Brokering practices among international EAL students at a New Zealand university

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Abstract

The numbers of international students enrolled in higher education in Anglophone countries have increased in the past decade, with the majority of students originating from Asian countries such as China. While it is in the interest of these universities to support international students during their study, there is a tendency for institutions to view students' learning in a deficit mode, for example, characterising students in terms of their limited English proficiency. Many studies of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are situated in formal instructional contexts that privilege Western academic norms, an environment which constrains students' agency. In order to make visible the agency of international EAL students, as well as to contribute to the limited research on students' informal academic learning, this study set out to examine a phenomenon in cross-cultural contexts known as brokering. Brokering refers to help-seeking social interactions, where students seek assistance with unfamiliar academic texts and practices from brokers who are able to bridge knowledge gaps.

A multi-methodological approach underpinned by a social constructionist paradigm was used to investigate the nature of brokering practices among 10 first-year, international EAL students, nine of whom were ethnic Chinese, at one New Zealand university. The study employed focused ethnography, where regular semi-structured interviews were conducted during students' initial 15-week semester. Records of brokering interactions associated with three key informants were also collected in the form of audio-recorded observations and screenshots of instant message exchanges on mobile phones. The data analysis was informed by brokering-related concepts from sociology and studies on immigrant communities, as well as conversation analytical concepts such as epistemic asymmetry, and politeness theories in pragmatics.

The study found that participants sought brokers among peers and non-peers for their academic needs. Brokering practices encompassed language brokering, literacy brokering, and resource brokering, with each type of brokering addressing particular aspects of academic learning. Unlike non-peer brokering, which was typically facilitated by English-speaking staff, peer brokering mostly took place in homophilous interactions, that is, between those of similar ethno-lingual backgrounds. Peer brokering relationships were also found to be valued not only for instrumental action in terms of obtaining knowledge, but also for expressive action in terms of engaging in shared sentiment. The analysis of the key informants' brokering interactions further demonstrated how agency was enacted through the seekers' maintenance and negotiation of relative knowledge positions, which was supported by politeness and face-management strategies. Peer brokering dynamics afforded greater scope for student agency, while the hierarchical social relations in non-peer brokering did not.

By integrating theoretical frameworks from different disciplines, this thesis has provided a unique conceptual lens for understanding international EAL students' academic-related brokering practices. It has also highlighted the need for international education practitioners to be sensitive to first-year international students' needs for culturally appropriate support. The thesis concludes that if institutions are aware of international EAL students' brokering practices, and take on a brokering role themselves, they will better serve the intercultural goals of international education.

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The Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it *Isaiah 42:5*

Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. *Psalm 139:4*

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Chapter 4 Findings

Lee, S. (2017). Understanding informal learning among international students through their brokering practices. *TESOLANZ Journal CLESOL 2016 Special Edition*, *25*, 13–27. Copyright 2017 by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Chapter 5 Case Study: Linda

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explain my research interests related to international students in Anglophone universities. I then provide an overview of international education in the higher education context, with specific reference to New Zealand. I conclude by highlighting the significance of the research study and the research aims, and provide an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 My Research Interests

My interest in international students in Anglophone universities has its roots in my undergraduate study at the National University of Singapore. At that time, I majored in English Language, a subject area which included sociolinguistics, as well as postcolonial and other critical perspectives on English language use in Singapore and the region. One of the long-lasting lessons I learnt was that the use of English for inter-ethnic communication rendered it far from being a neutral lingua franca. Instead, from the early years of postcolonial nation-building, the English language was inculcated through policy and educational discourses as the language for global participation and economic gain (Alsagoff, 2010; Tupas, 2011; Wee, 2003).

Singapore is a multicultural nation with three distinct ethnic groups: Chinese, who make up approximately three quarters of the resident population, Malays (about 14%), and Indians (under 10%) (Department of Statistics, 2017). English, Chinese, Mandarin, and Tamil are Singapore’s four official languages, with English being the predominant language across civic, business, and educational settings. While English was considered the first language and the medium of instruction in schools, ethnic languages were given the status of second language and were taught as standalone subjects rather than integrated into the curriculum (Tupas, 2011). Thus, as a Chinese Singaporean, I attended formal Chinese lessons in schools, but was expected to pay more attention to becoming proficient in English. In fact, during my formative schooling, it was widely understood among my peers and our families that a higher proficiency English led to better educational options and more important jobs.

The allure of English as the language of global opportunity can also be seen in the desirability of studying in higher education institutions in Western or Anglophone nations in Britain, Australasia, and North America (Liyanage &

Gurney, 2018). I observed this among my peers who either secured a scholarship for further study, or who could afford do so by their own means. I, too, held similar attitudes, and participated in an overseas exchange programme where I spent a semester at a Canadian university. In my own work experience, I found the appeal of Western education to be most palpable during my two-year teaching stint at a private college in the southern province of China. I taught pre-tertiary students academic English as part of a joint programme with overseas universities in Australia and the United Kingdom. Most of these students did not qualify to enter the Chinese public university but had the financial resources to enrol in a private institution that offered pathways for overseas qualifications. Not every student succeeded in going overseas to complete his/her course of study. However, among those who did, at least the students with whom I kept in touch had utilised their Western qualifications to advance their careers in a competitive labour market in China.

My main teaching career, however, was in Singapore, where I spent about six years as a lecturer in Business Communications at one of the five polytechnics in the country. As mentioned previously, English is the medium of instruction in schools and all students, regardless of their ethnic background, are expected to master English as their first language. In my teaching experience at the polytechnic, a small but significant number of students were not proficient English-language users and felt challenged by subjects that emphasised writing and reading densely written texts.

I undertook a Master of Arts in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) to understand how to better support English learners at my educational institution. In the course of my studies, I became interested in sociocultural theories of English language learning, particularly those that underscored the importance of creating equitable learning environments. In my capstone project I undertook a case study investigating the social learning trajectory of an English learner in Singapore. My case study participant was a former polytechnic student who had a Mandarin-speaking family background. In the early years of schooling she struggled against the dominant imperative to acquire ‘proper’ English. It was only much later during her vocational studies that she was motivated by pragmatic reasons to improve her English (e.g., for better job prospects), and chose to do so through informal means such as reading and blogging, rather than through formal lessons.

I decided to pursue a doctoral qualification overseas, specifically from an Anglophone institution, to fulfil several aspirations, one of which was to explore a research career in higher education outside of Singapore. The choice of my research topic was very much influenced by a phenomenon I considered to be characteristic of higher education in Anglophone countries: an unabated demand for Western education by Asian students. Many of my polytechnic students sought overseas degree qualifications upon completion of their diplomas, while many of my relatives had gone overseas for tertiary-level study.

During my postgraduate study, I was introduced to the phenomenon of brokering, where English language learners such as new migrants and emergent bilingual children sought assistance from others to acquire not only language skills but also cultural knowledge in relation to various texts and practices in their new environment. It was this idea of brokering that became the catalyst for my doctoral research study. Although the concept of *brokering* is not typically used in the literature on international students, it was intuitive to me that international students, particularly those who were not native users of the English language, were just as likely to engage in brokering practices in their Western educational context. The subsequent sections discuss this particular context of international students in Western educational institutions.

1.2 International Education in New Zealand

Internationalisation in education is driven by cultural, political, and economic reasons (Martens & Starke, 2008; van der Wende, 2010). In the higher education context, hosting international students has been touted as bringing educational benefits to both domestic and international students, namely, the exchange of knowledge and understanding between different nationalities and worldviews (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Hudzik, 2011; Knight, 2004, 2013). As encapsulated in Knight’s (2004) aspirational definition of internationalisation, engagement between the host institution and international students ought to reflect “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11). To be sure, an important rationale for institutions engaging in such internationalisation efforts is the aim of “develop[ing] graduates who are more internationally knowledgeable and interculturally skilled, and prepared to live and work in more culturally diverse communities” (Knight, 2013, p. 88).

However, as several scholars have pointed out (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2013; van der Wende, 2010), the internationalisation of higher education is increasingly dominated by a commercial mentality, where higher education is treated "as a private good, [and] not a public responsibility" (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 291). The demand for 'knowledge products' and economic advancement from middle-income nations such as those in Asia is being met by a supply of educational services from the developed and English-speaking or Anglophone countries (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The preference for Western, English-medium education is perpetuated by the use of English as the predominant language for scientific and academic communication globally (Altbach & Knight, 2007), and the prestige associated with acquiring Western qualifications in non-English speaking countries (Liyanage & Gurney, 2018). According to a recent Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, students from Asia form the largest group of international students enrolled in OECD tertiary education programmes at all levels, with almost 40% being from China (OECD, 2017b).

While traditional destination Anglophone countries such as Australia, the UK and the US attract the majority of international students (OECD, 2017b), New Zealand stands out as having the second largest enrolment of international students as a proportion of all students in tertiary education (21%, compared to an OECD average of 6%) (OECD, 2017a). As van der Wende (2010) notes, within the market-oriented model of higher education which emerged in the 1990s, internationalisation may be treated as "a revenue-generating approach [which considers] higher education as an export industry and … the revenues [used] to finance the domestic higher education sector" (p. 541). International education is indeed an important *export industry* for New Zealand (Collins & Lewis, 2016; Martens & Starke, 2008), referred to as such in government publications and the media. Neo-liberal reforms in the country from the mid-1980s onwards led to a shift in the focus of education policy from citizenship to economic efficiency (Martens & Starke, 2008). Universities themselves, traditionally viewed as independent and considered "critic and conscience of society", adopted an identity of "transnational business corporations operating in a competitive 'global knowledge economy'" (Shore, 2010, p. 15, as cited in Collins & Lewis, 2016). With reduced government funding of universities, international students have become "increasingly viewed as a source of revenue for institutions and the nation as a whole" (Collins & Lewis, 2016, p. 602).

The enormous growth of international education in New Zealand in the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly in the tertiary sector, was driven by both supply and demand factors. In addition to legislation enshrining education as an export good, the marketing and promotion of New Zealand as an education destination in the international market was "professionalised and institutionalised" (Martens & Starke, 2008, p. 9). From the consumers' point of view, New Zealand universities were considered more affordable than their Anglophone competitors (e.g., Australia, the UK). The country is also geographically closer to Asia (the largest source market), and widely regarded as 'clean, green, and safe' (Collins & Lewis, 2016; Martens & Starke, 2008).

Notwithstanding the appreciation of the New Zealand dollar and the uneven regulation and monitoring of education services in the past decade, the number of international students in New Zealand "has remained stable at around 90,000 per year" (Collins & Lewis, 2016, p. 603). In 2016, international education became the country's "fourth largest export sector, supporting more than 33,000 jobs across New Zealand" (Goldsmith, 2017). The industry was valued at more than NZ$4 billion, with almost a third of that value associated with the university sector (Education New Zealand, 2016). Similar to previous policies on international education (Collins & Lewis, 2016), the latest policy, the *International Education Strategy 2018-2030* (Ministry of Education, 2018), reinforces the discourse of international students as a revenue stream meeting labour market needs:

> International education is an important export industry, making a significant economic and cultural contribution to New Zealand, and adding to the diversity of our export industries. (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 10)
>
> The international education sector can attract international students who want to gain the qualifications and skills that the New Zealand labour market needs. (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 20)

Nonetheless, there appears to be a reciprocal element in the strategy which expresses in its rhetoric a commitment to deliver a 'high-quality' education by providing 'an excellent student experience':

> New Zealand's high-quality education system is a vital component of international education in New Zealand. To support the ongoing success of the sector, we need to keep delivering high-quality education and make sure that we provide an excellent student experience, prioritise student wellbeing, and attract students who are looking for internationally recognised qualifications. (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 14)

A crucial aspect of the international student experience is related to their academic experiences (Roberts & Dunworth, 2012; Ryan, 2011; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012), a topic discussed in the next section.

1.3 Academic Experiences of International Students

The academic experiences of international students for whom English is an additional language, otherwise referred to as EAL[1] students, are often influenced by their English language proficiency and familiarity with the culture of Western host countries and institutions (Abdullah, Abd Aziz, & Mohd Ibrahim, 2014; Andrade, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). While the use of the label 'EAL' in this thesis attempts to recognise students' linguistic capacities where English is an addition to students' existing repertoire of languages, the literature nonetheless tends to emphasise international students' English language deficiencies. Often, studies report on international EAL students' insufficient English proficiency in carrying out academic tasks (Brown, 2008; Campbell & Li, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Lee, Farruggia, & Brown, 2013), as well as their reluctance to participate in class discussions (Campbell & Li, 2008; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Sawir et al., 2012). In addition, scholars have noted the tendency for institutions to conflate EAL students' lack of language proficiency with a lack of academic ability (Ryan & Viete, 2009; Wingate, 2015). Others point out that students' non-communicative behaviour (e.g., reticence in classrooms) is associated with passive learning and a lack of critical thinking (Marlina, 2009; Ryan, 2011; Valiente, 2008). In other words, there persists a deficit view of international students, who are viewed "in terms of the characteristics that they lack, rather than those which they bring to their new learning environments" (Ryan & Louie, 2007, p. 406).

This deficit perspective stems from the dominance of the English language and associated academic norms in Anglophone institutions (Jenkins, 2014; Liyanage, Tran, & Ata, 2018; Singh, 2005); such international education contexts typically promote "discourses that essentialise and problematise users of language[s] other than English" (Liyanage et al., 2018, p. 15). In mitigating this deficit framing, several scholars have called for greater attention to international students' agency (Marginson, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2018; Volet & Jones, 2012), such as using positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) to highlight how students'

[1] Students who are not considered native English speakers have been accorded various other abbreviated labels such as: EFL (English as a Foreign Language); ESL (English as a Second Language); ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages); NESB (Non-English Speaking Background); and NNES (Non-Native English Speaker).

actions are situated within particular social practices and structures that make such choices relevant in the first place. In exploring EAL students' agency in academic learning, there is also a need to consider how language and communicative repertoires enable enactments of agency (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005). While the agency of international EAL students may be limited in the English-speaking environment of formal instruction, it may be promoted in environments which allow them to communicate in languages that they are already proficient in. Thus, an agentive view of international EAL students requires an alternative conception of what academic learning is, that is, other than demonstrating the expected norms and practices of Western institutions.

An *academic literacies* approach (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007) which foregrounds students' personal beliefs, attitudes, and resources in negotiating academic practices offers such an alternative. Academic learning, of course, is not only contained within classrooms and formal structures, as learning extends to personal and social spaces (Barnett, 2010; Barron, 2006). While such informal learning is often invisible, taken for granted and not usually recognised as learning, it nonetheless affords "greater scope for [examining] individual agency" (Eraut, 2004, p. 247).

1.4 Significance of the Study

As the literature on literacy practices among migrants suggests (Perry, 2009; Tse, 1995, 1996), newly enrolled EAL university students may engage in brokering practices as part of an informal strategy to understand their unfamiliar academic environment. Brokering refers to seeking or receiving assistance from an intermediary (i.e., the broker) who has access to valued resources which are otherwise difficult to obtain (Stovel, Golub, & Milgrom, 2011). Several studies have investigated EAL students' practices similar to brokering, such as engaging with peers for academic assistance (Che, 2013; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Nonetheless, there is still limited research on how international EAL students' brokering practices provide academic support, as well as on the specific areas of academic learning that students seek assistance with.

As with the broader literature, studies investigating the academic experiences of international EAL students in New Zealand higher education institutions typically examine formal learning contexts such as the classroom. For example, several studies have highlighted how students' inadequate English proficiency levels and their different educational expectations limit their success in academic tasks such as assignments and interpersonal interactions (Campbell & Li, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Lee et al., 2013). Other studies, however, have suggested that the lack of appropriate academic support also contributes to unfavourable learning environments. For example, Li (2016) and Skyrme (2010) point out that Asian international students' limited engagement with their teachers (i.e., lecturers and tutors) may result from a fear of exposing their weakness or prior encounters with teachers who were unwilling to provide detailed assistance. Government reports on the international student experience in New Zealand have similarly highlighted concerns regarding teachers' lack of understanding of international students' learning needs. In one survey report on international tertiary students, Mainland Chinese students, who were the largest group of respondents (27%), indicated that they were dissatisfied with learning areas such as "studying with students from other cultures" and getting "help to improve [their] English skills" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 23). Another report which surveyed international high school and tertiary students suggested that teachers were not always able to provide satisfactory academic support (Ministry of Education, 2008). This report found that "[r]elative to other elements of cultural inclusiveness, students did not believe as strongly that teachers understood the problems of international students or that the teachers made special efforts to help international students" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 3). The report also found that students were "more likely to seek social and emotional support from their international peers than any other group" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 4), echoing other studies that found international students approaching co-national or other international peers for informal academic assistance (Holmes, 2005; Li, 2016; Skyrme, 2010). These findings thus indicate the limitations of formal academic instruction in providing adequate or appropriate learning support.

The aim of my study was to investigate international EAL students' brokering practices at a New Zealand university. *Brokering practices* are defined as academic, help-seeking, social interactions outside the formal curriculum, and *international students* are students who obtain a temporary visa for purposes of studying at an educational institution in New Zealand. I was interested in the nature of brokering practices as seen through the aspects of academic learning brokered, the choice of brokers, the characteristics of brokering relationships, and the dynamics of brokering interactions. My research not only aimed to address the deficit perspective of international EAL students by considering students' agency in informal learning contexts, but also to bridge the gap in the literature on informal social support for academic learning in tertiary settings.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to my personal background in relation to my research interests; contextual information on international education in New Zealand; academic experiences of international students as seen in the literature; the rationale of the research topic; and an overview of the chapters in the thesis.

Chapter 2 surveys the literature in three parts. Part One concerns the dominant and alternative perspectives on academic learning, and reviews the literature in relation to international students' academic experiences; concepts of agency; concepts of academic literacy; and informal learning. In Part Two, I review the concept of brokering in terms of sociological theory, and also review the phenomenon of brokering by examining studies in language and literacy brokering. A conceptual framework of brokering is presented based on the theoretical and empirical insights from Parts One and Two. In Part Three, I review empirical studies related to brokering practices among international EAL students and identify opportunities for further investigation.

Chapter 3 presents my research questions, and the research methodology in terms of my epistemological stance, highlighting the importance of self-reflexivity in the processes of data collection and analysis. The chapter explains the multi-methodological approach chosen (i.e., focused ethnography and case study interactional analyses), and outlines the research process and ethical considerations. The chapter also details my translation and transcription processes, since a large portion of the data was in Chinese/Mandarin. The chapter concludes with an account of and justification for the forms of analysis I used, thematic analysis and conversation analysis.

Chapter 4 reports findings from the data corpus by providing descriptions of the extent of brokering practices for each of my participants. The chapter also answers the research questions by using the conceptual framework of brokering informed by Lin's (2001b) theory of social capital, in particular, the use of instrumental and expressive actions in accessing valued resources.

Chapters 5–7 are case study analyses of my key informants' brokering interactions with their respective brokers. The analyses of brokering interactions were based on concepts of conversation analysis, namely, epistemic asymmetry, as well as concepts from the field of pragmatics concerning politeness and face management, and demonstrate how the dynamics of the interactions were related to instrumental and/or expressive actions. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of brokering interactions related to Linda and her two peer brokers, a domestic student named Grace, and a co-national international student named Emily. Chapter 6 presents the analysis related to Kim and her ethno-lingual peer broker, Josh. Chapter 7 presents the analysis related to Jane and her co-national non-peer broker Tim. (All names mentioned are pseudonyms).

Chapter 8 presents my discussion of the findings and analyses from Chapters 4–7, and also the implications for faculty and support staff who work with international students. The chapter also highlights limitations of the study, and suggests areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organised in three parts where the first two parts build up a conceptual framework of brokering, and the final part examines empirical studies on the topic of brokering practices among international students in higher education settings. In Part One, I review the literature related to the conceptualisation of international students' academic learning and their agency in learning. I first present an overview of the literature on the academic experiences of international students. I highlight that the dominant paradigm in such literature is based on a deficit discourse of international students' lacking in English language proficiency and particular academic behaviours expected at the institutions. This deficit discourse is underpinned by the dominance of the English language in international education which in turn undermines the agency of international students whose first language is not English. I then examine different conceptualisations of agency and relate them to alternative paradigms that view students' academic learning as embedded in social relations, and foreground the students' perspective in their engagement with academic practices. These paradigms also extend the purview of academic learning beyond the classroom to include informal learning spaces. I then review the various perspectives on informal learning, and highlight significant characteristics of international students' informal academic learning.

Based on key insights derived from the review in Part One, I make connections between international students' academic learning and brokering in Part Two of the chapter. I review the concept of brokering by drawing on sociological theory, and on studies that report on the phenomenon of brokering in immigrant contexts. Based on the preceding literature review in Parts One and Two, I assemble a conceptual framework of brokering for my research. In the final part of the chapter, I review empirical studies related to brokering in light of my conceptual framework, and identify opportunities for further investigation. Part Three of the chapter concludes with a summary of the features of brokering and establishes the research gaps to be addressed.

Part One: International Students' Academic Learning and Agency

2.1 Academic Challenges for International Students

Entering university is widely recognised as a transition into a markedly different academic environment from previous educational experiences and thus incoming students need to be prepared for the particular requirements and expectations of tertiary study (Brinkworth, McCann, Matthews, & Nordström, 2009; James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010; Kuh, Cruce, & Gonyea, 2008; Tinto, 2006). For international students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from those associated with the host institution, the adjustment to university is even more challenging (Andrade, 2006; Martirosyan, Hwang, & Wanjohi, 2015; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yeh & Inose, 2003). International EAL students' difficulties in adjusting to a new academic environment are often attributed to their inadequate English language proficiency, as well as their being unaccustomed to the Western academic environment, particularly the expectation to engage in discussion (Andrade, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Numerous empirical studies bear testimony to the critical role that English language plays in EAL students' academic learning, highlighting the particular language-related issues. For example, comprehension of teaching materials was hampered by lecturers' or tutors' accents or use of slang unfamiliar to students (Bamford, 2008; Halic et al., 2009; Johnson, 2008; Lee et al., 2013; Quan, Smailes, & Fraser, 2013; Sawir et al., 2012). This was typically the case if students were used to standard American or British English in their prior language learning. Another salient issue has been students' unfamiliarity with the specialised vocabulary or terminology encountered in particular disciplines (Bamford, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Sawir et al., 2012), or academic language in general (Brown, 2008; Campbell & Li, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Lee et al., 2013). Furthermore, in an academic culture where oral communication is an expectation (e.g., during class discussion), students feel uncomfortable in having to express themselves in 'non-standard' English (Campbell & Li, 2008; Sawir et al., 2012), or feel unable to express a range of ideas and thoughts using English (Halic et al., 2009; Ippolito, 2007; Major, 2005).

With China being a major source of international students to English-speaking universities in recent decades (ICEF Monitor, 2015; OECD, 2017), researchers are additionally interested in the particular aspects of adjustment challenges faced by Chinese international students, whether from China or those with a Chinese cultural heritage. Like the general literature on international students, studies found that inadequate English language and communication skills affected Chinese students' class participation and other academic-related interactions (Lee et al., 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2011). Other studies have also emphasised the lack of English language proficiency as being the principal obstacle in students' learning (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010; Xu, 2002). In addition, Chinese students' limited engagement with host peers and lecturers has also been explained by a fear of 'losing face', that is, feeling embarrassed by exposing their inadequacies in front of others (Holmes, 2005; Yang, Li, & Sligo, 2008; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Some studies have further shown that such discomfort with the host environment results in a preference for engaging with co-language or co-national students for academic support (Holmes, 2005; Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010).

While such studies on international EAL students seek to address their particular academic needs and challenges, they nonetheless reinforce a deficit discourse of students as lacking in skills and characteristics (Marginson, 2014; Ryan & Louie, 2007; Tran, 2011; Tran & Vu, 2018), "rather than those which they bring to their new learning environments" (Ryan & Louie, 2007, p. 406). The deficit discourse can also be seen in the host institution's own attitudes towards EAL students. Scholars have highlighted the tendency for lecturers to conflate EAL students' lack of language proficiency with a lack of academic ability (Ryan & Viete, 2009; Wingate, 2015). Others point out how students' non-communicative behaviour, such as reticence in classrooms, is associated with passive learning and a lack of critical thinking (Marlina, 2009; Ryan, 2011; Valiente, 2008). Underlying these attitudes and assumptions, as scholars point out, is the centrality of the English language and particular academic norms, and the belief that EAL students are responsible for changing and adapting to such academic demands (Jenkins & Wingate, 2015; Ryan, 2011).

The centrality of the English language and Western norms in higher education is often unquestioningly accepted as a feature of globalisation (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Jenkins, 2014). English is recognised as the lingua franca for global trade and scientific communication by both English-speaking and non-English speaking nations, notably middle-income countries in Asia (Altbach & Knight, 2007). With English-language or Western education treated as an economic imperative, the dominance of English language is rarely discussed as a hegemonic force in international education (Jenkins, 2014; Liyanage et al., 2018; Singh, 2005).

Several scholars, nevertheless, have argued that assumptions around English as a neutral or useful language reflect linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Taking Phillipson's (1992) working definition, English linguistic imperialism occurs where the “dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (p. 47). Applied to the context of international EAL students in English-speaking institutions, English language imperialism, or the assertion of a monolingual perspective, amounts to a disregard for linguistic and cultural diversity (Altbach, 2007; Liyanage et al., 2018; Otten, 2003).

As a consequence, the prevailing deficit discourse around international EAL students conceals the “complex and diverse systems of cultural practices” of both Western and other cultures (Ryan & Louie, 2007, p. 414). The deficit discourse not only perpetuates ‘cross-cultural ignorance’ (Singh, 2009) but limits “the potential capacity of international students as partners or co-constructors of transnational knowledge, skills and attributes in the international classroom” (Liyanage et al., 2018, p. 13). The resulting effect is that EAL students are positioned as lacking agency, or the capacity to act in their own interests (Marginson, 2014; Tran, 2011; Tran & Vu, 2018; Volet & Jones, 2012). A number of scholars argue for a disengagement from the deficit discourse by respecting and valuing the diversity of linguistic and cultural resources that international students bring to host institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2013; Leask, 2009; Ryan & Viete, 2009). As a further response, several scholars have highlighted the need to promote international students’ agency at both theoretical and empirical levels (Marginson, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2018; Volet & Jones, 2012).

At one level, agency can be conceived of as individuals’ ability to make rational choices. Marginson (2014), for example, defines agency as “the sum of a person’s capacity to act on her/his own behalf” (p. 5), while Volet and Jones (2012) view agency as closely related to one’s motivations, goals and resilience. Yet other scholars have foregrounded the discursive aspects of agency (Kettle, 2005; Tran, 2011; Tran & Vu, 2018), drawing particularly from positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Such a perspective of agency highlights how one’s actions are always situated in the context of particular social practices and structures that make choices around courses of action available in the first place. As Tran and Vu (2018) note, agency not only “depends on … students’ individual efforts, but … is also contingent on the availability of resources, institutional and structural factors influencing the students' lived realities" (p. 171).

2.2 A Conceptualisation of Agency

The concept of agency as underpinned by the notion of positioning or positioning theory has been well articulated by Davies, Harré, and van Langenhove (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Davies (1990) argues that language is inextricably connected to agency since language not only enables people to describe social reality but in addition talk itself *constitutes* social reality; "we think that way because we talk about it that way" (p. 342). The individual, language, and society are therefore discursively related; people's actions are based on an understanding of what discursive practices are available and permissible in their lived social worlds. Thus, agency is

> [e]mbedded within those discursive practices [where there] is an understanding that each person is one who has an obligation to take themselves up as a knowable, recognizable identity, who 'speaks for themselves', who accepts responsibility for their actions, that is as one who is recognisably separate from any particular collective …. (Davies, 1990, p. 343)

The notion of a "knowable, recognizable identity" is understood as a *position* and the action of occupying that position as *positioning* (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1990). As explained by Davies and Harré (1990), a person takes up a position in terms of "the particular images, metaphors and storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned" (p. 46). At the same time, however, the person brings to the situation his her own subjective interpretation based on his/her own history of being in multiple positions and engaged in different forms of discourse. The subjective histories of participants in a particular situation thus give rise to potentially contradictory interpretations of storylines and alternative positionings.

Davies (1990) argues that agency requires three types of resources: discursive resources, personal resources, and social resources. Discursive resources are the understandings of how an individual exists as both a member and independently of a collective. In addition, the individual is understood as one who makes choices based on available positionings, rather than one who experiences his/her current positioning as inevitable. Personal resources refer to the individual's having knowledge of alternative positionings, and having the desire to be agentic, that is, "a sense of self as one who both can and should position themselves in that way, make the relevant choices, carry them through and accept the moral responsibility for doing so" (p. 360). Finally, social resources refer to the individual's access to fellow participants who will recognise the individual's positioning of him/herself as agentive.

In a later development of positioning, Harré and Van Langenhove (1999) refer to *positioning theory* as a conceptual framework based on a mutually determining triad of position/act-action/storyline manifested through conversation, where conversation is seen as analogous to social reality. According to the authors, positioning theory "pictures a dynamic stability between actors' positions, the social force of what they say and do, and the storylines that are instantiated in the sayings and doings of each episode" (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 10). In the tri-polar structure of conversation, positions people take are linked to the storylines, and the utterances that people produce reflect those positions and storylines. Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) give the example of a conversation between a teacher and a student who have respective rights to make particular remarks in relation to their position. The position of teacher within a storyline of instruction makes appropriate certain kinds of speech-acts (i.e., actions or intentions performed by the speaker's words) such as instruction, correction and reprimand. While the authors do not describe the student's position, his/her position within this storyline is likely to be associated with speech-acts of asking questions and submission.

These positions, however, are not fixed but fluid. One can position oneself as, for example, confident, or be positioned by others as, for example, powerless. In addition, positionings may be imposed on others, for example, in the case of someone who suddenly takes on a dominant position in a conversation and forces the other participants into positions they would not have occupied voluntarily. Further, positionings can be challenged either by oneself or others, and therefore participants may be repositioning themselves or be repositioned by others in the unfolding storyline of the conversation. Thus, positioning is a discursive practice where "each of the participants always positions the other while simultaneously positioning him or herself … and at the same time it is a resource through which all persons involved can negotiate new positions" (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 22).

Thus, on the basis of positioning theory as illustrated thus far, agency is a discursive practice where the individual recognises that one can choose to take on one of multiple positions, and takes responsibility for maintaining or negotiating positions according to the relevant storyline. At the same time, since other participants in the conversation are similarly engaged in the dynamics of positioning, the individual’s agentive actions are influenced by other participants’ recognition or acceptance of such efforts. Situating discursive practices in a multilingual context, Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005) highlight how agency, or the positioning of individuals, is influenced by their communicative potential in relation to the linguistic environments and practices wherein they are located.

Writing on multilingualism in urban areas where local and diasporic communities co-exist, Blommaert et al. (2005) argue that “[a] change in spatial environment clearly affects our capacity to deploy linguistic resources and skills and imposes requirements on us which we may fail to meet” (p. 198). So when international EAL students are reported as lacking English language proficiency or refraining from engaging in discussion, it is not about them “*having* a lack of capacity to communicate and interact, but that the particular environment *organizes* a particular regime of language, a regime which *incapacitates individuals*” (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 198, italics in original). For Blommaert et al. (2005), agency results from the interplay between people’s sociolinguistic repertoires and skills with language in particular situations. The authors recognise individuals’ linguistic and communicative potential, while being sensitive to how individuals are positioned during ‘translinguistic encounters’. As the authors explain, the environment imposes particular regimes of language where “the function and value of those repertoires and skills can change as the space of language contact changes” (Blommaert et al., 2005, p. 211). Thus, for international EAL students, their agency is likely to be constrained in an English-speaking environment of the university, but promoted in environments which enable them to communicate in languages that they are already proficient in.

Agency is thus not only a dynamic process of maintaining and/or negotiating positionings in discourse, but is also influenced by the sociocultural aspects of interactional spaces in which individuals may or may not be able to exercise their linguistic repertoires and communication skills. In the context of higher education, examining students’ agency in learning is also informed by the perspective one has on what constitutes academic learning. The following sections review several perspectives on academic learning, especially those that address the sociocultural elements of agency in relation to EAL students.

2.3 Perspectives on Academic Learning

Learning in higher education across all disciplines can be regarded as acquiring particular ways of "understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158). In seeking to understand how students acquire such knowledge and skills, the term 'academic literacy' is often used to refer to the ability to do so through skills such as reading and writing (Wingate, 2015). Academic writing, in particular, is the subject of much research on academic literacy, not surprisingly since much assessment involves writing (Casanave, 2002; Johns, 1997; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Academic literacy, however, is a contested term involving competing definitions (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Several scholars have identified the various approaches towards academic literacy which can be broadly categorised as either focused on content and methods of learning, or concerned about the ideology or particular beliefs that influence learning (Hyland, 2002; Ivanič, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007). Lea and Street (1998), for example, use the following terms to differentiate the different approaches: i) study skills; ii) academic socialisation; and iii) academic literacies, where the plural form is used to express the view of academic learning as repertoires of social practices (Street, 2003). These approaches are reviewed in the sub-sections that follow.

2.3.1 Study Skills

As explained by Lea and Street (1998), the *study skills* approach treats academic learning as a set of atomised skills which students have to learn and which are then transferable to other contexts. Often, it emphasises surface features of writing such as grammar and spelling, and focuses on error correction. Some have critiqued this approach as privileging the dominant culture of the institution and viewing the learner as passive and accommodating (Benesch, 2001; Lea & Street, 1998; Spack, 1997). Others point out that the genres of academic writing are fluid and evolving, and therefore should not be taught as having fixed and stable features (Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Prior, 1998).

While these positions problematise the teaching of academic skills, other scholars recognise the importance of knowing the dominant forms of academic discourse. The latter point out the pragmatically necessary but challenging process of acquiring sociocultural norms and practices in a new academic environment (e.g., Braine, 2002; Scarcella, 2003). Recognising the limitation of using a study skills approach, some scholars have adopted what is known as an *academic socialisation* approach (Lea & Street, 1998).

2.3.2 Academic Socialisation

The *academic socialisation* approach focuses on orientating the student to the particular culture of the academy. This can be seen in genre-based pedagogy that makes explicit the established conventions for various types of academic text (Hyland, 2003; Ivanič, 2004). Duff (2010), however, extends the definition of socialisation to include taking into account tensions involved in the process of helping students become familiar with the conventions of their academic environment. Duff (2010) draws on language socialisation, as developed by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), which emphasises the sociocultural context in using language as a means of achieving social competence. Using the term 'academic discourse socialisation', Duff views acquiring academic literacy as a process "characterized by variable amounts of modelling, feedback, and uptake; different levels of investment and agency on the part of learners; by the negotiation of power and identities; and, often, important personal transformations for at least some participants" (Duff, 2010, p. 169).

Studies using Duff's (2010) notion of academic discourse socialisation have analysed a range of academic environments in higher education which include oral group discussions (Ho, 2011; Kobayashi, 2003), academic writing (Nam & Beckett, 2011; Okuda & Anderson, 2018), and interactions with peers and instructors (Morita, 2004; Seloni, 2012). These studies highlight how the academic socialisation of EAL students is strongly influenced by the power relations between students and instructors, as well as between students and their peers. For example, Morita (2004) demonstrated how EAL students' classroom participation was limited by instructors and peers who did not actively engage them in discussion. In Okuda and Anderson's (2017) study, instructors' practices similarly had a negative impact on students. By consistently labelling EAL students' writing issues as 'problems' and directing them to self-learning resources, instructors denied students opportunities to acquire the necessary academic literacy practices. On the other hand, peers were seen as useful resources for providing advice for various academic tasks or events such as interacting with classmates and instructors (Seloni, 2012), making course choices and using academic services (Nam & Beckett, 2011). In identifying obstacles and enablers of socialisation, such studies call for interventions to allow for more meaningful and successful enculturation of EAL students in their academic environments.

The socialisation perspective, however, some scholars argue, tends to adopt an uncritical acceptance of the norms and practices of the institutional environment (Lea & Street, 1998, 2010; Lillis & Scott, 2007). By treating the academy as a relatively homogeneous culture, the socialisation perspective assumes that "once students have learned and understood the ground rules of a particular academic discourse, they are able to reproduce it unproblematically" (Lea & Street, 2010, p. 369). Lillis and Scott (2007) further point out that the socialisation approach is in fact a normative approach that only serves to strengthen a deficit framing of students' learning. In response to the weaknesses of a socialisation perspective, scholars such as Lea and Street (1998, 2010) and Lillis and Scott (2007) argue for an *academic literacies* approach that foregrounds power relations, authority, meaning-making and identity, particularly from students' perspectives.

2.3.3 Academic Literacies

The *academic literacies* approach is aligned with the broader field of *New Literacy Studies* (Street, 2003), where literacy is expressed in the plural ('literacies') to reflect the view of academic ability or literacy as a repertoire of social practices as opposed to a set of neutral and decontextualised skills as seen in the *study skills* approach (Lea & Street, 1998). The approach also interrogates relationships of power and authority between learners and their environment, which are seldom addressed in an *academic socialisation* approach. For Lea and Street (1998), it is important to take into account the contested nature of meanings that students, instructors and institutions attach to academic literacy practices, in particular, academic writing. Lillis and Scott (2007) add that it is also important to "explor[e] alternative ways of meaning making in academia, not least by considering the resources that [students] bring to the academy as legitimate tools for meaning making" (p. 13), thus promoting the perspective of student agency.

The importance of EAL students' personal engagement with their academic environment can be seen in studies investigating students' perspectives on their encounters with academic texts and practices. Leki (2006), for example, explored EAL students' socio-academic relationships, that is, academic interactions with peers or faculty members within the context of the institution. She revealed how faculty members assigned unidimensional identities to students based on students' national or cultural backgrounds. One participant, a Chinese nursing student named

Yang, for example, was conscious of how she was positioned as an incompetent English speaker, but at the same time, placed responsibility on her professors for their refusal to understand her English. Despite her frustration at not being able to articulate her ideas and knowledge, Yang refrained from an emotional response, which she believed would damage the already tense relationships she had with her professors. Here, Yang's agency is expressed through her process of critical reflection, revealing the emotional and strategic aspects of her learning behind her apparent incompetence in class.

While Leki's (2006) study focused on socio-academic interactions, other studies revolved around the more common topic of academic writing, and in particular, how students respond to writing conventions and instructors' expectations. Tran's (2011) study found that Chinese and Vietnamese postgraduate students at an Australian university had different approaches to mastering the skills of academic writing. While all participants actively sought advice from lecturers, some were conscious of restricting their personal agency in order to accommodate the lecturer's preferences and expectations, while others advocated for the use of their own personal styles and negotiated the boundaries of writing in their particular discipline. The latter form of interaction with lecturers, in particular, also provided lecturers with the opportunity to become more critically aware of the so-called Western conventions in their discipline, and to adapt their teaching practices for international students.

The mutual adaptation of the EAL student and the Western educator was also highlighted in an earlier study. Viete and Ha (2007) showed how a Vietnamese postgraduate student, Ha, and her supervisor, Rosemary, challenged dominant writing conventions and explored diversity in expression in negotiating Ha's representation of herself in her research writing. While Ha adopted the conventions of thesis writing, she also wrote parts of the thesis in a passionate or flowery style often found in Vietnamese writing but uncommon in formal writing in English. By using and justifying her own cultural style of discourse, Ha experienced agency in her writing.

The use of students' own cultural resources in academic literacy is echoed in Morton et al. (2015), whose longitudinal case studies on three EAL students revealed different responses to the challenges of academic writing. One student, Fei, actively sought feedback and advice from her peers, in particular, her Chinese friends, and engaged in the practice of writing her drafts in both English and

Chinese, her native language. Another student, Kevin, viewed writing as a technical exercise and used assessment rubrics to guide his production of the text. Yet another student, Laura, struggled with the concept of academic identity in her writing but gradually gained confidence by discussing her assignment topics with her husband in their native language of Portuguese. Thus, these EAL students experienced agency in various ways, notably by seeking assistance from others who could engage with them in their native language.

As the preceding studies illustrate, an *academic literacies* approach has the potential to foreground EAL students' agency in negotiating unfamiliar academic practices, which is intertwined with their personal beliefs and attitudes, as well as linguistic and cultural practices. The literature also suggests the importance of informal and social contexts as avenues to explore alternative ways of understanding EAL students' academic competence and students' resources as 'legitimate tools for meaning making' (Lillis & Scott, 2007). To better understand students' informal academic learning, the literature on informal learning is reviewed in the following section.

2.4 Informal Learning

Livingstone (2006) defines informal learning as "any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria … and is determined by the individuals and groups that choose to engage in it" (p. 206). Eraut (2004), however, while recognising the individual agency involved in informal learning, contends that individuals themselves may be unaware of their own learning because of its 'invisible' nature, that is, informal learning is implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured. Based on empirical research in workplace settings, Eraut (2004) highlights the relative importance of "informal support from whoever [is] available … [over] formally designated helpers" (p. 267). The opportunistic and unstructured characteristic of informal learning is also manifested in the way such individuals approach such workplace relationships. Some may be proactive in seeking out a wider network of knowledge resources beyond their immediate colleagues, while others may give it little attention, often depending on whether they perceive workplace relationships as being supportive or not.

In the context of higher education, informal learning is generally understood as learning outside formal instruction such as lectures and tutorials (Barnett, 2010; Barron, 2006; Rogers, 2008), and has been associated with peer learning (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Falchikov, 2003). In academic contexts, peers have been defined as those in a similar situation to, and who have a similar status to, the students seeking assistance (Boud et al., 2001; Falchikov, 2003). Often, peers are considered to be students in the same class or cohort, but as university students interact with others in different contexts such as extracurricular activities and places of residence, peers may be thought of more broadly as significant others in one's social learning networks (Boud & Lee, 2005). Similar to the unstructured nature of informal learning in the workplace (Eraut, 2004), peer learning in higher education has been defined as "students learning from and with each other … [where] the roles of the teacher and learner … are either undefined or may shift during the course of the learning experience" (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001, p. 4). However, relatively few studies have examined informal peer learning "beyond the didactic structure and the institutional organisation of learning" and thus ignore "the complexity of the learning environment" (Havnes, 2008, p. 193). The result, as Havnes (2008) argues, is a lack of theorising that accounts for the social processes and interactions that influence peer learning.

Among the research on informal peer learning interactions in higher education, several social theories have been put forth. Havnes (2008) used Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of the zone of proximal development in a narrative reflection about how novice students learned from experts or more competent peers at universities in Norway. Hommes et al. (2012), on the other hand, employed a social network approach (Katz, Lazer, Arrow, & Contractor, 2004) that "views individuals as interdependent, taking into account a person's resources, information flow and relationships" (Hommes et al., 2012, p. 744). Based on a quantitative analysis of social network data of medical undergraduate students at a university in The Netherlands, the authors found that those who learned most were positioned more centrally in the network and had more connections to others, thus increasing their chances of accessing a greater amount, and more valuable information. A study by Morosanu, Handley, and O'Donovan (2010) also used social network theory but did so through qualitative methods of participant audio diaries and in-depth interviewing. The authors found that first-year UK undergraduate students' informal ties were helpful in providing emotional and social support, but not necessarily in terms of offering appropriate academic assistance. While institutional ties were more reliable in terms of academic support, they lacked the "closeness, frequency of contact, reciprocity and equality" of peer and other intimate relations (Morosanu et al., 2010, p. 676).

The contexts of the preceding studies were, however, domestic student populations; sociocultural perspectives on informal academic learning have not been fully explored in the context of international EAL students. While the social theories presented have illuminated the processes of peer learning, they do not necessarily explicitly address the language and cultural differences that EAL students bring to their learning environments. In addressing the informal academic interactions of EAL students, alternative concepts are thus needed to take into account the gaps between EAL students' own resources and those required by their English-speaking institutional context. One particular concept that foregrounds how such gaps are resolved informally is *brokering* as used in sociological literature, as well as studies related to the language and literacy learning practices of immigrant families and bilingual classrooms.

Part Two: Theory and Practice of Brokering

2.5 Theoretical Perspectives of Brokering

The term *brokering* is commonly associated with financial transactions, for example, the stockbroker who is used by lay people to access expert and specialised advice on financial trading. Similarly in sociology, the concept of brokering or *brokerage* (the more common term in sociology) refers to using intermediaries because of their particular knowledge about an otherwise inaccessible entity (Stovel & Shaw, 2012). More specifically, however, the sociological concept of brokering is concerned with how "people situated between distinct social worlds collect and channel scarce information in ways that make things happen" (Stovel & Shaw, 2012, p. 140). For example, providing job-seekers with information or helping others navigate a new and unfamiliar environment are acts of brokering.

Brokers can thus be broadly defined as "intermediary links in systems of social, economic, or political relations who facilitate trade or transmission of valued resources that would otherwise be substantially more difficult [to access]" (Stovel, Golub, & Milgrom, 2011, p. 21326). The difficulty arises when "communities are separated from one another by culture, language, or geography or when the transaction is complex or atypical" (Stovel et al., 2011, p. 21327). Stovel et al. (2011) further define the characteristics of brokers as i) bridging gaps in social structure, and ii) helping goods, information, opportunities or knowledge flow across those gaps.

Several sociologists have theorised the concept of brokerage in the context of social networks within and between organisations such as large business companies (Burt, 2004; Gould & Fernandez, 1989), while others have alluded to brokering relationships from a social network perspective, emphasising the degree of similarity or proximity between those seeking resources and their brokers (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 1982, 2001a, 2001b). It is the latter literature that is of greater relevance to my research because of its attention to social and often informal relationships, and is thus consequently reviewed. Granovetter's (1973) theory of weak ties and Lin's (1982, 2001b) work on social capital both provide insight into how brokering relationships are influenced by social ties. In particular, Lin's (2001b) theory of social capital provides useful conceptualisations of brokering as related to the following: i) homophilous interactions; ii) accessing resources through expressive and instrumental actions; iii) social structure and positions; and iv) the relational rationality of exchanges. In addition, Lin's (2001a) explanation of a particular concept of relational rationality known as *guanxi* offers additional insight into social relations based on sentiment and recognition which are common in, but not unique to, Chinese society. Lin's (2001a) insights into *guanxi* are also paralleled in the anthropological writing of Smart (1999) whose discussion of *guanxi* provides a perspective of brokering within interpersonal relationships in a Chinese cultural context.

2.5.1 Theory of Weak Ties

In Granovetter's (1973) "The Strength of Weak Ties", his seminal work based on a labour market study, he argued that weak ties in a job-seeker's social network generated more valuable job information than strong ties. Defining weak and strong ties in terms of the frequency of interaction between job-seekers and their contacts, Granovetter (1973) demonstrated how "those to whom [seekers] are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles different from [their] own and will thus have access to information different from that which [they] receive" (p. 1371). In contrast, strong ties such as family and friends often had information limited to that particular social circle. In many cases of weak ties, brokers were only marginally included in the current network of contacts (e.g., former college friends, colleagues, or employers), with whom contact had been maintained through chance meetings or through mutual contacts. These contacts were considered acquaintances rather than friends by many of the respondents. Yet, it was these distant contacts who provided crucial information that made it possible for people to move on to new jobs.

Granovetter's (1973) work thus provides additional insight into Stovel et al.'s (2011) characteristics of brokers. In order for brokers to effectively bridge gaps and facilitate transfer of information and resources, they should be socially distant contacts rather than those already in close or frequent contact with seekers. Despite the significance of weak ties as brokers, there are nonetheless challenges and tensions involved in making connections with socially distant contacts, as Lin's (2001b) theory of social capital demonstrates.

2.5.2 Theory of Social Capital

According to Lin (2001b), "[s]ocial capital contains resources (e.g., wealth, power, and reputation, as well as social networks) of other individual actors to whom an individual actor can gain access through direct or indirect social ties" (p. 43). An example of accessing a resource through a direct tie is an individual asking his friend to lend him his car (i.e., the friend's personal resource). More typically, however, resources are accessed through indirect or weak ties. In order to access a certain resource, for example, information about property investment, an individual is likely to approach someone who does not possess the information but who may know someone else who does. As Lin (2001b) points out, "social capital is contingent on resources embedded in direct and indirect ties and [being] accessible through these ties" (p. 44). Thus, brokering can be viewed as the acquisition of social capital since it is dependent on accessing some resource of other individuals through the basis of direct or indirect social ties. Furthermore, Lin's conceptualisation of the relationship between social interactions, resources, and social positions provides insight into the motivations and maintenance of brokering interactions. The following sections review the following aspects of Lin's (2001b) theory: i) principle of homophily; ii) accessing resources; iii) social structure and positions; and iv) relational rationality of social exchanges.

i) Principle of homophily

To explain social interactions, Lin expands on the sociological principle of homophily, which states "that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 416). This principle is supported by numerous studies demonstrating how people are more likely to interact and associate with others who are of the same race, ethnicity, and age in a range of contexts such as schools, neighbourhoods, and work environments (McPherson et al., 2001). In particular, Lin's (2001b) conceptualisation of homophily draws on Homans's (1950) principle of reciprocal and positive relationships as influenced by three factors: interaction, sentiment, and activity. As Lin explains,

> [t]he more individuals interact, the more likely they are to share sentiments and the more they engage in collective activity. Likewise, the more individuals share sentiments, the more likely they are to interact and engage in activities. … In other words, interaction is based primarily on shared emotion. (Lin, 2001b, p. 39)

He argues that the homophilous principle of interaction further implies that individuals who engage in interaction with each other also have similar resources.

Based on this extended understanding of homophilous interactions, Lin (2001b) proposes a triangular structure of reciprocal relationships among sentiment, resources, and interaction. In Lin's modified principle of homophily, interactions influence, and are influenced by, both shared sentiment and similarity of resources. While this model does not assume any particular cause-and-effect sequence among the elements, Lin (2001b) emphasises that "individuals whose positions are situated closer to each other in social structures are more likely to interact" (p. 39). In contrast, heterophilous interactions, where individuals have unequal positions, resources of differing value, and a lack of shared sentiments, are less likely to occur, and if they do, demand greater effort. Lin's argument about homophilous and heterophilous interactions thus points to the challenges in accessing valued resources through weak ties or those with dissimilar positions and resources. These challenges are further explained in Lin's (2001b) discussion of the types of resources and how individuals access them.

ii) Accessing resources through expressive and instrumental actions

Lin (2001b) defines resources as valued goods in a society which typically correspond to wealth, power and reputation. Further, the possession of such valued goods maintains and promotes an individual's self-interest for survival and preservation. He identifies three categories of resources: personal, positional, and social. Personal resources are resources possessed by an individual and may include ownership of material (e.g., money, property) as well as symbolic goods (e.g., knowledge, skills, certification). An individual may acquire personal resources through inheritance or an authorised transfer from one individual to another. Another way of acquiring personal resources is by investing one's own resources of efforts, for example, paying the fees and working hard for a university degree.

Yet another way is through exchange (whether with money or other resources), for example, paying a sum of money for a property. Lin refers to personal resources as human capital—that which is owned by the individual and can be used, transferred, and disposed of "without needing to receive specific authorization or to be accountable to other actors or social positions" (Lin, 2001b, p. 42).

Related to but distinct from personal resources are positional resources. These are specific resources that an individual has ownership of under a contract. For example, an individual who occupies a high position in a hierarchy (e.g., the president of a company) "has the right to control and use the resources attached to that position" (Lin, 2001b, p. 43). While the contract is valid, the individual can exercise power in controlling the resources; when the contract expires or is terminated, so do the rights of access. While positional resources appear to be less permanent than personal resources, the position which the individual occupies is part of a larger social network and the individual or "actor-occupant" derives benefits from other actor-occupants. As Lin (2001b) explains,

> [being] part of a hierarchical structure with authority and linkages offers opportunities for the actor-occupant to have access to other actor-occupants and borrow or exchange resources. In other words, through structural connections, positions in hierarchical structures gain control and use of resources beyond those that these positions are allocated. (p. 43)

According to Lin (2001b), most individuals, however, possess limited personal and positional resources. Instead, they are more likely to access resources through social connections, otherwise known as social resources or social capital.

Lin (2001b) proposes that people access these different resources through two types of deliberate or purposive action: *expressive action* and *instrumental action*. *Expressive action* is motivated by maintaining valued resources already owned by the individual, while *instrumental action* is motivated by the desire to gain additional valued resources. In expressive action, maintaining one's resources requires recognition by others of "one's legitimacy in claiming property rights to these resources or sharing one's sentiments" (Lin, 2001b, p. 45). Expressive action can also be construed as instrumental in that it is goal-oriented in seeking to solicit sentiment and support. However, the action is primarily expressive in that there is no action required beyond the recognition or acknowledgement of one's resources or sentiments.

Lin (2001b) gives an example of a mother expressing to another mother affection for her children, where "the act of communicating serves as both means and goal; [the other party is] expected to sympathize and empathize with [the individual] and to appreciate and reciprocate [his/her] feelings, thereby recognizing, legitimizing, and sharing [the individual's] claims to their resources" (p. 46). For the mother, her expressive action maintains her right as a mother to express love for her personal resource (i.e., her offspring), with the expectation that the other party will be in agreement with such sentiment. Furthermore, since homophilous interactions operate on the basis of shared sentiments, expressive actions are more likely to take place within homophilous interactions. As Lin (2001b) explains, the more similar the resources of two (or more) parties, the more likely it is that those parties will have mutual empathy and share a common concern for maintaining each other's resources. Parties in homophilous interactions are thus more likely to be socially equal and enjoy satisfying social interactions that encourage reciprocal actions of resource maintenance.

In contrast, instrumental action requires differences in resources between parties. The resource-poorer party is driven by the desire to seek and gain additional resources and hopes to "trigger actions and reactions from others leading to more allocation of resources to [himself or herself]" (Lin, 2001b, p. 46). The argument follows that an individual is more likely to gain additional resources if he/she engages in heterophilous interactions, where others have dissimilar resources. However, Lin (2001b) points out that the normative tendency is for individuals of similar resources to engage each other, as engaging others of dissimilar resources requires both parties to make greater efforts in producing the interaction. The effort is greater not only because one is interacting with someone who is different in terms of resources, but also, a person with more highly valued resources is more likely to occupy a higher hierarchical position in society. Thus, the occurrence of heterophilous interactions for instrumental action requires "a greater degree of agency to overcome the normative homophilous pattern of interaction" (Lin, 2001b, p. 51).

Lin (2001b) further explains that since there is a "mismatch between instrumental action and normative patterns of interaction, … [there is a need to understand how] instrumental action becomes successful through social capital" (p. 59). To do so, Lin proposes a theory of social capital in which social structure is constituted by homophilous and heterophilious interactions and relations, and allows access to and use of resources not necessarily in each individual's possession. According to Lin's (1982, 2001b) explanation of social structure, the relative strength or social connections or ties, as well as the positions that individuals occupy in the structure, influence whether instrumental action takes place in homophilous or heterophilous interactions.

iii) Social structure and positions

In a precursor to Lin's (2001b) theory of social capital, Lin's (1982) theory of instrumental action posits "a social structure consisting of a network of persons whose positions are rank-ordered according to certain normatively valued resources such as wealth, status and power" (p. 132). The structure assumes a pyramidal shape in terms of accessibility to and control over such resources, and so a position nearer to the top not only has more valued resources, but also greater accessibility to the lower-ranking positions.

Lin (1982) then offers two propositions to explain how instrumental action is achieved. One proposition is the strength-of-positions proposition, which states that the level of the initial position is positively related to social resources. In other words, those whose initial positions are relatively high are more likely to access better resources, compared to those whose initial positions are relatively low. The other proposition is the strength-of-ties proposition, which builds on the homophily principle. Where ties refer to frequency of interaction and intensity of relationships between individuals, "strong ties characterize the intimate social circle of individuals with similar characteristics and weak ties characterize the infrequent interactions and peripheral relationships among dissimilar individuals" (Lin, 1982, p. 134). Following Granovetter's (1973) argument that it is advantageous to use weak ties to access valued resources, the strength-of-ties proposition states that weak ties rather than strong ties tend to lead to better resources. Comparing the two propositions, the strength-of-positions proposition specifies the advantage of being in a higher initial position, while the strength-of-ties proposition specifies weak ties as being "optimal for instrumental action, even if one's initial position is relatively low" (Lin, 1982, p. 134).

However, Lin (1982) points out that weak ties have an insignificant impact on attaining better resources for those who are in initially higher positions. Lin argues that as one's position moves closer to the top of the social structure with fewer similar occupants, there is a greater advantage of using strong ties to reach positions with similar or better resources, since weak ties may merely link one to those occupying lower social positions. Conversely, the greatest effect of weak ties should occur when one's initial position is very low.

In articulating his theory of social capital, Lin (2001b) reiterates that "as one's position in the hierarchical structure moves toward the upper ceiling, the homophily principle rather than the heterophilous principle becomes more effective" (p. 73). Thus, Lin argues for an additional proposition, that being in relatively higher positions and having strong ties with those in similar positions allow individuals to access social capital that is similar or even better than one's own. This is illustrated in Lin's example of a bank president who occupies a high-level position and interacts with other highly positioned individuals. When the bank president wishes to obtain some valued resource, he/she is more likely to interact with similar others who have different types of resource (e.g., power instead of wealth), rather than with dissimilar others who are in much lower positions and with much less valued resources. Conversely, for an individual in a relatively low position in the pyramid structure who is surrounded by a greater number of occupants in similar low positions with less valued resources, instrumental action is more successful by using weak ties or heterophilous contacts.

While Lin (2001b) recognises that instrumental action can be affected by the more or less fixed social positions that individuals occupy, he highlights that it is also influenced by the relationship between interacting partners. Even if one has better resources, he/she may not respond to the individual's desire to gain access to them "if their relationship does not reflect normative reciprocity, trust, and mutual obligations" (Lin, 2001b, p. 66). Lin (2001b) further explains that instrumental action can be explained by either *transactional* or *relational* rationalities. Transactional rationality favours optimal outcomes (i.e., gains of economic capital and related symbolic goods) over the relationship, and instrumental action from such a perspective tends to be episodic and short-term. Relational rationality, on the other hand, favours "the maintenance and promotion of the relationship even when the transactions are less than optimal" (Lin, 2001b, p. 151), and encourages persistent relationships. It is relational rationality, Lin (2001b) argues, that offers a more satisfactory explanation for asymmetrical instrumental action, especially when it is repeated over time.

iv) Relational rationality of asymmetric exchanges

Lin (2001b) explains that as interacting partners become aware of the inequality between the resources one has command over, they will need to assess each other's willingness to engage in the exchange. While those seeking more or better resources stand to gain, being resource-poorer, they need to consider what the resource-richer partners might want in return. Conversely, the resource-richer partners need to consider whether the seekers "can reciprocate with meaningful resources to add to their already rich repertoire of resources" (Lin, 2001b, p. 47). To explain the motivations behind asymmetric exchanges, Lin uses the analogy of the creditor-debtor relationship. Lin (2001b) describes how the resource-richer partner or creditor gains social capital in maintaining the relationship by holding on to the possibility of calling on the resource-poorer partner or debtor to repay the debt:

> But so long as the creditor does not make such a demand, the debtor is perpetually indebted to the creditor. To be able to maintain the relationship with the creditor, the debtor is expected to take certain social actions to reduce the relational cost (or increase the utility of exchanges) for the creditor. (Lin, 2001b, p. 151)

The social actions that Lin refers to include social recognition of the exchange between the two parties (i.e., making it known that the creditor has provided resources to the debtor), and giving social credit to the creditor, such as telling others (through social ties) about his/her indebtedness to the creditor. For the creditor, the recognition of his/her ability or willingness to suffer a transactional loss for others reinforces the legitimacy of his/her resources and position. At the same time, the enhanced value of the creditor's resources offers incentives for engaging in further unequal or asymmetric social exchanges, thereby enhancing one's social capital. Thus, acts of social recognition, as Lin (2001b) explains, are necessary on the debtor's part for maintaining the relationship, and hence, accessing future exchanges with the creditor.

2.5.3 A Cultural Concept of G*uanxi*

Lin (2001a) further elaborates on the importance of relational rationality using the Chinese concept of *guanxi*, defined as:

> enduring, sentimentally based instrumental relations that invoke private transactions of favors and public recognition of asymmetric exchanges. Guanxi takes on significance in a society where social standing (e.g., social relations themselves and social recognition of one's placement in the web of social networks) is deemed valuable for actions. (Lin, 2001a, p. 159)

The sentimental basis of *guanxi*, explained by Lin (2001a), and also discussed in Smart (1999), is derived from the Chinese custom of forming familial social relations based on shared identities (e.g., classmates, work colleagues) or shared life experiences (e.g., being from the same home town, attending the same school years apart). Such insider relations (as opposed to relations with outsiders or unrelated others) resemble family relations in that sentiment and loyalty are at the core of the relationship. Members of these relationships "perform instrumental activities for one another, but payback in kind is no longer expected" (Lin, 2001a, p. 155).

As (Lin, 2001a) explains, when one party renders a favour for the other, there is no expectation of that favour being returned immediately, and any reciprocal gesture "can never match or be seen as a 'payment' for the favor rendered … [but] merely reflect deference and gratification on the part of the favor seeker for being granted a favor by the giver" (p. 157). The proper payback expected of the seeker is to enhance the giver's reputation in their social networks, that is, recognising the giver for his/her ability to render favours. It may also be the case that both parties are able to provide favours to the other, but are still bound by the need to propagate indebtedness or owing favours in order to sustain the relationship or *guanxi*. Thus, *guanxi* is built on the mutual understanding that transactions are imbalanced, and that these imbalanced transactions reinforce the significance of the relationship rather than the value of the favour or resource that is provided.

While Lin's (2001a) explanation of *guanxi* is directed at understanding social networks more broadly in Chinese and other similar societies, Smart (1999) suggests that elements of *guanxi* are also present in personal friendships among the Chinese. He cites various studies which observe that interpersonal relationships in immigrant Chinese communities often have both instrumental purposes and the expressive function of emotional support. Smart (1999) further contends that while instrumental and expressive facets of friendship are not incompatible in either Chinese or Western contexts, the difference is that Western friendships emphasise the expressive dimension, while Chinese friendships involve obligations such as "high levels of reciprocity, and expectations of assistance" (p. 125). He gives an example of an American academic in China who noted how her Chinese colleagues cultivated friendships with her as "an investment of social capital …, [that is, as] a way of achieving options for their professional lives" such as securing sponsorship for emigration (Beaver, 1995, p. 34, as cited in Smart, 1999, p. 124) .

Although other scholars on Chinese culture such as Yang (1994) view friendships as "more disinterested, less instrumental, and ethically purer than *guanxi* relationships" (p. 111, as cited in Smart, 1999), Smart (1999) maintains that the boundaries between instrumental and expressive intents in Chinese social relations are often ambiguous. He surmises that participants in Chinese interpersonal relationships "may receive instrumental utility as well as emotional satisfaction from their relationships, as long as the principles of reciprocity and the non-subordination of the relationship to the utilities are maintained" (Smart, 1999, p. 132).

2.5.4 Summary of Theoretical Perspectives of Brokering

Thus far, the review of theoretical perspectives has provided an understanding of brokering as bridging gaps in social structure (Stovel et al., 2011) by accessing social capital through social ties (Lin, 2001b). More specifically, brokering can be thought of as instrumental action, arising from the need to acquire more or better resources, in contrast to expressive action or the maintenance of resources already in one's possession (Lin, 2001b). Since brokers possess better resources, they are typically those who occupy higher positions in a hierarchical social structure. In contrast, resource-poorer seekers are those in lower positions and engage in brokering through weak ties or heterophilous interactions (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 2001b). If seekers occupy higher positions initially, brokering may be more effective through strong ties or homophilous interactions. However, homophily being the normative interactional pattern, it is those in lower positions who need to use greater effort to engage in heterophilous brokering interactions. The resource-poorer seeker needs to consider what the broker may want in return, while the resource-richer broker needs to consider what the seeker has to offer. Furthermore, brokers in homophilous interactions may also wish to consider whether there are reciprocal benefits.

One way to overcome the challenge of an imbalanced exchange between seeker and broker is through the propagation of social indebtedness, as explained by the principle of relational rationality (Lin, 2001b). In exchange for valued resources from the broker, the seeker promotes the reputation of the broker, thus enhancing the broker's social capital and his/her ability to provide valued resources. The Chinese concept of *guanxi* exemplifies how instrumental action is sustained in this manner in society more broadly (Lin, 2001a), as well as in Chinese interpersonal relationships (Smart, 1999).

In this research context, international EAL students can thus be thought of as seekers of valued resources related to academic learning, by engaging with brokers who are in relatively higher positions and thus possess greater resources, within a hierarchical structure of academic knowledge and skills. While the brokering interaction is an imbalanced instrumental exchange of valued resources, the principle of relational rationality or *guanxi* explains how seekers can reciprocate with expressive action such as enhancing the brokers' reputation, in order to maintain the instrumental exchange. The following section reviews studies that investigate the phenomenon of brokering in cross-cultural contexts in relation to this research's concern with the informal academic learning in a culturally unfamiliar environment.

2.6 Brokering in Immigrant Contexts

The literature which refers to brokering as a means of informal learning in immigrant contexts highlights the common phenomenon of newcomers to English-speaking countries seeking to understand a new language and culture. The phenomenon of informal language assistance has been termed *language brokering* by Tse (1995, 1996), defined as "interpreting and translating performed by bilinguals … without special training" (Tse, 1996, p. 486). Often, it is the bilingual immigrant children who function as language brokers for their parents who have limited English language skills (Hall & Sham, 2007; Morales, Yakushko, & Castro, 2012; Perry, 2009; Tse, 1995, 1996). In the context of bilingual classrooms, bilingual children have been found to engage in language brokering for their classmates (Angelova, Gunawardena, & Volk, 2006; Coyoca & Lee, 2009; Gort, 2008).

2.6.1 Language Brokering in Families

In Tse's survey studies of US high school students from Latino families (Tse, 1995), as well as Chinese and Vietnamese immigrant families (Tse, 1996), she found that child brokers translated and interpreted for their parents and other members of the community (e.g., teachers, neighbours) in a wide range of daily settings. For example, the children translated notes and letters from school, job application forms and bank documents, and also acted as interpreters during interactions in public places such as the post office and restaurants. As child brokers become well-informed through a variety of everyday scenarios, Tse (1995) views them as "conduits of information and opportunities" (Tse, 1995, p. 191) who serve as important resources for bridging the host and immigrant communities. At the same time, however, because of the high degree of trust parents place in their children for interpreting important communication, child brokers may be making decisions independently from their parents, which may not be in the latter's best interests (Tse, 1995, 1996).

Hall and Sham (2007) also raised issues arising from the dependence parents have on their children for language brokering in their research on immigrant

Chinese families in the UK, all of whom operated take-away restaurants. Based on an 18-month long period of interviews with both parents and children, the authors highlighted that the child brokers may not always provide accurate or unbiased translations. In one family situation, the son deliberately misinterpreted what was said in order to avoid conflict in a tense encounter between his parents and the customer. In another situation, the daughter did not fully reveal what was communicated between the fire inspector and her parents, but instead offered a modified version to her parents to prevent them from worrying, and provided appropriate answers to the inspector in order to satisfy his query.

Morales, Yakushko, and Castro (2012) similarly highlighted tensions in family relationships in their multiple qualitative case study of six Mexican families in the US. The authors found that while parents expressed pride in their children's translating and interpreting skills, they were worried about their own limited English skills and being unable to perform their roles as decision-makers for the family. Children also expressed negative feelings such as frustration and being emotionally burdened in sharing their parents' responsibility to meet the basic needs of the family due to their parents' lack of communication skills.

The studies on language brokering in families thus reveal the dilemmas of brokering based on intimate relations. On the one hand, the immediate availability of children appears to expedite the process of understanding a foreign language in everyday affairs. On the other hand, the reliance on children as brokers may limit parents' agency in decision-making.

2.6.2 Language Brokering in Classrooms

In studies on English–Spanish dual language programmes in the US[2] (Angelova et al., 2006; Coyoca & Lee, 2009; Gort, 2008), authors found that students who had language skills in both English and Spanish often assisted their classmates with understanding classroom instruction or materials in either language. In Angelova, Gunawardena, and Volk's (2006) study on a first-grade classroom where either Spanish or English was the medium of instruction, the authors highlighted the importance of bilinguals who code-switched between Spanish and

[2] The dual language programme in these studies aimed at integrating native English speakers and native Spanish speakers with the goal of developing their second language (L2) learning, that is, Spanish as an L2 for English speakers and English as an L2 for Spanish speakers. While native English-speaking students were born in the US, native Spanish-speaking students came from Latin American countries such as Mexico and Puerto Rico. There were also bilinguals who had advanced knowledge of a second language (English or Spanish).

English to help their English-speaking classmates carry out class activities. For example, during a Spanish lesson, Beatríz, a bilingual student from Puerto Rico, took the initiative to correct her classmate Lori's (a native English speaker) inaccurate expression of a Spanish phrase. Similarly in Gort's (2008) study of students' writing activities in a first-grade dual language classroom, bilinguals students were involved in spontaneous peer interactions. During a Spanish writing workshop activity, for example, a student, Jeremy, approached his classmate, Barbara, for assistance with writing words or phrases in Spanish.

In Coyoca and Lee's (2009) study which analysed the brokering interactions that took place in a second-grade dual language classroom, the authors proposed a typology of brokering to better understand the interactional processes involved. The authors' typology conceptualised brokering according to the directional process, as well as the points of initiation, as summarised in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1. Typology of Brokering Interactions

Brokering process	**Definition**	**Point of initiation**	**Definition**
Unidirectional brokering A→B (Most common)	A student asks for assistance and it is given, or a student offers assistance and it is received.	Brokee-initiated (Second most common)	A student (A) requests assistance from another student (B) due to a lack of comprehension, miscommunication, or misunderstanding.
		Broker-initiated (Most common)	A student (A) offers assistance to another student (B) on his/her own initiative.
		Other-initiated (Least common)	A teacher or peer asks a particular student (A) to provide assistance to another student (B)
Reciprocal brokering A ←→ B (Least common)	Students request help in exchange for assistance in another domain	Brokee-initiated	
Distributed brokering A→ B, C, D A← B, C, D (Second most common)	A student asks for assistance among many, or many students broker for one person.	Brokee-initiated or broker-initiated	

Note. Adapted from "A Typology of Language-Brokering Events in Dual-Language Immersion Classroom," by A. M. Coyoca and J. S. Lee, 2009, Bilingual Research Journal, 32(3), pp. 265–266. Copyright 2009 by the National Association for Bilingual Education. Adapted with permission.

In terms of directionality, the authors' findings revealed three different types of directional processes: i) *unidirectional brokering* where the direction of the assistance starts from one individual and is directed to another individual (the most common); ii) *reciprocal brokering* which refers to brokering services that are bartered or exchanged for linguistic or content knowledge that takes place in the context of an established relationship (the least common); and iii) *distributed brokering* where the direction of brokering assistance is directed from one student to many students, or from many students to one particular student (the second most common). In terms of points of initiation, a common type of brokering interaction was *brokee-initiated* where the student sought assistance from the broker. A more frequent interaction was *broker-initiated* where assistance was offered by the broker on his/her initiative. The authors also identified *other-initiated* interactions where a student was told to broker (i.e., provide assistance) by a teacher or another peer who is not the brokee, although this was not as frequent as the previous types.

In conjunction with the typology, Coyoca and Lee (2009) used positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) (as explained earlier in the chapter) to further understand the dynamics of brokering interactions. The authors not only identified different episodes of brokering (or what the authors call brokering events), but also showed how the accumulation of directional processes and points of initiation demonstrated the complex dynamics involved in brokering. This is seen in an example involving Chad, a Spanish L2 learner, and Lily, a bilingual speaker. At the beginning of the school year, the brokering relationship between Chad and Lily was largely unidirectional, where either Chad asked Lily for assistance (brokee-initiated) or assistance was directed from Lily to Chad (broker-initiated) in helping him to understand Spanish in order to participate in class activities.

While broker-initiated assistance was usually accepted by Chad, there were times when the authors found that Chad resisted being positioned in the brokee-role. For example, during a brokering event later in the school year, Chad displayed his resistance to Lily's positioning of him as an incompetent Spanish speaker. While Lily initiated brokering assistance by telling Chad to underline a particular Spanish word in a text, Chad subsequently claimed that he was able to identify another Spanish word independently, thus pronouncing his competence in the language. When Lily responds by asserting her greater proficiency in Spanish, Chad then points out that Lily is not as competent in Math, and then subsequently asserts his greater expertise in Math compared to Lily. The exchange ended with Lily's acceptance of Chad's conclusion that Lily is better in Spanish while he is better in Math. With this new understanding of their respective expertise, Lily then initiated a brokering request by asking Chad to help her with Math, demonstrating also how reciprocal brokering is achieved in this instance. The example thus shows how shifts in directionality and points of initiation in brokering interactions reveal the dynamic nature of brokering between brokee (or seeker) and broker.

The literature on language brokering thus far has contributed to an understanding of brokering as an informal but complex activity involving the translation of written and verbal communication done by bilinguals in family and classroom contexts. The complexity of brokering is seen in the tensions arising from particular roles or positions imposed by brokers on those seeking brokering assistance. Thus, brokering has the potential to be a double-edged sword in providing benefits for the seeker, as well as limiting his/her agency in demonstrating competence.

2.6.3 Literacy Brokering

Perry's (2009) study focused on a particular aspect of language brokering she refers to as *literacy brokering*, and provided a heuristic for understanding how various types of knowledge are embedded in texts and practices in an unfamiliar language and culture. Literacy brokering is defined as "a process of seeking and/or providing informal assistance about some aspect of a given text or literacy practice" and brokers are those who "bridge linguistic, cultural, and textual divides for others" (Perry, 2009, p. 256). Perry (2009) views literacy brokering as a complex activity involving not only the literal translation of word meanings but also explanations of underlying cultural meanings, and the genre aspects of printed texts. In short, literacy brokering involves unpacking the various meanings and implications of unfamiliar texts and practices encountered on an everyday basis.

In her ethnographic study of three Sudanese refugee families in the US, Perry (2009) documented how family members helped one another understand and interpret written genres such as letters and other kinds of texts from school, as well as digital genres such as webpages that contained hyperlinks, dialogue boxes, and icons. For example, the children often brought home a variety of genres such as homework, library books, permission slips, order forms, and newsletters. The children would then "help their parents gain access to important information about school literacy practices" (p. 269). In one family, for example, as the son presented his mother with a permission slip for a class field trip, he made comments in Arabic and included the English words ‘field trip form’, thus naming the genre and alerting his mother to the purpose of the form. On another occasion, as the son handed his mother a stack of notes and flyers, he commented that it was important for his mother to read them, thus alerting his mother to the value of those particular texts. These examples show how it is not enough to understand the meaning of the words in a text, but also the expected response to the text.

In another example, one of Perry’s participants, Viola, needed help to use the computer to apply for jobs, and received informal help from her new American friends. These brokers explained to Viola how to open computer programs by clicking on icons, type in the website address, and use hyperlinks to locate information. Children were also important brokers in helping their parents use the computer and navigate the internet. As the children regularly used computers in schools, they were able to help their parents perform digital tasks such as setting up an email account.

Perry (2009) also found that brokering frequently occurred when the parents encountered particular genres with which they had little experience before coming to the US, such as yearbooks, sewing patterns, phone books, crossword puzzles, coupons and unsolicited mail. One example regarding a document related to a sweepstakes programme in the US demonstrates how such genres can be relatively complex to navigate. A couple from one of the families approached Perry to provide advice about financial documents the family had received in the mail, a matter which they considered important and were only willing to speak to someone they could trust. These financial documents were actually a letter with accompanying forms soliciting readers to enter a sweepstakes programme. The husband’s name had been inserted in these forms and the letter suggested that the husband was likely to win a million dollars. As neither the husband nor wife was familiar with how the sweepstakes programme worked in the US, and because they did not know how to interpret such a letter, they took the statement at face value. Perry subsequently explained to the couple how the programme worked, pointing out the misleading language used in the documents, and also the unlikelihood of winning the money. As this example illustrates, without cultural knowledge regarding the sweepstakes programme in the US, without the experience of receiving unsolicited mail, and without the knowledge of the particular language used in such mail, the Sundanese couple could not make an informed decision about this particular text.

Based on her findings, Perry (2009) proposed a heuristic to understand how various aspects of knowledge are involved in literacy brokering. The heuristic is presented as a diagram which features overlapping areas of knowledge used in literacy brokering (see Figure 2-1). According to Perry's diagram, the three broad areas of knowledge can be said to be:

i) Genre knowledge which is concerned with text features, purposes, uses and organisation ("written genre knowledge");

ii) Linguistic knowledge related to elements such as vocabulary and syntax ("lexico-syntactic and graphophonic knowledge");

iii) Sociocultural knowledge related to cultural knowledge, beliefs, values, and expectations ("cultural knowledge").

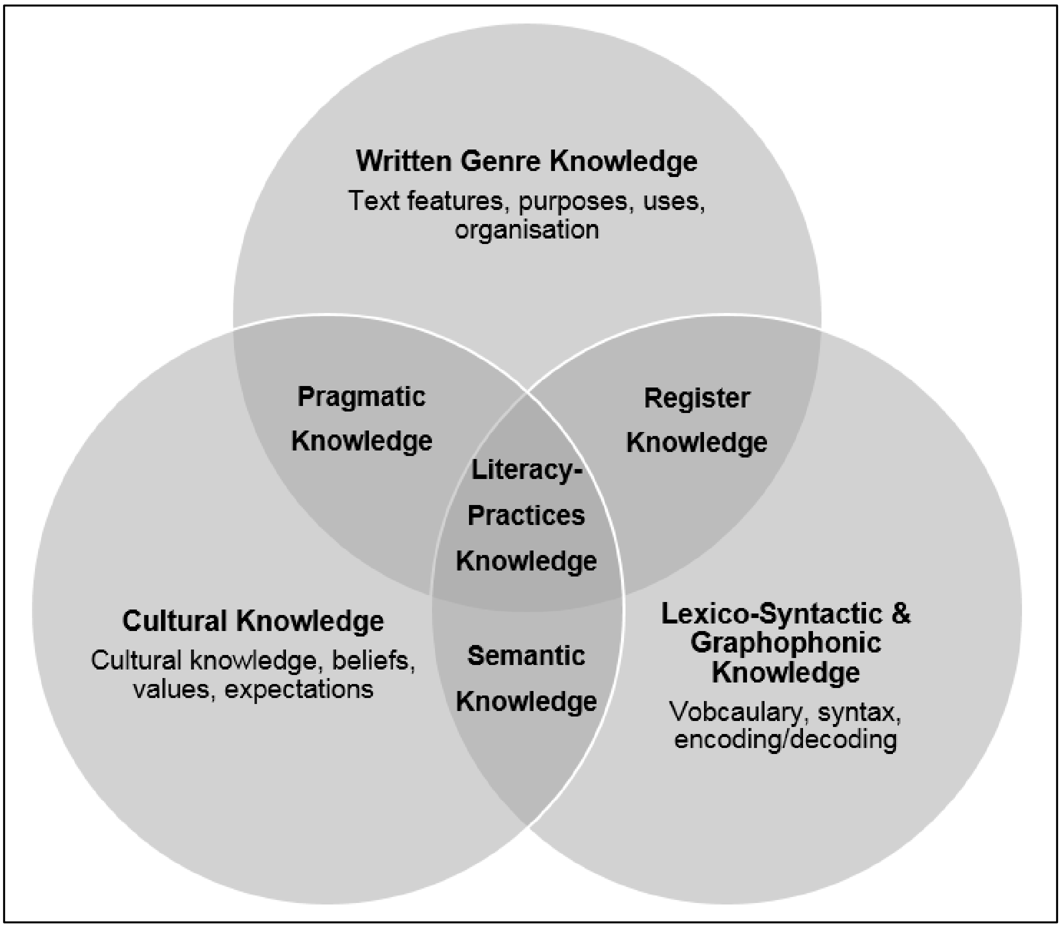

Figure 2-1. Aspects of knowledge adults needed to engage in literacy practices. From "Genres, Contexts, and Literacy Practices: Literacy Brokering among Sudanese Refugee Families," by K. H. Perry, 2009, Reading Research Quarterly, 44(3), p. 271. Copyright 2009 by International Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

These broad areas further comprise overlapping sub-sets of knowledge, namely, register knowledge (genre and linguistic), semantic knowledge (linguistic and sociocultural), and pragmatic knowledge (sociocultural and genre).

As the literature on language and literacy brokering has shown, brokering takes place through strong social ties such as those with family and friends, and meets immigrants' everyday communication needs in their host society. While brokers perform an important function in assisting seekers with understanding various aspects of knowledge in a new linguistic and cultural environment, the tendency for unidirectional brokering may have implications for the seeker's agency in terms of expressing one's competence. Perry's (2009) heuristic on literacy brokering further articulates three types of knowledge involved, that is, genre knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and sociocultural knowledge.

2.7 Summary of Conceptual Framework

The preceding review in Sections 2.2–2.6 has provided a conceptual framework for understanding agency in informal academic learning through brokering. As much as agency is mediated through language and discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999), agency is constrained in an environment that imposes particular regimes of language (e.g., having to use English with native speakers), but promoted in particular spaces that enable students to deploy linguistic resources and skills (e.g., using one's native language with others) (Blommaert et al., 2005). In the context of international EAL students, agency further involves reframing their academic competence as developing a repertoire of social practices rather than possessing a set of fixed skills or successful enculturation to the norms of the academic institution. In acknowledging their perspectives and personal resources as legitimate tools for meaning making (Lillis & Scott, 2007), one can look to how students engage with academic learning outside formal instruction, otherwise referred to as informal learning.

As informal learning is influenced by social relations and social networks, EAL students' engagement with linguistically and culturally unfamiliar texts and practices is exemplified in the notion of brokering, as both a sociological concept and a social phenomenon. A sociological perspective highlights how brokering bridges gaps between dissimilar spaces in terms of language and culture, with the broker having the ability to provide valued resources to those who seek them (Stovel et al., 2011). In addition, brokering can be understood through several sociological concepts: accessing social capital through strong and weak ties; engaging in instrumental action within a hierarchical structure of social positions; and maintaining brokering relationships through expressive action such as the recognition of the broker's claims to resources (Lin, 2001b). Within cultural contexts where social relationships are relied on for instrumental purposes (e.g., Chinese culture), the concept of brokering is further informed by the notion of *guanxi* or sentimentally-based social relations that involve subtle exchanges between favours and social recognition (Lin, 2001a; Smart, 1999).

As a phenomenon in immigrant or similar cross-cultural settings, international EAL students' brokering practices may involve *language brokering* where brokers informally translate everyday texts and communication (Hall & Sham, 2007; Morales et al., 2012; Perry, 2009; Tse, 1995, 1996), such as classroom materials and activities (Angelova et al., 2006; Coyoca & Lee, 2009; Gort, 2008). Brokering may be initiated by the students or brokers, and, while typically unidirectional, may also involve reciprocal brokering (Coyoca & Lee, 2009). In addition, the heuristic of *literacy brokering* provides an understanding of the particular types of knowledge, namely, genre, linguistic, and sociocultural (Perry, 2009), that students may encounter in seeking brokering assistance with various academic texts and practices. For example, students may seek help in translation or interpretation of academic information and texts (linguistic knowledge), understanding the expectations of assignments (genre knowledge), as well as deciding on appropriate responses to academic tasks (sociocultural knowledge).

In sum, I define informal academic learning through brokering as engaging in help-seeking interactions about academic texts and practices encountered in the English-speaking academic institution. Brokering takes place outside the boundaries of formal instruction through social interaction where the EAL student seeks assistance from brokers who have access to valued resources related to the seekers' academic needs. In referring to the student, I use the term *seeker*, rather than *brokee*, to emphasise the students' initiation of seeking help from brokers. I also refer to the engagement in help-seeking social interactions as *brokering practices*; the interactions between the seeker and broker as *brokering interactions*; and the relationships between the seeker and the broker as *brokering relationships*. Thus, in examining international EAL students' agency in their informal learning, this research aims to investigate the nature of academic-related brokering practices among international EAL students, by examining their brokering interactions and brokering relationships. With this research aim in mind, a review of empirical research on similar informal learning activities is presented in the next section.

Part Three: Brokering Practices among International Students

2.8 Empirical Research on Brokering in Higher Education

While the term *brokering* is not widely used in research on academic learning, several studies nonetheless allude to the concept of brokering in terms of informal help-seeking interactions among peers. The review of empirical research was based on studies that examined how EAL students sought assistance with academic practices that were linguistically or culturally unfamiliar to them, through their social interactions with peers and others. In addition, these interactions took place outside the formal instructional environment, that is, outside of lectures, tutorials and other prescribed lessons, in higher education settings. While the term *brokering* was used as one of keywords in the search process, the limited use of the term warranted related keywords such as *informal learning*, *help*, *assistance*, and *social interactions*. The other keywords used in conjunction with *brokering* were *peers*, *academic learning* and *academic literacy*. During the search process, relevant results suggested other keywords to be included in subsequent searches such as *writing advice* and *advice giving*.

The review below discusses empirical studies alluding to the concept of brokering in the context of international EAL students in higher education settings, or more generally in informal learning settings. The studies reviewed pertain to the following aspects of brokering: i) mode of brokering interactions; ii) brokering with similar others; iii) brokering using social networks; and iv) brokering strategies and limitations.

2.8.1 Mode of Brokering Interactions

In studies on informal peer learning interactions, brokering was found to occur in face-to-face settings such as one-to-one conversations and meetings, as well as in technology-mediated settings such as online email discussion boards (Goodwin, Kennedy, & Vetere, 2010; Krause, 2007) and mobile phone text messaging (Goodwin et al., 2010). While both studies provided insight into how technology was utilised for informal learning, the respective studies also reported the specific circumstances or reasons that prompted students' preference for technology-mediated interactions over face-to-face interactions or vice versa. In Krause's (2007) survey of almost 500 university students from a single discipline across three undergraduate year levels, she found a significant relationship between the incidence of technology-mediated interactions and student achievement. Students who indicated that they did not cope well with their studies reported more frequent email and online discussion activity with peers than those who were satisfied with how they coped with their studies. While those who were coping well appeared "to capitalise on opportunities for face-to-face social engagement, … [s]tudents who report[ed] being overwhelmed with their study workload may [have] use[d] online communication for a number of reasons, including perceived lack of time or feelings of intellectual or social inadequacy within their peer group" (Krause, 2007, p. 313). In addition, international students were found to engage in academic-related peer interactions to discuss areas they had difficulty with significantly more than domestic students, but made greater use of technology-mediated interactions on a regular basis.

Goodwin et al. (2010), on the other hand, found that participants had a greater number of face-to-face than technology-mediated interactions, preferring face-to-face interactions for ease of working together, and viewing technology "as a fall-back option if face-to-face interaction [was not] possible" (p. 389). Where technology-mediated communication was used, there were also specific reasons for using one over the other. Based on a small sample of Architecture students (13 students), the authors gathered information about students' informal learning interactions using a range of data collection tools: a questionnaire, twice-weekly reports from participants about their out-of-classroom interactions with other classmates over a ten-week period, and follow-up interviews with selected students. The authors found that although mobile phone text messaging was the most frequently used mode of communication, typically to arrange face-to-face meetings, it was also considered by participants as a more appropriate communication channel "between classmates who [were not] very well acquainted", as compared to using instant messaging with well-known acquaintances. Email, the next most commonly used technology-mediated communication, was used to disseminate information but not considered to be useful for maintaining ongoing conversation about some academic topic. The findings of Krause (2007) and Goodwin et al. (2010) thus indicate varied reasons for students' choice of using technology-mediated communication tools, with Krause's (2007) study suggesting a greater use of technology-mediated communication by international students.

The use of technology-mediated interactions for informal academic learning was also found in studies examining students' use of social networking sites such as *Facebook* (Gomes, Berry, Alzougool, & Chang, 2014; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009; Vivian, Barnes, Geer, & Wood, 2014; Vivian & Barnes, 2010). In an online survey of first-year undergraduates at a British university, Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) found that students were active users of *Facebook*, using the social networking site to maintain existing social relationships as well as to establish new ones as they commenced university studies. In terms of using *Facebook* for learning purposes, such usage occurred more frequently towards the end of the semester, coinciding with assignment deadlines and examinations. The authors reported that almost half (46%) of the respondents stated that they used *Facebook* to informally discuss academic work with other students on a daily or weekly basis and nearly a quarter (22%) did so on a monthly basis. As reflected in the open-ended sections of the survey, informal academic learning comprised activities such as contacting other classmates to organise group meetings for academic project work, and making queries related to revision and coursework. However, when asked to respond to the statement '*Facebook* is helpful to my academic life', only 22% of respondents agreed while 29% neither agreed nor disagreed, 32% of respondents disagreed, and 18% strongly disagreed, thus reflecting "the fact that students login to *Facebook* far more frequently for social rather than academic purposes and see it predominately as a social tool, not an academic one" (Madge et al., 2009, p. 149).

While Madge et al. (2009) did not consider international students in their sample, two related studies (Vivian & Barnes, 2010; Vivian, et al., 2014) included this particular demographic, and provided some insight into the use of communication technologies for informal academic learning among international students. In the study by Vivian and Barnes (2010), an online questionnaire was completed by more than 800 undergraduate and postgraduate students at an Australian university; 20% identified themselves as being of a non-English speaking background (NESB), and just over 12% as international students (Vivian & Barnes, 2010). This study reported that while social networking sites such as *Facebook* were frequently used among all students for informal academic learning, another significant communication tool was instant messaging applications offering real-time text transmission over the internet (e.g., *MSN*). The authors also found that international and NESB students used a range of communication technologies (i.e., social networking sites, instant messaging applications, mobile phone text messages, voice calls) for informal academic purposes, significantly more than domestic students.

In a follow-up study, Vivian, Barnes, Geer, and Wood (2014) observed the public use of *Facebook* for informal academic-related activity among 70 students, of which approximately a fifth were international students. The authors found that participants initiated or responded to topics such as experiences of engaging with course content and levels of motivation, and tended to have more of such activity during the time when assignments were due. However, the authors noted that as this study was concerned only with participants' public activity on *Facebook*, participants who did not demonstrate any academic activity on the social networking site may have used private messaging applications to discuss academic matters as suggested by the findings in Vivian and Barnes (2010).

A study by Gomes, Berry, Alzougool, and Chang (2014) provided further insight into international students' use of online social networks. The authors conducted seven focus group sessions to find out about the activities and communication tools international students used in their social networks. While *Facebook* was the most used social media as indicated by more than 77% of the participants, students from Mainland China tended to use Chinese social media such as *Weibo* and *Renren* as these websites or applications allowed them to communicate in their native language. While the study did not report the use of private applications as highlighted earlier (Vivian et al., 2014; Vivian & Barnes, 2010), it is likely that international students from China also used an instant messaging application known as *WeChat*, an online communication tool popular among Chinese youth, as pointed out by several studies (Sandel & Ju, 2015; Zhou, Hentschel, & Kumar, 2017).

Thus, while the preceding studies highlight the potential use of social networking sites among international students for informal academic learning, private messaging applications appear to be more salient for academic-related discussions (Vivian et al., 2014; Vivian & Barnes, 2010). In addition, particular groups of international students such as those from China may use culture-specific online applications that allow them to communicate in their native language with other users.

2.8.2 Brokering among Peers

Studies of academic-related brokering practices of international students have noted how students typically approach those who share similarities with themselves, that is, co-nationals or other international students. While several studies have examined the general academic needs of international students, reporting how international students sought assistance from peers regarding various academic tasks such as interpreting and completing assignments (Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), other studies have examined the specific area of academic writing (Che, 2013; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011).

Li, Clarke, and Remedios (2010) examined the perceptions of 13 tertiary students from Mainland China about their out-of-class, peer-group experiences at two Australian universities. Through in-depth individual interviews, the authors found that students initiated peer groups to address their queries about academic assignments. Although students interacted with students from Australia and other nationalities in their classes, these peer groups were exclusively homogenous, that is, group members were all Mandarin speakers, either from China or ethnic Chinese from other countries. The analysis of these groups revealed that students initiated such groups to ask each other questions related to their individual assignments, or clarify their understanding about a common assignment. In addition, students "not only checked [their] answers with each other, but also shared their thinking about how they reached the solution" (p. 107).

In a study examining the academic-related functions of peer networks of four international, undergraduate students at another Australian university, Wakimoto (2007) found similar informal group formations among the four students. Through multiple methods of semi-structured interviews, diary entries by participants over a period of one week, and follow-up interviews based on these diary entries, the author found that participants often sought academic support from co-national (i.e., those from the same country) peers living in the halls of residence, rather than from domestic students they interacted with in their classes. Again, language and culture was an underlying reason for these peer interactions. One of the participants, Kate, for example, studied with other Malaysian students whom she frequently interacted with in the same hall of residence. Another participant, Hassan, found it advantageous to study with other Malay-speaking students from Malaysia in clarifying his understanding of various academic matters.

While Li, Clarke, and Remedios (2010) and Wakimoto (2007) highlighted the preference for peer brokering interactions based on a common language or culture, Montgomery and McDowell (2009) focused instead on international undergraduate students' interactions and relationships with other international students from different countries. Based at a UK university, the research comprised observations, group discussions and individual in-depth interviews with a social group of seven international students who were indirectly linked to each other. The authors noted that the students used their friendships with fellow international students to support their study and learning, while their interactions with domestic students were regarded by participants as superficial as they felt "they had little in common and were not part of each other's social groups" (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009, p. 458).

Participants reported getting help with practical aspects of academic work such as handing in assignments, assistance with proofreading, and discussing aspects of their work with others. Two participants, Xan, a male Indonesian student, and Pei, a female Chinese student, referred to initiating study groups to discuss aspects of lectures and assignments they did not fully understand. Xan further shared how he was deliberate in selecting friends who could help him achieve his particular study goals, for example, choosing not to approach his friend who appeared to be failing his course, and approaching another whom he felt shared similar academic motivations. Not only were such brokering interactions purposefully set up, they were also reciprocal. Arin, a male Italian student, revealed that he was conscious of how he and his friend benefited from the academic support they provided each other, for example, by studying together and helping each other prepare for exams. The authors also noted that Xan, an academically accomplished student who achieved the highest marks among his friends, was approached by his peers for help as he was regarded as "a source of knowledge and academic support for others" (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009, p. 461).

2.8.3 Brokering through the Lens of Social Theories

Montgomery and McDowell's (2009) study further highlighted how brokering occurs through students' social networks. The authors considered the mutually supportive relationships among these international students as part of a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where "movement toward full participation [in this community of international students] is supported by other members … and previous knowledge and experience is passed between 'old-timers' and 'newcomers'" (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009, p. 463). The authors noted how old-timers "passed on information and experience which they have gained themselves … [through] an information initiation of newcomers to the group, carried out to spare the new students the difficulties experienced by [themselves]" (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009, p. 461). Conversely, newcomers actively sought out information and support from other international students who had been in the UK for longer than themselves. These supportive brokering relationships were further attributed to a strong group identity as international students, as captured in one participant's comment: "… when we come here, the first thing we remember is that all of us are the international students, and the problems we are facing are all similar …. We always feel we are the international students, and we must help each other" (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009, p. 462).

The concept of community of practice is further extended in Zappa-Hollman and Duff's (2015) study on a cohort of Mexican undergraduate students who spent up to a year at a Canadian university. In particular, the authors used the notion of *individual network of practice* (INoP) which captures all the social ties reported by a given individual, and is represented by the following elements: *ties* in terms of whether these connections to others are weak or strong; *node*, which is the individuals with whom a person connects; *clusters*, the labels grouping nodes of the same kind; and *core*, the individuals whose INoP is represented. From their research involving a series of interviews with participants and examination of participants' writing logs about their academic challenges and how challenges were overcome, the authors reported how three case study participants' INoPs influenced their learning of a new academic culture.

In the case of Liliana, her INoP had eight clusters (or social groups), 25 nodes (or key people) and 45 ties (or social connections). One particularly significant cluster was her Mexican friends, some but not all of whom were also fellow study-abroad students. In that cluster, a key node was Natalia, who was tied to Liliana in multiple ways, and hence a multiplex node. Natalia was Liliana's best friend at their Mexican university before commencing her study abroad programme in Canada, her roommate in Canada, her classmate in six classes, and the group-work partner on several occasions. Because they spent a considerable amount of time together, Natalia was also a strong tie. In terms of understanding the new academic environment, Natalia and Liliana became each other's brokers by doing homework together, "work[ing] jointly to interpret assignments prompts, shar[ing] notes, and exchang[ing] resources" (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015, p. 346), mostly in the medium of Spanish, and at times a mixture of Spanish and English. Liliana also sought similar brokering assistance from other Mexican students such as Salvador, who was also a multiplex node but a relatively weaker tie; he came from the same Mexican university and was enrolled in the same subject as Liliana at the

Canadian university, but was not previously classmates with her. As Natalia was not enrolled in that subject, Salvador took the place of Natalia in providing reciprocal brokering through sharing study notes and preparing for examinations together.

In contrast to her brokering experience with Natalia and Salvador, Liliana's interactions with English-speaking Canadian students were usually limited and superficial. Nonetheless, she established friendships with two native English speakers who were her room-mates. One of them, Susan, was an Australian exchange student and socialised with Liliana and her Mexican friends, and consequently, Liliana's "trust in Susan and reliance on her also grew with time" (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015, p. 348). Liliana's trust in Susan led Liliana to approach Susan as a broker in several ways, such as asking her to interpret some of her philosophy readings, and proofread her work; Liliana subsequently incorporated Susan's suggestions for improvements in her writing.

While Liliana's brokering experiences were mostly with native Spanish-speaking Mexican classmates, and, to a more limited extent, native English-speaking roommates, the case studies of Raquel and Isabel demonstrated how native English speakers were more prominent brokers. In Raquel's INoP, there were more diverse clusters including Mexican and international friends. Unlike Liliana, Raquel's close Mexican friends did not provide any brokering assistance, as it was Raquel who was often called upon to provide moral support for her peers. Among Raquel's international friends whom she met in her dormitory and classes, however, there were two whom she approached as brokers on the basis of their native English skills. With one of them, Amanda, a Canadian student who was learning Spanish, there was a reciprocal brokering exchange where Raquel helped Amanda practise her Spanish oral presentations while Amanda proofread Raquel's essays in English. Another broker was Stephanie, an international student from Australia, whom Raquel asked to "teach her new slang words and colloquialisms, correct her pronunciation, and point out her oral or written English mistakes" (p. 352). In the final case study of Isabel, her significant brokers came from group-work partners who were English speakers, and a group of non-Mexican friends, all of whom were weak ties. For example, Isabel called upon native English speakers in the group to check and proofread her writing, and approached a native English speaker among her friends to give her feedback on some of her assignments.

As with previous studies highlighting brokering interactions with co-nationals or fellow international students (Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Wakimoto, 2007), Montgomery and McDowell (2009) and Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) demonstrate a common theme of reciprocity in brokering among EAL students with a strong group identity or multiplex and strong ties, as seen in their studying or learning. Conversely, as evidenced in Zappa-Hollman and Duff's (2015) study, weaker ties such as those with native English speakers did not appear to generate reciprocal action, apart from the exchange of different forms of academic assistance between Raquel and Amanda.

In Che's (2013) mixed methods study on informal peer learning, reciprocity was understood as an exchange based on social capital, that is, friendships and collegial peer relations. Based on the qualitative findings of interview responses, Che suggested that reciprocity was immediate in relationships that were symmetrical, but delayed in asymmetrical ones. EAL students formed symmetrical relationships with ethno-lingual peers in the same course of study who were equally knowledgeable or experienced, and reciprocity took the form of mutual scaffolding and the sharing of information. On the other hand, asymmetrical relationships were formed with native English speakers, usually from extra-curricular contexts such as halls of residence. Che (2013) found that "[t]he more experienced students participated in these social interactions as a favour to their peers [which,] in turn, created a sense of social indebtedness in these peer relationships" (p. 216) Che further suggested that such favours "might eventually be returned by the less experienced peers with information and resources of other forms at a later time" (p. 216). However, her conclusion about reciprocity in asymmetrical relationships was more tentative as there was limited evidence. Nonetheless, Che's study, as with others (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), shows how reciprocity can be an important motivation for brokering through the perspective of social ties and social capital.

2.8.4 Brokering Strategies and Limitations

The reasons behind the choice of brokers are further explored in studies examining how international students obtain assistance with their academic writing, and how brokers' particular expertise, or lack thereof, influence brokering outcomes (Che, 2013; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011). In her mixed methods study of international and domestic EAL undergraduates enrolled in a writing class at a US university, Che (2013) found that EAL students often sought help with their work outside their writing classes, most notably by asking a peer to review their work, and to a lesser extent, by using institutional peer assistance from the writing centre, such as writing fellows (or peer tutors) and consultants, for writing feedback. The preference for informal peer review over institutional peer assistance was attributed to writing fellows not being familiar with the themes of the writing courses or the course materials, meaning they could provide only general advice regarding the content of the assignment. Furthermore, some participants found that it was more productive to discuss possible assignment topics with classmates and other peers because writing fellows were less willing to brainstorm ideas in the early stages of writing.

During informal peer brokering interactions, Che (2013) found that students were generally more concerned with global issues of writing such as structure, organisation, thesis, and logic, rather than local issues such as word choice, grammatical errors, and sentence-level problems. Students' peer brokers "mainly served as a second pair of eyes offering second opinions, supplemental to teacher feedback" (Che, 2013, p. 167). Nonetheless, suggestions on improving local aspects of writing were welcome, especially among international EAL students, who "relied on native speaker peers more for language-focused, local-level feedback and proofreading for correctness of writing, while non-native speaker peers, especially ethno-lingual peers, [provided more of] the 'big picture' and global-level revisions of structure and organisation" (Che, 2013, pp. 169–170).

Che (2013) noted that, on the one hand, EAL students' choice of ethno-lingual peers, that is, those who share both a common ethnicity and language, was attributed to the relatively closer social distance compared to other students, such as classmates from the writing class. The importance of sharing a peer relationship and a common language, otherwise referred to by Che (2013) as social capital, is illustrated in one participant's comment: "Because we knew each other, we speak Chinese, they could be more frank about problems of my essay, and I will not be upset" (p. 171). On the other hand, Che (2013) revealed that EAL students' choice of native speakers was a result of a deficit positioning of themselves as non-native English speakers who were inferior to native English speakers. These native English-speaking brokers came from a variety of social contexts, for example, residential advisors, students from more senior levels of study living in the same hall of residence, and friends known through extracurricular activity on campus. Compared to brokering relationships with ethno-lingual peers, brokering relationships with these native speakers were asymmetrical and unilateral, where "interactions took place on the basis of trust and belief in the expertise of the other person and of respect for their 'authority'" (Che, 2013, p. 201). Participants often commended their native English-speaking brokers, describing them as 'trained' and 'smart' because of their particular major (e.g., in English), and linking their expertise to their nationality, as seen in one participant's comment: "my roommate is American, she fixed my grammar" (Che, 2013, p. 246).

The complex reasons behind international students' brokering interactions are echoed elsewhere (Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011). Nam and Beckett (2011) found peer brokering to be of limited help, and at times well-intentioned but misguided. From their in-depth interviews with five Korean graduate students at a US university, the authors found that while these EAL students were aware of their lack of knowledge and skills in academic writing genres and academic language in general, they did not always utilise the resources provided by their university, such as writing centres and research writing courses that specifically taught academic genres.

One of the reasons for not doing so was attributed to the advice given by Korean peers (students who were at a more senior level of study) who had reported certain negative experiences. These peer brokers suggested that students delay taking the research writing course in order to gain more writing experience so as to get a better grade for the course. However, in the authors' opinion, the research writing course was an important resource in helping students to develop their writing skills in the first place.

Another reason for not using the institutional resources was the limited utility of the services provided by the writing centre. Participants highlighted that the writing assistants were not familiar with their specific field of study. In addition, they had insufficient time to have their papers checked because they often worked on their assignments right up to the deadline. Instead, participants sought out other avenues to address their concerns with academic writing. What appeared to be most useful were privately arranged tutoring services where tutors were either in the same field or study or had some knowledge of the subject area. Apart from these paid brokers, who offered particular expertise, participants also made use of peers, not so much for their expertise in writing, but for their advice on where to access useful resources (e.g., classmates' messages posted on online discussion boards) or their ability to provide useful resources such as writing samples for reference. While participants reported efforts to approach their native English speaker peers, the participants felt that their brokers' assistance was limited to superficial tasks such as proofreading and they often appeared to be too busy to provide much support.

While Nam and Beckett (2011) highlighted the limitations of peer brokering, Séror (2011) demonstrated how peers and significant others provided ideal brokering assistance for international students' writing. In his regular interviews with five Japanese exchange students at a Canadian university over a period of eight months of study, Séror (2011) reported that participants sought out informal brokering assistance as they were not satisfied with instructor feedback on their writing, where there was limited time to engage in discussion about their writing. While instructor feedback was "embedded in a clearly established institutional power relationship which often made it difficult for students to complain about the feedback they received," informal brokering interactions frequently occurred within relationships "where students felt a more equal footing with the person providing the feedback" (p. 128). One of the participants, Naoko, was strategic in her efforts to obtain advice on her writing from a variety of individuals. She approached her Canadian roommates and friends to provide feedback on her writing, discussed possible topics for her assignment with fellow Japanese exchange students, in addition to attending weekly appointments at the university's writing centre. While Naoko reported that she received useful assistance from these various sources, informal peer brokering interactions were preferred over more formal ones at the writing centre as more casual settings allowed her to speak more comfortably and ask more questions.

Another participant, Kaito, acted in a similarly strategic manner, making use of his wide network of friends, "doing everything he could do to maximize his chances of meeting people that could help [him] improve as a writer" (Séror, 2011, p. 133). In one of his brokering attempts, Kaito volunteered himself as an assistant in a research project, thus allowing him to ask for favours in return, a move which the author considered unusual and risky because of the large amount of time Kaito would have to devote to the project outside of this full-time studies. Fortunately for Kaito, his investment in the project paid off, as the Japanese PhD student who had initially recruited Kaito to help with the project subsequently became Kaito's broker by providing extensive feedback on his writing. Two significant examples of the feedback that Kaito received were "the use of different coloured fonts to ask and answer questions in a series of back and forth emails," and using the 'track changes' function in Microsoft Word to "flag deletions and suggest specific changes to the text all while adding comments about the strength of the idea being proposed" (Séror, 2011, p. 134). Thus, in Kaito's unique case, he was able to make use of the expectation of reciprocity to access high-quality brokering assistance from a "senior" peer who was also Japanese and in his field of study.

Séror's (2011) study further revealed the seekers' strategy of using the researcher as broker. The author reported how Naoko "took advantage of [their] regular interviews to ask for advice in the initial planning stages of her paper and inquire about resources [he] felt might be relevant to her [assignment]" (p. 131). Similarly, Kaito approached the author for writing advice on occasion. Such reporting of how participants positioned the researcher as a potential broker is not typically discussed and Séror's (2011) revelations suggest that conducting research on brokering practices may very well prompt brokering approaches, similar to how Perry's (2009) participants approached her for advice on the financial documents they received.

Thus, these studies on seeking informal assistance with academic writing have provided additional insight into the complexity of brokering practices, such as using social capital via ethno-lingual brokering relationships, positioning native English speakers as experts, and the limitations of peer brokers, as well as how the strategic efforts on the part of the seekers can result in highly beneficial outcomes. These insights, however, were gained primarily from participants' interview accounts. Brokering interactions themselves, and in particular, the conversations between seekers and brokers, were not examined. Literature related to conversation analysis and pragmatics, on the other hand, offers conceptual tools to better understand the dynamics of brokering interactions.

2.9 Conversation Analysis and Pragmatics in Brokering Interactions

Concepts from conversation analysis (CA) and pragmatics provide analytical tools to understand brokering interactions. CA concepts address how interactions can be understood in terms of the conversational structure, as well as through interactional strategies. The CA concepts and studies reviewed here are related to epistemic asymmetry, advice sequences, and alignment and affiliation. Concepts from pragmatics address another facet of interactions, that is, the underlying meaning of the language and grammar used by participants. The literature on politeness and face, as well as interactional resources available in technology-mediated settings, are also reviewed.

Conversation analysis (CA) is a method for analysing the organisation of social interaction based on a model of turn-taking developed by Sacks et al. (1974). In Sacks et al.'s (1974) model, speakers or interactants take turns to speak, and each turn is part of a series of turns that can be identified as particular types of sequences. The basic structure of a sequence is "when some current turn's talk projects a relevant next activity, or range of activities, to be accomplished by another speaker in the next turn" (Heritage, 1984, p. 245). For example, in a question–answer sequence, a question by a speaker in the first turn makes it relevant for another speaker to provide an answer in the next turn. Similar expectations feature in other types of sequences, such as invitation–acceptance and request–grant sequences.

2.9.1 Epistemic Asymmetry

Considering brokering involves asking questions or making requests about some academic-related information, knowledge or advice, participants in brokering interactions can be understood as displaying particular knowledge or epistemic stances as seen in the CA concept of epistemic asymmetry (Heritage, 2012, 2013; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). The concept of epistemic asymmetry examines "knowledge claims that interactants assert, contest, and defend in and through turns-at-talk and sequences of interaction" (Heritage, 2013, p. 370). According to Heritage (2013), interactants or participants have their particular epistemic status, that is, their own territories of information, as well as the rights to possess the information and articulate it. Epistemic stance, on the other hand, is the relative positioning of participants as being more knowledgeable, what Heritage terms as a K+ stance, or less knowledgeable (a K- stance), and is expressed through "the design of turns-at-talk" (Heritage, 2013, p. 377). In the general question–answer sequence, epistemic asymmetry is typically featured where the questioner takes on a relatively less knowledgeable stance (K-) and the answerer a relatively more knowledgeable stance (K+).

As with other interactional sequences, accomplishing the question–answer sequence or maintaining epistemic asymmetry is dependent on the performance of *preferred* or positive responses (e.g., accepting one's answer), and minimising *dispreferred* or negative responses (e.g., rejecting one's answer) (Heritage, 1984). Heritage (1984) explains that preferred actions are typically performed straightforwardly and without delay and are supportive of social solidarity. A common way of displaying a straightforward acceptance of an answer is through the use of acknowledgement tokens such as 'Ok' and 'All right' (Park, 2014;

Pudlinski, 2002; Waring, 2007). On the other hand, *dispreferred* actions are largely destructive of social solidarity and when performed, often feature delays, mitigations and accounts to minimise the effect. Delays can be expressed through a pause or prefaces such as verbal markers ‘uh’ or ‘well’; mitigations refer to reducing the severity of some action perceived to be negative; and accounts are explanations for the negative action.

2.9.2 Advice Sequences

The negotiation of epistemic stances or the projection of being knowledgeable can be seen in CA studies on advice sequences (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Park, 2014; Vehvilainen, 2001; Waring, 2007). In a study examining the interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers, Heritage and Sefi (1992) found that mothers often managed interactions “so as to portray themselves, as far as possible, as competent and knowledgeable about the issues they raise” (p. 376). When initiating request for advice, mothers take on a range of knowledge positions, such as using straightforward questions to signal ignorance, managing the requests so as to appear knowledgeable and competent (e.g., requesting confirmation for a proposed course of action), and detailing an ‘untoward state of affairs’ as an indirect means of soliciting advice. In receiving advice, responses can take several forms: conveying acceptance of the advice offered, avoiding acknowledging the advice as informative, and asserting that participants themselves already know or are undertaking the particular advice.

Similar to detailing an untoward state of affairs as a means of soliciting advice, Jefferson and Lee (1981) have found that expressing one’s troubles or *troubles-talk* may do the work of soliciting advice. However, in close relationships such as between family members and friends, troubles-talk may be used instead to elicit emotional reciprocity from the other person. This suggests that displaying troubles-talk may serve a dual purpose, and that emotional reciprocity is relevant in brokering sequences as a means of validating a seeker’s viewpoint or attitude towards some issue.

In studies relating to settings in higher education, advice sequences have been examined in the context of career counselling (Vehvilainen, 2001) and writing advising or tutoring sessions (Park, 2014; Tsai & Kinginger, 2015; Waring, 2007). Vehvilainen (2001) notes that “[a]dvice contains a normative dimension, a recommendation toward a course of action that the advice giver prefers, and it is given with the expectation that the recipient will treat it as relevant, helpful, or newsworthy and accept it. Advice implies that the adviser has knowledge or insight that the advisee lacks" (Vehvilainen, 2001, p. 373). Similarly, in brokering interactions, the broker who dispenses advice is positioned as having particular expertise and knowledge which the seeker lacks.

While asymmetry is inherent in advice-giving, studies such as Park (2014), Tsai and Kinginger (2015), and Waring (2007) have highlighted that advice-giving can be problematic because it is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Waring (2007), for example, explains that the advice-giver "threaten[s] both the positive face (the want to be well-regarded) and the negative face (the want to be free of imposition) of the advisee" (Waring, 2007, p. 368). As the advice-giver or the broker may encounter resistance from the ones seeking brokering assistance, Tsai and Kinginger (2015) highlight that between peers, it is "crucial for the advice giver to wield his/her power [as the more competent person] and also to sustain social harmony" (p. 98).

In exploring how advisors, specifically education counsellors, create a favourable environment for their clients (i.e., students) to accept their advice, Vehvilainen (2001) demonstrated how a *stepwise entry* "allows the professional to fit the advice to the client's perspective, create alignment between the perspectives, and thus minimize resistance" (p. 375). Based on transcriptions of audio or video recordings of 21 episodes of counselling involving seven different counsellors, the author identified two variations of this stepwise entry, one where the student's perspective justifies the counsellor's advice, and a second where the counsellor's advice evaluates the student's perspective. The first variation is a question–answer sequence, often extended to a set of chained questions, as explained below:

> The question is designed to elicit a particular kind of response, and the advice is grounded in this response. The basic structure can be presented as follows:
>
> 1 CO: Question (QU→) (topicalizing or eliciting student's opinion)
>
> 2 ST: Response (RSP→) (confirming or displaying the elicited opinion)
>
> 3 CO: Advice (AD→) (grounded in the view established in the prior turns)
>
> (Vehvilainen, 2001, p. 375)

In the second variation, the counsellor positions the advice evaluating and challenging the student's perspective, in what the author identifies as planning sequences:

> Planning happens through an extended sequence—the core of which is the following stepwise entry structure:
>
> 1 CO: Activation of a problem (PRB→) (eliciting ST's ideas or plans regarding a particular task)
>
> 2 ST: Response (RSP→) (description of plans, ideas, intentions)
>
> 3 CO: Advice (AD→) (commentary turn in which CO evaluates ST's response)
>
> (Vehvilainen, 2001, p. 375)

Vehvilainen (2001) notes that the counsellor typically employs the planning sequences where he/she accepts the student's idea only partially. The counsellor may "complete or correct it, or reject it and provide an alternative … or may also add his/her own additional ideas" (Vehvilainen, 2001, p. 379). The student may produce additional ideas or resist the counsellor's response, which will then lead to the recurrence of the stepwise sequence. Ultimately, the aim of such counselling sessions is to "make [students] explore their own views and act out their own interests" (Vehvilainen, 2001, p. 394).

In peer tutoring contexts, however, where social solidarity plays a more important role than in teacher–student interactions, strategies are commonly used to mitigate the face-threatening act of advice-giving. Waring (2007) highlights the use of accounts in advice sequences, an *account* being "a basis for evaluating the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of whatever is being reported" (Drew, 1998). Waring (2007) argues that accounts in advice sequences are used by the advice-giver to enhance the validity of the advice given, whether immediately after the advice is given, or as a response to the uncertain acceptance of the advice.

In Waring's (2007) analysis of 143 advising sequences from 15 graduate peer-tutoring sessions at a graduate writing centre, she found that first-position accounts were the most frequently utilised in the tutoring sessions, approximately 40 percent of the total number of instances. First-position accounts, as explained by Waring,

> usually identify a problem in the manuscript, and in so doing, invite the recipients to formulate the advice itself as an "upshot" of the problem with which they concur. It is a maximally face-saving strategy designed to avoid the delicate action of advice giving. The overwhelming occurrences of first-position accounts may offer one sort of evidence for the preference for avoiding explicit advice giving. (Waring, 2007, p. 376)

This typical use of accounts is seen in the following extract where the writing consultant, Heidi, begins the sequence by seeking confirmation on the number and gender of the subjects in Lena's manuscript.

1	Heidi:		Um(.) It’s six people>three male three female<
2			right?
3	Lena:		U:h four female, two male.
4	Heidi:	AC→	Okay, I guess ( )>i- i-<it’s hard for me
5			[to figure outwh]ich- ( ) male [( )fe] male( )
6	Lena:		[>all right.<] [◦okay◦.]
7		AD→	So: [shall I sa:y fo]u:r?>okay.<
8	Heidi:	AD→	[(so it’s four)] Y[e a h.]
9	Lena:		[>◦all right.◦<]

(Waring, 2007, p. 376)

Lena, the student, provides the correct information in line 3, which shows how her manuscript gives rise to the misunderstanding as seen in lines 1–3. This ambiguity in Lena’s writing is then used as a basis for Heidi’s subsequent “complaint” (lines 4–5) “which alludes to Lena’s lack of clarity and serves as a problem-account for her forthcoming advice, which she ends up not having to articulate” (Waring, 2007b, p. 376). In lines 6–7, Lena interrupts Heidi to acknowledge her lack of clarity (“all right” and “okay”) and infers Heidi’s advice (“shall I say four”) (line 7). Heidi confirms Lena’s proposed advice in line 8, which is then acknowledged by Lena in line 9. Thus, the broker’s (Heidi) use of account mitigates the face-threatening act of advice-giving, and allows the seeker (Lena) to infer the advice for herself and demonstrate autonomy or competence.

In another peer tutoring study, Park (2014) also highlighted the use of accounts, but in terms of how seekers resisted their broker’s advice. Based on video-recordings of 11 tutoring sessions held by six peer tutors and 11 students at a university undergraduate student writing centre, Park identified the use of stepwise structures in interactions that comprised elements of acknowledgement, contrastive conjunction, epistemic statement, and account. In describing how students (seekers) resisted their tutors’ (brokers) advice, Park (2014) demonstrated how a seeker progressively moves away from accepting the advice within a single turn:

Step 1: Acknowledgment of tutor advice (e.g., “yeah”, upshot, repeat of key terms)

Step 2: Contrastive conjunction (e.g., “but”, “the thing is”)

Step 3: Epistemic statement (e.g., “I feel/think x”)

Step 4: Account for advice resistance

(Park, 2014, p. 367)

The author found that such advice resistance turns were additionally delayed and mitigated with epistemic downgrades (e.g., I don't know).

In response, the peer tutors or brokers reformulated the advice in a stepwise fashion as well, often including a specific example or reason why the advice was valid:

Step 1: Acknowledgment of student concern (e.g., "right", "that's true")

Step 2: Contrastive conjunction (e.g., "but")

Step 3: Specified advice (e.g., reason/example)

(Park, 2014, p. 367)

Like the student's response, the tutor's turn is also delivered with delays, epistemic downgrades (e.g., I think, it seems) and qualifications (e.g., kinda, as far as). Thus, as seen in the stepwise structures of interaction, both seeker and brokers engaged in face-saving acts such as epistemic downgrades, and accounts or justifications for resisting or asserting advice.

While Waring's (2007) and Park's (2014) studies were situated in face-to-face institutional settings where peer tutors or brokers were typically native speakers who were formally trained to carry out their duties, Tsai and Kinginger's (2015) study examined advice sequences in the context of computer-mediated peer response sessions where both seekers and brokers were fellow EAL students, with the broker providing feedback on the seeker's draft writing. The authors found that the asymmetry in power relations was handled differently by seeker and brokers. While seekers made explicit requests for advice and responded with a straightforward acceptance of advice, brokers often offered advice with complimenting strategies so as to mitigate the face-threatening act and establish social solidarity in the peer review sessions. Tsai and Kinginger (2015) point out, however, that compliments were not necessarily helpful to seekers. For example, brokers provided compliments immediately after a negative evaluation of the seeker's writing, thus "render[ing] the negative evaluations confusing and leav[ing] the whole advice sequence ambiguous" (p. 102). In fact, the authors found that seekers appeared to treat compliments as irrelevant, either by downgrading the compliments or not responding to them. Instead, seekers positioned themselves as willing advice recipients by anticipating, as well as straightforwardly accepting the broker's negative evaluations of their work.

The above CA studies on advice sequences thus provide an insight into the dynamics of brokering interactions, highlighting how both brokers and seekers respond to the epistemic and power asymmetry inherent in advice sequences. While seekers may accept their position as less knowledgeable recipients, they may nonetheless exercise their rights to display competence by resisting the broker's advice. Brokers, on the other hand, particularly in peer contexts, appear to be more sensitive to the face-threatening act of advice-giving and actively employ interactional strategies such as accounts, and mitigation through epistemic downgrades and compliments. Thus, the dynamics of brokering interactions can also be thought of more broadly as employing interactional strategies that accomplish particular goals such as demonstrating social solidarity or facilitating cooperation.

2.9.3 Interactional Strategies for Social Solidarity

Social solidarity in interaction can be examined through the CA notions of alignment and affiliation (Steensig, 2013; Steensig & Drew, 2008; Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011), as well as politeness theories in general terms (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and in cultural-specific ways (Gu, 1990; Ji, 2000; Mao, 1994; Pan, 2000). The CA terms *alignment* and *affiliation* address how interactants cooperate with each other (Steensig, 2013; Stivers et al., 2011). While alignment occurs at the structural level of cooperation by accepting the presuppositions of the activity, for example, through the display of preferred turns, affiliation takes place at the affective level of cooperation where responses "match the prior speaker's evaluative stance, display empathy and/cooperate with the preference of the prior action" (Stivers et al., 2011, p. 21). Conversely, disaligning responses take place when participants, for example, initiate a different activity or do not take up any action indicated or implied in the previous turn (Steensig, 2013), while disaffiliative responses may perform actions such as "challenging, reproaching, complaining, criticizing, disagreeing, or the like" (Steensig & Drew, 2008, p. 9). Thus, social cooperation or solidarity is promoted through the aligning and affiliative responses.

While alignment and affiliation are generally thought to be optimal in cooperative action, Steensig (2013) highlights situations where participants disalign while affiliating with their co-participants, for example, when a speaker agrees with the other while simultaneously asserting more rights over the knowledge of what is being assessed, or when a speaker displays affiliation, while at the same time taking issue with the knowledge raised in the previous turn. Thus, "[a]ny analysis of alignment and affiliation should be specific about how preceding actions create something to align and (possibly) affiliate with and about how responding utterances (dis)align or (dis)affiliate" (Steensig, 2013, p. 4).

Cooperative action can be also examined through the use of politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) refer to the use of politeness in interaction as part of the universal concern with face, defined as "the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for him[/her]self" (p. 61). The authors distinguish between negative face and positive face as follows: Negative face is the want that one's actions be unimpeded by others, while positive face is the want to have one's personal traits or goals thought of as desirable. Consequently, the authors argue, there are acts (i.e., what is said or implied) that can threaten one's face and are referred to as *face-threatening acts* or FTAs.

FTAs are thus similar to the CA notions of alignment and affiliation. FTAs related to negative face typically put pressure on the participant to take up some future action. FTAs related to positive face, on the other hand, imply that one participant does not care about the other's feelings, expectations, or desires, for example, through expressions of disapproval, criticism, contradictions, disagreement, and challenge (Brown & Levinson, 1987). As a result, as explained by Brown and Levinson (1987), FTAs are usually avoided or minimised by performing FTAs through redressive action, that is, by performing positive or negative politeness. Positive politeness 'anoints' the face of the addressee "by treating him[/her] as a member of an in-group, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked[,]" while negative politeness conveys one's recognition of the other's freedom of action or right to be unimpeded and is characterised by "self-effacement, formality[,] and restraint" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 70). However, FTAs may be performed without redressive action (or 'baldly') if one does not fear retribution from the other. For example, FTAs occur when both participants "tacitly agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in the interests of urgency or efficiency;]" or where one participant "is vastly superior in power" to the other (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) claims of a universal framework of face as a public self-image that is individually oriented, however, have been criticised by scholars who highlight its incompatibility with non-Western cultures such as Chinese culture. Gu (1990) and Mao (1994), for example, raise objections to the self-oriented wants of the individual, highlighting that politeness in Chinese culture revolves around showing deference to other parties, and argue that negative face has limited presence in Chinese culture. Gu (1990) highlights that in several interactional discourses in Chinese culture such as invitations and making offers, the apparent act of impeding one's freedom by insisting on certain actions is not face-threatening, but instead demonstrates sincerity on the speaker's part. Mao (1994) further argues that in Chinese culture, face is "a publicly negotiated image … [that] revolves around a recognition by others of one's desire for social prestige, reputation, or sanction, … or hinges upon a mandatory acknowledgement of one's role and status in relation to others in any given interaction" (p. 471). Ji (2000), however, views Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework as legitimate in distinguishing between positive and negative face, citing scenarios where

> Chinese people display high sensitivity to negative face … when they ask people they don't know very well for information or to do something for them … [by using] expressions … to soften the following verbal request that is felt to be a potential threat to the addressee's negative face. (Ji, 2000, p. 1061)

While Ji recognises the lack of empirical basis to disregard negative face in Chinese interactions, he nonetheless highlights that the more important issue "is that some politeness phenomena are beyond the descriptive scope of [Brown and Levinson's] framework" (Ji, 2000, p. 1061), and thus better explanations are required for politeness in different cultures.

Pan (2000) offers a contextual approach to understanding politeness in Chinese interactions. While she recognises that face in Asian collectivist cultures is an interdependent rather than individualistic phenomenon, Pan (2000) highlights that whether one regards acts as face-threatening or not "depends upon the type of relationship, situation, and the cultural values attached to the relationship and situation" (p. 12). In terms of relationships, Pan distinguishes between inside and outside relationships where positive politeness is favoured among in-group members (e.g., family, friends) so as to emphasise cohesion and solidarity, while addressing face concerns is not typically seen as relevant when interacting with outsiders whose social attributes are not apparent. In addition to how relationships are mutually defined, the particular goals of the interaction additionally influence whether participants' face concerns are attended to. In situations where unacquainted participants come into contact because of some task they have to complete, for example, in a one-off business transaction, Pan (2000) highlights that the task takes precedence over interpersonal relations.

On the other hand, according to Pan (2000), those who are part of an inside relationship are obliged to acknowledge the social stratification (e.g., status, rank, age, gender) and power differences among members who share a sense of mutual dependence, in other words, obligations within *guanxi* relationships as discussed earlier in section 2.5.3. Pan (2000) explains this mutual dependence as part of a normative cultural practice where “the person in the superordinate position is in some way obliged to take care of and cultivate the person in the subordinate position, and, in turn, receives respect and deference from the subordinate” (p. 150). On the one hand, the superordinate, having greater power, has the option to either display authority or claim solidarity, with both face strategies enhancing the superordinate’s power because he/she is in a position to make that choice. On the other hand, the subordinate who has less power is expected to show respect and deference to the superordinate. Thus, while the subordinate is expected to mitigate potential FTAs against the superordinate, the reverse may not hold true.

Despite the influence of deep-rooted cultural beliefs on politeness behaviour, Pan (2000) highlights that attitudes towards and expressions of politeness evolve according to societal changes. A relatively recent study by Wang (2013) illustrates how the traditional hierarchical relationship between teachers and students may not resonate with contemporary young Chinese as expected. According to Wang, “teachers and students typically have a family-like relationship, though in a dominance–obedience hierarchy” (Wang, 2013, p. 72). The findings of her study on learner characteristics of Chinese students, however, found that students indicated that they were less in favour of having the traditional parent–child relationships with their teachers, for example, by accepting everything that the teacher says.

The preceding literature on the use of politeness in interactional accomplishment thus highlights how maintaining social solidarity in brokering interactions is informed by notions of politeness that attend to one’s positive or negative face. Expressions of politeness are further influenced by the cultural context of participants. The literature on politeness behaviour in Chinese culture illustrates how mutually dependent relationships may foster positive politeness, but also how attention to the face concerns of others is guided by hierarchical relations. More important, however, is that politeness behaviour is a dynamic process that may challenge traditionally held societal values.

2.10 Summary of Empirical Findings and Research Gaps

The empirical literature review has explored various facets of academic-related brokering in higher education settings. While the focus of the research is on international EAL students, it was useful to review studies that refer more broadly to university students' brokering practices, thus allowing a more expansive view, such as understanding technology-mediated spaces for brokering (as seen in the literature on the mode of brokering), and understanding brokering interactions as complex conversations between students and their brokers (as seen in the CA and pragmatics literature on advice-giving).

With regard to international EAL students' brokering practices, almost all studies have identified assignments as the central topic of brokering, although such a focus reinforces a narrow view of academic needs. In choosing brokers, students appear to prefer those with similar ethnic and language backgrounds, or at least those with shared circumstances (e.g., fellow international students), but may also approach those who possess particular expertise such as writing advisors or consultants, and more generally, those who are native English speakers. The reasons for doing so, however, further depend on the particular context and students' perceptions of, and experiences with, brokers. While understanding the interactional dynamics between seekers and brokers was not the focus of studies relying on interview and other self-reported data, examining interactions through CA concepts and politeness frameworks potentially offers a useful lens to understand the dynamics of brokering.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter reports on how I undertook the research to investigate brokering practices among international EAL students based on the following research question and sub-questions:

What is the nature of brokering practices among international EAL students?

1) What aspects of academic learning are brokered?
2) Who are the brokers?
3) Why are these brokers chosen?
4) What are the characteristics of brokering relationships?
5) What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?

I first present my research paradigm which is based on social constructionism, followed by the methodological approach I have chosen. I then explain my research design and the different methods of data collection, as well as highlight the study's ethical considerations. In the last part of the chapter, I detail the process of translating the data, and explain the analytical approaches I used.

Part One: Research Paradigm

3.1 Social Constructionism

As I adopt a view of academic learning as a repertoire of social practices, and a concept of brokering that is embedded in social relations, my research employs a social constructionist paradigm. A constructionist philosophy rejects the positivist assumptions that there is an objective truth, which can be discovered with accuracy and certainty by appropriate methods of inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Instead, it accepts that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essential social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In using the term *social constructionism*, I distinguish it from *constructivism* which "focuses on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 240). Instead, social constructionism focuses on how social reality is produced through social processes and interaction. This is not to say that social constructionism does not recognise individual agency but, instead, views agency as constituted by the social norms and practices made available in and through human interaction (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 1994).

In using a social constructionist paradigm, I recognise that the paradigm draws on various authors from psychological and sociological disciplines at different points in history (Burr, 2003). However, I base my understanding of social constructionism on Gergen (1985), in particular, using the following four assumptions:

i) One should be critical of any objective claim that reality can be understood through observation; instead, our understanding of reality is derived from language used in particular cultural, historical and social contexts.
ii) The process of understanding is the result of people interacting with others in a particular period of time and place.
iii) Specifically, understanding is dependent on the dynamics of social processes such as communication, negotiation, conflict and rhetoric.
iv) Furthermore, this understanding of social reality is intertwined with the full range of other human activities and various social patterns. Particular constructions of reality "thus serve to sustain and support certain patterns to the exclusion of others" (Gergen, 1985, p. 268).

Burr (2003) further highlights important features of social constructionism that stand in opposition to positivist traditions, such as anti-essentialism and anti-realism, language as a form of social action, and a focus on social interaction and practices.

3.1.1 Anti-Essentialism and Anti-Realism

Social constructionism embraces an anti-essentialist and anti-realist ontology which casts doubts on a knowable reality, and rejects anything presented as an objective fact. Since all knowledge is contingent upon particular cultural, historical and social contexts, any perspective is partial "both in the sense of being only one way of seeing the world among many potential ways and in the sense of reflecting vested interests" (Burr, 2003, p. 7). Any construction of reality is thus provisional and contestable. While the relativist stance of social constructionism has been criticised for treating reality as illusory and thus less trustworthy, Burr (2003) points out that social constructionism does not deny the existence of a material world; it focuses instead on how reality is constructed through social interactions. In fact, it is the relativist position that social constructionism takes that promotes its critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, thereby having the potential to challenge oppressive and discriminatory practices, and offer alternative ways of viewing marginalised groups of people and their practices.

3.1.2 Language as a Form of Social Action

The language that people use in communicating with one another is a shared cultural resource. Language not only allows individuals to express themselves, it also performs social actions. As a performative and action-oriented tool, language is an integral part of interaction, used by people for particular purposes such as creating identities, justifying actions and blaming others. The analytical framework of positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), for example, has been used to explain how people in interaction use language to construct positions within available discourses, that is, particular social situations that give rise to recognisable roles and obligations. Social constructionist research thus examines people's social practices and their interactions with one another as the basis for understanding how forms of knowledge or different phenomena are co-constructed by people in interaction.

3.1.3 The Importance of Self-Reflexivity

Since social constructionism regards objectivity as an impossible goal, researchers must recognise their own subjectivity. The research questions they ask, the particular theories they use, and the ways they interact with the research context and participants all arise from their particular historical, cultural and social ways of understanding the world. Furthermore, there is an inherent power imbalance between the researcher and those being researched, where the researcher's account of the research is often the only account, running counter to social constructionism's aim of dismantling self-evident truths. Therefore, as Burr (2003) highlights, researchers need to "acknowledge and even to work with their own intrinsic involvement in the research process and the part that this plays in the results that are produced" (p. 152).

Acknowledging and responding to the researcher's own partial role in the research is referred to as self-reflexivity, a process where researchers "find ways to analyse how subjective and intersubjective elements influence their research" (Finlay, 2002, p. 531). Doing so not only locates the researcher's interpretation as a construction among several (Burr, 2003) but also serves as a criterion for readers to test claims of credibility and integrity in all qualitative research (Finlay, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

In social constructionist research, researchers may demonstrate self-reflexivity by engaging in participatory research. Such research seeks to address the unequal power relations between researcher and participants. People as subjects of research are co-opted as co-researchers by involving them in generating research problems and data analysis. What results is an integration of the participants' accounts of the research as part of a dialogue between researcher and participants. Researchers may also demonstrate self-reflexivity by exploring the dynamics of the researcher-participant relationship during the research process. During interviews, for example, the researcher may seek to understand the positions people take up by examining how both the researcher and the participants are constructed as interviewer and respondents (e.g., Foley, 2012).

While the preceding examples of self-reflexivity are related to research processes, other approaches to self-reflexivity focus on the researcher's self-awareness and self-disclosure (Finlay, 2002; Tracy, 2010). Being self-aware entails researchers being introspective, reviewing how their own biases and motivations, their strengths and weaknesses, have influenced the research process itself. Finlay (2002) distinguishes between *reflection* and *(self-)reflexivity* as being on two ends of a continuum. In the reflection process, the researcher is distancing him/herself as the subject, from the object of reflection, and thinking about it after the fact. The reflexive process, on the other hand, is a lived experience which is "a more immediate, continuing, dynamic, and subjective self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p. 533). While it is impossible to fully experience and to be fully aware in the same instance, it is possible to have a reflexive awareness through an ongoing conversation with oneself in attempting to "capture some of the connections by which subject and object influence and constitute each other" (Finlay, 2002, p. 533).

Finlay (2002) and Tracy (2010) suggest how researchers might practise self-reflexivity during different stages of the research process, through the use of *reflexive analysis* (Finlay, 2002):

i) Pre-research

- Goal: To clarify the impact of the researcher's position and perspective on the research.
- Examine their motivations, assumptions, and interests in the research as a precursor to identifying forces that might skew the research in particular directions (Finlay, 2002)

- Evaluate whether they are well-suited to investigate their chosen sites or topics at that particular time (Tracy, 2010)

ii) Data collection

- Goal: To demonstrate how the data collected have been influenced by the choice of methods and the emerging researcher-participant relationship.
- Reflect on any issue that comes up in the course of data collection (Finlay, 2002)
- Examine their impact on the scene and note others' reactions to them (Tracy, 2010)
- Write self-reflexive commentary in field notes about their own subjective feelings and sense-making (Tracy, 2010)

iii) Data analysis and presentation

- Goal: To make known researchers' personal influences on the interpretation of the research.
- Examine their ambivalent responses during analysis (Finlay, 2002)
- Interrogate their own predilections or opinions and ask for feedback from participants (Tracy, 2010)
- Acknowledge how personal experiences influence and are influenced by the research (Finlay, 2002)

Self-reflexivity, as described above, can be an uncomfortable process for the researcher, but may also be self-indulgent to the point of drowning out the object of the research. Finlay (2002) reminds researchers that reflexive analysis should question the researcher-self only while it remains purposeful to do so. Tracy (2010) similarly concludes that the researcher should aim to integrate reflexive analysis throughout the research report by showing how the information contributes to enhancing readers' understanding of the research context and participants.

3.1.4 Self-Reflexivity in My Research

In my research, I exercised self-reflexivity most significantly during the data collection and analysis stages, aided by the keeping of a research journal (Etherington, 2004; Ortlipp, 2008; Watt, 2007). Writing journal entries involves writing notes about an event or what people have said soon after it has happened, or about the researcher's developing thoughts (Etherington, 2004). My research journal comprised notes and personal reflections about the things that concerned me at various points in the research process. Some of this occurred when writing reports or meeting notes to supervisors, but most of it arose from a personal motivation to capture my thought processes. Like Richardson (2001), I wrote because I wanted to find something out; I wrote in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it. Journalling began as a personal desire to clarify my thinking, and evolved into a more methodical approach during the data collection stage.

The research journal I refer to is thus not a single collection of diary entries, but various notes and reflections, sometimes handwritten, but mostly electronically recorded on the computer. Electronically recording and storing such writing also meant that they were date and time stamped, and searchable. In preparing for reflexive analysis, I returned to these pieces of writing to review and reorganise them, and in the process of doing so, realised the importance of writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2001; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

At the point of embarking on data collection, although I was familiar with the concept of self-reflexivity and understood the importance of journalling, it was only in hindsight that I could see whether and how I was acting reflexively. In fact, without trying to articulate in writing what I was thinking about, it may be that I would not have come to certain decisions about my data collection. St. Pierre arrived at this revelation about writing as analysis: “Thought happened in the writing. ... I doubt I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970). Thus, the regular recording of personal reactions, insights and dilemmas was part of the reflexive process.

I present reflexive analyses later in the chapter when discussing the processes of data collection, translation and transcription procedures, and data analysis. Doing so is not only an appropriate response for a researcher working within a constructionist paradigm, but also a means to demonstrate the trustworthiness of my research (Finlay, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

3.2 A Multi-Methodological Approach

With a constructionist epistemology underpinning the research, I recognise that different methodologies will have different emphases on how social interactions are to be interpreted. In the field of informal learning, studies have predominantly used inductive research methods such as ethnography, qualitative interviewing, and case study (Sawchuk, 2008). However, Sawchuk (2008) points out that studies using these approaches rely on self-reported data and, thus, “[tend]

to presume rather than empirically demonstrate the dynamic inner workings – that is, the active process of accomplishment – of … informal learning" (p. 12). He highlights the strength of micro-analytical approaches in examining the actual social practice, for example, the use of pragmatics and conversation analysis in analysing speech interactions. He contends, nonetheless, that using any one methodology has its limitations, and calls for "a multi-methodological approach given that no single method is at this point able to generate particularly comprehensive accounts of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 14).

In brokering-related studies, Coyoca and Lee's (2009) study exemplifies the use of a multi-methodological approach by combining ethnography with interactional analysis. As part of an ethnographic approach to students' language brokering practices, the researchers observed a cohort of students by conducting classroom observations over a three-year period. Apart from recording field notes, the researchers also made audio-visual recordings of classroom and group activity, which were subsequently transcribed and analysed using discourse analysis. Thus, their descriptive notes about brokering interactions complemented a close-up analysis of the actual practice of brokering.

Similarly, in my research I used a multi-methodological approach combining ethnographic and micro-analytic approaches. My research initially used focused ethnography to gain a general understanding of brokering practices among a small number of international EAL students. This involved conducting regular interviews with 10 students (primary participants) and observing or recording interactions between students and their brokers (secondary participants). Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyse patterns or themes in the data collected from both primary and secondary participants. Of the 10 primary participants, three were key informants who engaged in regular brokering interactions and who, along with their brokers, provided permission for the interactions to be recorded. Subsequently, these three participants and their respective brokers formed the basis of case studies where a micro-analytic approach, conversation analysis, was used to examine details of their brokering interactions. Focused ethnography and case study will be discussed in the following sections, while the analytical methods of thematic analysis and conversation analysis will be elaborated in a later section (Section 3.8).

3.2.1 Focused Ethnography[3]

An ethnographic method was chosen as a means to understand "a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (Creswell, 2012, p. 462). Further, according to Wolcott (1985), the goal of ethnography is to "make explicit and to portray in terms of social interaction among many individuals [from the group, i.e., the micro-culture of the entire group] … what its various members know only tacitly and understand individually" (Wolcott, 1985, p. 193), making ethnography an appropriate choice to answer the overarching research question on the nature of brokering practices among international EAL students.

While ethnography has been traditionally associated with long-term engagement or fieldwork of typically a year's duration or longer (O'Reilly, 2005; Wolcott, 2005), O'Reilly (2005) points out that fieldwork does not necessarily need to be long-term, and the length and degree of engagement are dependent on the research context and the goals of the research. In educational contexts, Jeffrey and Troman (2004) highlight that the institutional context influences the research processes such as the length of the research period and the frequency of site visits and interviews. Instead of limiting ethnographic time to only "a lengthy and sustained period" (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 535), the authors suggest that time can be thought of as *compressed*, *selective intermittent*, and *recurrent* modes of time.

As Jeffrey and Troman (2004) explain, a compressed time mode "involves a short period of intense ethnographic research in which researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month" (p. 538), while a selective intermittent time mode may involve a relatively longer of time (e.g., from three months to two years), but takes on "a very flexible approach to the frequency of site visits [where the] frequency depends on the researcher selecting particular foci as the research develops and selecting the relevant events" (p. 540). Finally, a recurrent time mode is one where temporal phases are the focus of the research. The research "may aim to gain a picture by sampling the same temporal phases [for example, beginnings and ends of terms, or alternatively] sample a regular, predetermined basis irrespective of specific events" (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004, p. 542).

[3] A detailed discussion of the use of focused ethnography in my study is found in Lee (2017d).

Such alternative perspectives of ethnographic time, typically within a time period of less than a year, are captured in what several researchers have termed *focused ethnography* (Higginbottom, Pillay, & Boadu, 2013; Knoblauch, 2005). In the broad context of applied research, Higginbottom, Pillay, and Boadu (2013) describe focused ethnography as investigating specific beliefs and practices held by particular cultural groups "within a discrete community or phenomenon and context, whereby participants have specific knowledge about an identified problem" (p. 2). From a sociological perspective, Knoblauch (2005) views it as a distinctive form of contemporary sociological ethnography that adapts conventional ethnography methods to suit the study of contemporary society "which is socially and culturally highly differentiated and fragmented. … Instead of social groups or fields, studies focus on communicative activities, [or] experiences by communication" (Knoblauch, 2005, para. 2). For example, Gkeredakis, Nicolini, and Swan (2014) conducted a focused ethnography on the nature of decision-making at three organisations by participating in each organisation's meetings, each lasting between two to three and a half hours.

Thus, focused ethnography was adopted as the specific ethnographic approach, in view of several key aspects of my research. Firstly, the research setting was the university where academic-related activity typically takes place within semesters lasting 15 weeks. Secondly, the cultural group of interest was international EAL students, as opposed to a cohort of students or the general university population. Finally, the research question on understanding the dynamics of brokering interactions is best addressed by examining communication related to brokering, such as conversations or meetings between participants and their brokers.

The particular characteristics of the research context and phenomenon of interest have additional implications regarding the data collection methods. Unlike conventional ethnography that employs unstructured interviews and prolonged field visits (O'Reilly, 2005), focused ethnography may involve more structured interviews, as well as intermittent and purposeful field visits. Where participant observations are not practicable, for example, where participants would find it too intrusive or inappropriate, the researcher may use audio-visual technologies in place of observations to record participants' activities (Knoblauch, 2005; Pink & Morgan, 2013), conduct non-participant observations, or not make observations at all (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Morse, 2007).

The use of audio-visual recordings, in particular, potentially provides a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time, and allows researchers "to observe specific features or to inquire into certain aspects of the already focused field" (Knoblauch, 2005, para. 27). Thus, focused ethnography can be additionally characterised as having *data intensity*, that is, intensity in the data collection and analysis processes (Knoblauch, 2005), with the close analysis of recordings creating "a depth of data and immersion" (Pink & Morgan, 2013, p. 353). Pink and Morgan (2013) further highlight the benefit of data intensity, or using audio-visual recordings within short periods of time. They point out that researchers are "intervening in peoples' lives in new ways that are intensive, potentially intrusive, and involve asking what they might think are irrelevant questions, [n]one of which is sustainable over longer periods of time" (Pink & Morgan, 2013, p. 353).

3.2.2 Case Study

Considering the intrusive nature of requesting access to participants' personal communications, I anticipated that such data would only be available from a few participants. These participants can be thought of as key informants, typically those who have deep knowledge of the research topic and are able and willing to communicate such knowledge to the researcher (Marshall, 1996; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). In the context of a focused ethnography which takes place within a relatively short period of time, the willingness of these key informants to communicate and co-operate with the researcher become all the more important (Marshall, 1996).

Thus, I used an additional methodological approach, case study, to examine the dynamics of brokering interactions between key informants and their brokers; that is, a key informant and his or her respective brokers formed the basis of a single case study. Case study can be understood as "both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry" (Stake, 2000, p. 436). Stake (2000) distinguishes between two types of case study, *intrinsic* and *instrumental*. While the intrinsic case study is in itself of interest "in all its particularity and ordinariness", the instrumental case study is examined "mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw generalization" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). The type of case study in this research is instrumental as the purpose of understanding the dynamics of particular students' brokering interactions was to gain insight into the nature of brokering practices of international EAL students as a wider group. As brokering practices, and more generally, informal learning, constitute a relatively under-researched phenomenon in higher education, using case study was also valuable for "refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation" (Stake, 2000, p. 448).

Part Two: Research Design

3.3 Research Setting and Sampling

The research was conducted at a university in New Zealand which, at the time of data collection, had approximately 2000 international students making up approximately 15 percent of the student population. International students are defined as those of non-New Zealand nationalities on a student visa who are enrolled in study programmes at the university. International students' prior educational experiences may take different forms. While some commence tertiary study overseas soon after obtaining a high-school qualification in their home country, many international students at this university were engaged in a period of study prior to enrolment, such as English language or university preparation courses. Like other universities in New Zealand, this particular university offered English language and academic bridging programmes that were targeted at international students. In addition, the university had international partnerships with universities in China and other locations. For example, students who were part of the Bachelor partnership programme would complete two years of English language and foundational studies in China, and two years at the university.

My target sample of participants was international students for whom English was an additional language (EAL), and who were enrolled in a tertiary level programme, excluding pre-sessional programmes such as English and academic bridging programmes. In addition, considering that the initial period of study is where adjustment challenges are the greatest (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998), the target timeframe of the research was students' initial academic semester, a period with potentially significant help-seeking or brokering activity.

As an academic semester is a relatively short time period of 15 weeks, I considered it important to reach my target number of participants early in the semester, instead of allowing participants to be recruited mid-way through or later in the semester. Thus, in order to maximise the number of students recruited in a short space of time, I adopted purposive sampling by recruiting participants from individual subjects or papers that international students typically enrolled in, as well as through less formal ways. As I intended to conduct regular individual interviews over the course of the academic semester, I aimed at recruiting 10 participants, as 10 was a number that could be practically interviewed in two to three week intervals. If there were insufficient data to answer the research questions by the end of the semester, I planned to recruit additional participants in the subsequent semester.

3.4 Participant Recruitment

In preparing to recruit my participants, I considered my familiarity with the research context and target participants. In qualitative research, the issue of familiarity is often discussed in terms of whether the researcher is an insider or outsider (Merriam et al., 2001). While insiders are members of particular social or cultural groups or those who hold specified social statuses such as ethnicity, gender and age, outsiders are non-members (Merton, 1972). Ethnographic studies often emphasise the value of an insider's perspective in portraying an authentic view of the social or cultural phenomenon (Adler & Adler, 1987; Clifford, 1986; Fetterman, 2010). Adler and Adler (1987) further distinguish among three insider membership roles: i) the peripheral member who participates as an insider but refrains from engagement with the group under study; ii) the active member who participates in the core activities but does not commit to the values and goals of group members; and iii) the complete member who has prior membership or has converted to membership in the group.

Such perspectives of insider membership nonetheless reinforce an unproblematic notion of the insider as offering authenticity and therefore validity to the research. Merton (1972), in fact, makes clear that we are all both insiders and outsiders, "members of some groups and, sometimes derivatively, not of others" (p. 22). He refutes any validity claims of what he terms *insider doctrine*, that one must be one in order to understand one. He argues that based on structural terms, the sheer number and variety of group affiliations and statuses distributed among individuals in a society results in a small number of individuals having precisely the same social configuration. Clifford (1986) further reminds us that any representation of culture is inherently partial:

> If "culture" is not an object to be described, neither is it a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal and emergent. Representation and explanation—both by insiders and outsiders—is implicated in this emergence. (p. 19)

Merriam et al. (2001), for example, show how various researchers' positionings of themselves as insiders and outsiders serve to promote or constrain access to participants in both predictable and unexpected ways. One of the authors, Ming-Yeh, was a doctoral researcher and had no problems recruiting Taiwanese Chinese participants based in the US, as she belonged to the same community. However, on many occasions, eliciting her participants' comments about their major life events led them to "demonstrate their expertise based on seniority" (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 408), thus prompting her to consider the implications of the power dynamics created by the differences in age and status between her and her participants. Thus, researchers' own reflexive understanding of how they position or construct themselves in relation to their participants becomes more important than simply claiming greater validity on the basis of being an insider.

In terms of understanding the research subject of international students, I considered myself an insider as I was a former English teacher in China where my students were enrolled in preparatory programmes for overseas study. Furthermore, I was an international student myself, and therefore shared with participants the common experience of studying in an unfamiliar environment. However, as a newcomer to New Zealand with limited personal and professional connections, I felt I was an outsider to the research site. In order to familarise myself with the academic environment of the university, I contacted the gatekeepers of the papers from which I wanted to recruit my participants. These gatekeepers included administrators, paper coordinators, and lecturers. I arranged to meet them in person as far as possible in order to find out in detail what their classes were like, as well as understand the background of their international students. Doing so helped me reduce my sense of being an outsider and increased my confidence in approaching potential research participants as a more knowledgeable insider of their learning context.

Approval to conduct the research was obtained from my university's Faulty of Education Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A) in accordance with the regulations set down by the University of Waikato (2018). I approached and obtained permission from the heads of faculty departments at the research site to recruit participants from four papers taught at two social science faculties (two from each faculty). These papers were to be taught in Semester A, the first semester of the academic year. As the administrators and lecturers of the papers informed me that there would be a range of nationalities among the international students, I did not target any specific nationality and prepared the research-related documents such as information sheets and consent forms in English. I also put up notices about my call for participants at the two social science faculties to increase students' awareness of my research (see Appendix B).

Recruitment of participants from the papers took place at either the beginning or the end of lectures. During the five-minute presentation I introduced myself and the purpose of my research, and invited international EAL students to a research information session where I would explain my research in more detail. As I was also conscious of making meaningful connections with my potential participants, I referred to myself as a Singaporean, a former English teacher and now a PhD student, who was interested in researching students' learning. In my presentation slides, I included photos of myself with former students, and displayed photos of myself with my PhD colleagues who were fellow international students. As I was aware of my perceived higher status as a PhD student, I intended to create the impression that I was warm and approachable, as well as being an insider as a fellow international student.

Apart from the formal call for participants, I also engaged in informal means to increase my chances of recruiting participants. While waiting to enter the lecture venue to make my presentation, I initiated conversations with students who were also waiting outside the venue. Many of the students were Chinese and I spoke to them in Mandarin. I was conscious of being friendly and approachable and hoped that my interaction with them would encourage them to respond favourably to my call for participants during the lecture. Three of those with whom I had informal conversations were among those who agreed to participate in my research. I also attended academic orientation events in anticipation of interacting with international students. At one orientation activity, I chatted with two Chinese female students who later agreed to be my participants. One of them also invited her friend to take part in the research, this being the only instance of snowball sampling.

The recruitment and research information sessions took place in mid-February 2016 over a period of two weeks, at the end of which I had 10 participants whose details are summarised are in Table 3-1 (participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms). Apart from one exchange student, participants were full-time students. Unsurprisingly, the majority of participants were of Chinese ethnicity. While this could be attributed to the large majority of Chinese students in two of the papers I recruited from, it may have also been an unconscious but mutual affinity between myself, a Chinese Singaporean, and those of Chinese ethnicity.

Table 3-1. Summary of Participants' Background

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Nationality	Level of study	Prior educational qualification or experience
1	Linda	Female	Early 20s	Mainland Chinese	Postgraduate diploma First semester	Bachelor degree from a public university in Mainland China; IELTS[a] in Mainland China
2	Kim	Female	Early 20s	Taiwanese Chinese	Postgraduate diploma First semester	Bachelor degree from a private university in Taiwan China; English language programme in New Zealand
3	Josh	Male	Early 20s	Malaysian Chinese	Honours year First semester	Bachelor degree from a private university in Malaysia (where the medium of instruction was English)
4	Jane	Female	Early 20s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree First semester	Completed 18 months of a study abroad programme at a private university in Mainland China
5	Sarah	Female	Early 20s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree First semester	Completed 12 months of tertiary level study at a private university in Mainland China; English language programme in New Zealand
6	Henry	Male	Early 20s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree First semester	Academic preparatory programme for university entrance in New Zealand
7	Cindy[b]	Female	Early 20s	Japanese	Bachelor degree First semester	Completed two years of undergraduate study at a private university in Japan; TOEFL[c] in Japan
8	Annie	Female	Early 30s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree First semester	Bachelor degree from a university in Mainland China; English language programme in New Zealand
9	Kevin	Male	Early 40s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree First semester	IELTS in Mainland China (Participant did not disclose his educational qualifications from Mainland China)
10	Simon	Male	Early 20s	Mainland Chinese	Bachelor degree Second semester	Two-year study abroad programme at a private university in Mainland China as part of a joint programme with a New Zealand university

Note. For university enrolment in New Zealand, the language requirement for most international students from countries that do not use English is an internationally recognised standardised test such as IELTS or TOEFL, or a language preparation programme that is recognised by the university.

[a] IELTS stands for the 'International English Language Testing System' (IELTS Partners, 2017). [b] Cindy was an exchange student taking 100- and 200-level papers. [c] TOEFL stands for 'Test of English as a Foreign Language' (Educational Testing Service, 2018).

3.5 Ethical Considerations[4]

As indicated earlier, ethical approval was sought before the research proceeded, a common practice in research involving humans, particularly when conducted under the auspices of institutional organisations (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Howe & Moses, 1999). In considering ethics in research, protecting individual autonomy, or the right of the individual to make his/her own decisions, is the central guiding principle. In the Kantian philosophical sense, it means that researchers should "treat persons as ends in themselves and never solely as means" (Howe & Moses, 1999, p. 22). However, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) point out the inherent tension between ethics and research, since "[i]n the great majority of cases, research involving humans is a process of asking people to take part in, or undergo, procedures that they have not actively sought out or requested, and that are not intended solely or even primarily for their direct benefit" (p. 271). Nonetheless, this ethical tension can be resolved if participants are able to take up the goals of the research as their own. Thus, one of the key ethical concepts in human research is the notion of informed consent (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Howe & Moses, 1999).

Informed consent is achieved by providing potential research participants sufficient information about the research before they make any decisions about being involved. In my research, I prepared an information letter for participants that included the following information (see Appendix B):

- the various types of data collection methods I intended to use;
- the duration of interviews and the data collection period;
- that I would provide data transcripts to participants for their verification;
- how the information from the research will be disseminated;
- the maintenance of participant anonymity (e.g., by using pseudonyms); and
- that participants could withdraw from the research at any time, as well as the data associated with them (provided I had not already analysed it).

All participants were given a hard copy of the information letter which I explained to them in person during the research information sessions, except in the case of one participant whom I met individually on a separate occasion. During the

[4] A discussion of ethical considerations in my study is found in Lee (in press).

explanation, I provided them the opportunity to ask me questions. The consent form, which reiterated the points about participant autonomy, was signed by the participants who also retained a copy for their reference (see Appendix C). A similar process of obtaining informed consent was also carried out with secondary participants.

The process of obtaining informed consent, as described above, covered the ethical aspects of highlighting potential harm (at least in terms of the type of data collection methods, and how their data were intended to be used), as well as upholding the rights of participants in terms of protecting their identities and their freedom of action. In terms of researcher accountability, both the information letter and consent form contained the names and email address of my supervisors whom participants could contact if they wished. However, such procedural measures to safeguard participants' well-being were insufficient in themselves to ensure that ethics were practised in the research. Rather, it is the "researchers [who] must do the real ethical work in this regard" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 273).

In my research, I faced what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) term "ethically important moments" which made me question whether I was acting with integrity with regards to respecting my participants' rights and particular needs at that point in time. One salient ethical dilemma was related to the very topic of my research. I anticipated that participants, in talking about areas of learning they needed help with, might approach me for assistance. At the outset of the research, I considered that such requests would result in a conflict of interest as I would be involved in the very phenomenon I wanted to investigate, a matter I had raised in my ethical approval documentation. My approved solution was to 'consciously disengage' from being part of the phenomenon I wanted to investigate, for example, by mentioning a university resource that might help participants but to refrain from making suggestions on what they should do.

In practising conscious disengagement I emphasised my role as a researcher, and not as an advisor or counsellor during the research information sessions with participants. To use Adler and Adler's (1987) term, I aimed at being a *peripheral member* who participated as an insider (such as being a fellow international student, as well as sharing a similar cultural background), but refrained from engagement with the group under study. However, the desire to obtain authentic data (that was untainted by my own involvement) did not always fit in well with the dynamics of reciprocity in interpersonal engagement. The ethically important moments that arose from such tensions are discussed later in the section on semi-structured interviews (Section 3.6.1).

3.6 Data Collection Methods

The two primary methods commonly associated with ethnography are observation and unstructured interviewing (Creswell, 2012). Observations and interviews are also often supported by examining documents, records, and artefacts related to the research context (Patton, 2015). As highlighted previously, data collection in focused ethnography is carried out more flexibly than in conventional ethnography, thus, observations may be limited in number or left out altogether, and interviews more tightly structured with specific aims in mind (Higginbottom et al., 2013). With the goal of understanding the dynamics of social interactions in my research, recording such interactions through audio and/or visual means was also important.

My research design took into consideration several important features of the research phenomenon and participants. Firstly, as participants were commencing their academic studies in a new social and cultural environment, they might not readily identify informal learning interactions, let alone the specific aspect of brokering. Also, as Eraut (2004) highlighted about informal learning, brokering is likely to occur spontaneously or be planned with short notice. Thus, maintaining regular contact with participants was important so that I could inquire about brokering practices as they unfolded, and identify potential interactions for observation. I was also aware that participants could be uncomfortable with the intrusive nature of observations, so it was important for me to be able to broach the request for observation with sensitivity.

Thus, considering the issues of participants' unfamiliarity with their own brokering practices, the unpredictability of informal learning, and the potential aversion towards intrusive data collection methods, I sought to create a non-intimidating research environment through regularly scheduled interviews during the course of the semester. Although asking participants to keep a journal about their academic-related interactions would have been a useful data collection method, similar to writing logs used by Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015), I did not do so as I felt that students would already be faced with various adjustment challenges. Instead, during each interview, I asked participants to share any instance of informal learning activity or interaction, and explored with them the possibility of observing their brokering interactions. I conducted follow-up interviews after the observations where possible. If interactions took place via digitally mediated communication (e.g., mobile phone), I adopted digital ethnographic methods to obtain interactional data (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012; Pink et al., 2015). In addition, if brokering interactions were supported with materials, for example, written comments on a participant's draft essay, I requested copies of such artefacts. Participants' brokers who responded to my request for interviews and/or observations were subsequently recruited as secondary participants and provided with a copy of the information letter regarding the research (Appendix D) and asked to sign the consent form (Appendix E).

Data collection took place over two semesters, during Semester A from March to June 2016, and during Semester B from July to October 2016. Table 3-2 outlines my choice of data collection methods, how the method was carried out, and the research questions these methods addressed. In Semester A, 10 primary participants were invited to take part in regular semi-structured interviews. Participants' brokering interactions took place in both physical and digital locations. I observed face-to-face brokering interactions between one primary participant, Jane, and her brokers, and accessed the digital brokering interactions by obtaining copies of message exchanges from Linda and Kim. Where possible, the participants' brokers were also interviewed. Three brokers were interviewed about their brokering interactions with the primary participants concerned, Linda and Kim. Linda's two brokers each participated in a one-off interview. Kim's broker was Josh, who was an existing primary participant. I asked him questions about his interactions with Kim during my regular interviews with him. For brokering interactions that related to written work there were also artefacts such as draft essays annotated by the brokers. Copies of such artefacts were obtained from Linda, Kim and Jane, who had shared reflections on such brokering interactions.

Towards the end of the semester, key informants were identified based on the amount and richness of the data that were associated with them. As I felt there was the potential for more brokering interactions to take place in the subsequent semester, key informants were invited to continue being involved in the research in the same manner as previously carried out. The three key informants, Linda, Kim and Jane, agreed to continue being participants in Semester B. Kim was later unable to participate due to a change in her personal circumstances, but I continued to keep in touch with Kim informally in terms of asking her to comment on my initial data analysis.

Table 3-2. Overview of Data Collection

No.	Data collection method	How method was carried out	Research sub-question (RQ) addressed
1	Semi-structured interviews with primary participants	Used an interview schedule for guiding questions. Conducted individual interviews with each primary participant once every two to three weeks over a 15-week period. Used informal communication channels such as email and text messages to make arrangements for interviews, as well as to ask follow up questions. Audio-recorded interviews.	RQ1. What aspects of academic learning are brokered? RQ2. Who are the brokers? RQ3. Why are these brokers chosen? RQ4. What are the characteristics of brokering relationships?
2	Semi-structured interviews with secondary participants (participants' brokers)	Used an interview schedule for guiding questions. Conducted individual interviews with each secondary participant, mostly only once. Audio-recorded interviews.	RQ1. What aspects of academic learning are brokered? RQ2. Who are the brokers? RQ3. Why are these brokers chosen? RQ4. What are the characteristics of brokering relationships?
3	Observations of brokering interactions between participants and brokers	Used an observation guide for taking field notes during observation. Audio-recorded interactions.	RQ1. What aspects of academic learning are brokered? RQ4. What are the characteristics of brokering relationships? RQ5. What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?
4	Records of brokering interactions between participants and brokers	Obtained screenshots of brokering interactions that occurred through personal communication devices (e.g., mobile phones).	RQ1. What aspects of academic learning are brokered? RQ4. What are the characteristics of brokering relationships? RQ5. What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?
5	Artefacts of brokering interactions	Obtained copies of artefacts from participants.	RQ1. What aspects of academic learning are brokered?

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing is a common data collection instrument in qualitative research, not only to obtain information from respondents but also to allow respondents to share their perceptions of the research topics of interest (Bryman, 2012; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured, with the most common form of interview being individual, face-to-face verbal interactions. In structured interviewing, the interviewer asks all respondents the same set of pre-established questions, often with a limited set of response categories and little room for variation. In unstructured interviews, the interviewer often has one or a few open-ended questions and allows the respondents to respond freely. The latter is often associated with ethnographic interviews and is akin to friendly conversation (Spradley, 1979). Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, blend aspects of structured and unstructured interviews in that they are guided by a set of pre-established questions or prompts but are used flexibly, allowing the interviewer to modify or omit questions, as well as ask additional questions in response to what the respondent shares (Bryman, 2012).

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews so that I could be open to unanticipated aspects of the research topic while keeping the interviews within the scope of the research aims. To guide my interviews, I developed an interview schedule relating to participants' brokering practices (Appendix G). The questions did not use the term *brokering* but approximations such as *helping* and *learning*. For the initial interview, there were more questions about the participants' educational background and impressions about their first few weeks, as participants were unlikely to have had brokering interactions in the early part of the semester.

Each interview lasted around 30 to 40 minutes, and permission was sought at the start of each interview for it to be audio-recorded. Chinese participants were given a choice between using Mandarin and English; four of them chose to communicate with me in English, and five used Mandarin. (I later explain how I interacted with Chinese/Mandarin data in Section 3.7 on being a bilingual researcher.) The interviews were transcribed promptly, usually within two days of the interview, and transcriptions were subsequently provided to participants for verification, as part of the process of member checking to enhance the credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Eight of the participants attended interviews throughout the semester. Among the eight, six attended a total of five interviews each except for Sarah who missed one interview due to a last-minute change of plans, and Jane who attended seven interviews (two being follow-up interviews to observations). The remaining two participants attended interviews only in the early part of the semester; Simon attended three, while Kevin attended two. In response to subsequent requests for interviews, Simon declined, citing other priorities, while Kevin did not respond at all.

I conducted interviews in the spirit of friendly conversation (Spradley, 1979). In the early part of the interview, I typically started with broad questions about what had happened in the past few weeks, or what participants felt was significant about their learning. I would then ask participants to clarify or expand on points I thought were potentially related to the research topic. Based on what participants shared, I identified brokering interactions and asked participants if it would be possible for me to observe those interactions. Most of the time, however, requests to observe interactions were met with various obstacles (which will be discussed in the Section 3.6.2 on observations), and so interviews provided the majority of data in terms of a collective understanding about participants' brokering practices.

Ethical considerations during interviews

i) Personal engagement

As mentioned previously, interviews were regularly scheduled to track participants' brokering practices over time. The regular contact with participants also increased opportunities for both myself and the participants to become more personally involved in the interviewer–interviewee relationship, allowing the expression of emotions and opinions outside the purview of the research topic (Oakley, 1981). Oakley (1981) highlights that this personal engagement between the interviewer and interviewee is not often addressed in research reports since it may be seen as implying biased and therefore less valid data. She, however, criticises the conventional notion of validity as dependent on mechanical and hierarchical perspectives of interviews, where interviewers specialise in asking the questions, while interviewees are passive individuals whose job is to provide the answers. Instead, Oakley (1981) argues that "personal involvement is more than dangerous bias — it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (p. 51).

Gunzenhauser (2006) and Tracy (2010) similarly argue that interviewers or researchers should reflect on their personal engagement with participants as part of the relational ethics of the research process. Tracy (2010) defines relational ethics as involving self-reflexivity, or “an ethical self-consciousness in which researchers are mindful of their character, actions, and consequences on others … [who] engage in reciprocity with participants and do not co-opt others just to get a ‘great story’” (p. 847). Thus, instead of viewing the interview as a mechanical data collection method where the researcher extracts useful answers from participants, the interview can be viewed as a reciprocal exchange that is as beneficial to the participant as it is to the researcher (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Corbin and Morse (2003) suggest several benefits that participants gain from interviews:

- Participants have a chance to share their story in the presence of an attentive listener;
- They are able to seek validation over an issue despite what might have happened to them;
- They desire particular information from the researcher;
- They are able to unburden and there is no one else to whom they can turn to tell their story;
- They hope that telling their story will help others;
- Through talking, they are able to make sense of what is happening to them, in terms of events and emotions; and
- They want to see how a stranger reacts to their story before they tell it to someone closer to them.

Corbin and Morse (2003) further suggest that “a conscientious researcher will try to discern what it is participants are seeking” and explore the possibility of providing it to them (p. 342). Likewise, Gunzenhauser (2006) suggests that the researcher should adopt an attitude of *motivational displacement*, that is, “setting aside his or her own goals to focus on the [participant]; the [researcher] helps the [participant] achieve his or her goals” (p. 625).

Initially, I did not regard such participant-centred attitudes as beneficial to my research. Finding out participants’ needs meant entertaining the possibility of being their broker and influencing their brokering practices, and thus detract from understanding their actual practices without my presence. However, in the course of regular interviews and informal communication with participants, I became more sensitive to their emotional states as several expressed how they felt about adjusting to their new academic environment. As Corbin and Morse (2003) highlight, even when participants “share intimate information, … the researcher gives something in return: a sense of presence or of being with the participant in the story” (p. 342).

ii) Managing interview boundaries

There were several occasions, however, where I found it difficult to exercise motivational displacement. There were times when I identified important brokering interactions that could potentially provide rich data and so was eager to conduct observations. In making repeated requests for observations, however, I inadvertently caused participants to feel annoyed or uncomfortable. For example, during the third interview with Kim, she referred to brokering interactions she had with classmates in a *Facebook* group. When I asked Kim whether I could speak to that particular group of classmates, I noted how her tone and body language changed:

> She hesitated … and showed signs of discomfort, e.g., rubbing neck, facing away from me. (Researcher Journal, 6 May 2016)

Unclear why she was feeling uncomfortable, I explained how I intended to approach her brokers, hoping that I could persuade her to agree. Kim then explained her unwillingness: She did not feel confident interacting with English speakers:

> Yes, uhm, a little bit challenges. Sorry about that. Yeah because ((long pause)) I'm not sure what they are going to say about this. And I think although they are really friendly, I'm still afraid to speak English in front of them. (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

Despite Kim's rejection, I still attempted to persuade her otherwise. Again, Kim declined my request, this time releasing the tension in our negotiation with laughter. It was only then that I finally stopped my line of inquiry:

> Interviewer: Would you be comfortable, let's say for example, before or after the lecture, I'd come and introduce myself and explain to them what I'm doing and see if they would be willing to let me look at the Facebook group?
>
> Kim: ((laughs)) uh ((long pause)) uh ((long pause)) I think it will be a little bit weird ((laughs)) yes, sorry about that. (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

Realising that I had potentially crossed the boundaries of reciprocal exchange, in that I was asking Kim for more than she was prepared to give, I set out to make amends. Later on in the interview, when the topic of the group of classmates came up again, I apologised for my behaviour, to which Kim replied graciously:

> Interviewer: I'm sorry to impose.
>
> Kim: No, that's all right, that's all right. (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

It was also difficult to maintain motivational displacement on occasions when I felt that participants were requesting from me more than I was prepared to give. During my sixth interview with Jane, a few weeks before the end of semester, she asked me a question about referencing. As I noted in my journal:

> … she asked me how to reference a website with no author and no date. She showed me the APA referencing hand-out which was in both English and Chinese. She didn't think that was enough. I hesitated to help her but I could not outrightly refuse her. She was asking me because she tried to get the answer but she could not find a solution based on the hand-out. (Researcher Journal, 16 May 2016)

My conscious decision to disengage myself from a brokering situation resulted in a protracted exchange over a question about the correct referencing of a website with minimal information. After more than five minutes, I finally said I was unable to answer her question and told her to ask her tutor:

> I explained to her that I rarely use website resources, and usually cited book and articles. The truth was that if I really wanted to help her understand how to reference websites properly, I would end up having to dedicate some time to explaining the mechanics of doing so. I did not want to do that because that would put me in a specific role of broker. So I guess I was trying to be helpful without going into the details of teaching her how to do something. (Researcher Journal, 16 May 2016)

I then switched to another topic and continued the interview, and Jane did not raise her question again.

Such moments made me realise that, as much as participants exercised control over what they wished to disclose or allowed the researcher to do, interviews are characterised by an asymmetrical power relation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). As the researcher, I was ultimately in control of the interview and negotiated it to suit my goals as far as I could. Towards the end of the semester, I recognised that I had placed too much emphasis on fulfilling my own agenda, and felt that I needed to be more intentional in managing interviews as reciprocal exchanges. I thus decided to use the final interview as an opportunity to find out whether and how participants benefited from being involved in my research, as described in the next section.

iii) Interview closure

I approached the final interview with each participant as an *exit interview*. Exit interviews are commonly conducted when an employee leaves an organisation (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The questions during such interviews are primarily evaluative; they revolve around why the person decided to leave the job, and what was positive and negative about the working experience. Exit interviews were also conducted again at the end of Semester B with Linda and Jane. In conducting exit interviews with my participants, my aim was to shift the focus from my research goals to the concerns of the participants. I was interested in their motivation for being part of my research and whether the research had benefitted them in any way. In addition to asking the usual questions about their academic learning and brokering experiences as in previous interviews, I did the following:

- I shared with participants my impression of their brokering experiences, and invited them to confirm or disconfirm my interpretation.
- I asked them what prompted them to be involved in my research, and what they had found useful about being involved in my research.
- As a final question, I asked them if they had anything else they wanted to share with me about my research.
- At the end of the interview, I expressed my thanks for their participation.

In giving participants the opportunity to comment on my impressions of them, and by asking them about how the research had affected them, I had hoped to provide a dialogue that focused on their needs. While my participants gave affirmative and positive responses, I recognise that they may have been agreeable in order to be polite, and may have refrained from articulating their honest feelings. Thus, I also recognise the limitations of the exit interview in addressing the issue of asymmetrical power relations. While the exit interview may have been a partial attempt at rebalancing the interviewer–interviewee relationship, nonetheless I hope it provided a considerate but definite closure to the research relationship, releasing them from their obligations to me, and vice versa.

3.6.2 Observations

Observation enables a researcher to see first-hand what is happening in a social setting or during a particular event, rather than making assumptions or depending solely on what participants reveal (Bell, 2010; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) identifies 10 dimensions of observations (and in fieldwork more generally) as seen in Table 3-3: i) role of the observer; ii) insider versus outsider perspective; iii) number of inquirers; iv) degree of collaboration with those being studied; v) degree of disclosure of the observer’s role to others; vi) duration of observations and fieldwork; vii) location of observational inquiry; viii) focus of observations; ix) degree of emergence in the field; and x) degree of topical sensitivity or controversy. In addition, each dimension is thought of as a continuum of variations and options. Patton’s (2015) 10 dimensions can be further categorised into aspects related to observation, that is, the roles of the researcher (1–3), engagement with participants (4–6), and the particular context of what and who is being observed (7–10).

Table 3-3. Dimensions of Fieldwork: Variations and Options along Continua

No.	Dimensions of Observation and its Variations or Options		
1	Role of the observer		
	Participant-observer	Part participant-observer, part spectator-observer	Spectator-observer
2	Insider versus outsider perspective		
	Insider (emic) perspective dominant	Balance	Outsider (etic) perspective dominant
3	Number of inquirers		
	Solo inquiry	Mixed solo and team	Team inquiry
4	Degree of collaboration with those being studied		
	Inquiry directed entirely by the observer	Some involvement of those studied	Highly participatory inquiry
5	Degree of disclosure of the observer's role to others		
	Overt: full disclosure	Selective disclosure	Covert: no disclosure
6	Duration of observations and fieldwork		
	Short, single site visit and rapid reconnaissance	Ongoing over some time	Long term: years
7	Location of observational inquiry		
	On site in physical real-world location(s)	Some real world, some virtual	Virtual world: online
8	Focus of observations		
	Narrow focus: single subject	Multiple subjects	Broad inquiry, holistic
9	Degree of emergence in the field		
	Fixed focus and process: predetermined data collection	Some fixed, some emergent	Highly emergent: open inquiry
10	Degree of topical sensitivity/controversy		
	Straightforward topic: not controversial or sensitive	Some degree of sensitivity	Highly sensitive topic: potentially controversial

Note. Adapted from "Fieldwork strategies and observation methods," by M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th edition, p. 356–357), 2015, Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Copyright 2015 by SAGE College. Adapted with permission.

i) Context of observations

It is useful to first highlight the context of observations before discussing the aspects related to participant engagement and researcher roles. As mentioned previously, opportunities to conduct observations of participants' brokering interactions were explored during interviews over time, and therefore their brokering practices could be said to be emergent. Furthermore, interactions were challenging to observe because of their unpredictability, as well as participants' discomfort at being observed. Brokering interactions were unpredictable because of the way they often occurred spontaneously or within short notice. Even when participants Cindy and Simon gave me sufficient notice of their intended meetings with their brokers (i.e., classmates), these meetings did not materialise. On several occasions, I turned up at the appointed time and place, only to be informed by Cindy that her classmates were not present that day. Simon's intended meetings with his classmate also did not take place because either Simon or his classmate had a last-minute change of plans.

Another challenge regarding observing brokering interactions was the issue of privacy. As highlighted earlier, Kim was uncomfortable exposing her perceived weakness when interacting with English speakers. Other participants, Henry and Annie, felt that their brokers would not be willing to be observed. Henry explained that his classmate "probably won't be very enthusiastic about this kind of activity research activity" (translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 6 April 2016), while Annie was sure her classmate would "feel quite confused about why she has to do this" [i.e., to be involved in the research] (translated from Mandarin; Annie, Interview, 6 May 2016).

Thus, establishing brokering interactions to be observed, at least those that took place in physical real-world locations, was dependent on: i) whether the interactions were sufficiently planned in advance so that I could make arrangements to be present; ii) whether participants and brokers were committed to meeting; and iii) whether participants and their brokers were willing to be observed. (Brokering interactions that could not be physically observed, that is, those that took place via personal communication devices such as mobile phones, are discussed in the subsequent section on digital records.) Brokering interactions that were arranged in advance with a high commitment of participation were typically more formal in nature. In the case of the three key informants, Linda, Kim and Jane, these interactions were part of the consultations they had with learning advisors at the university who provided assistance with assignments. As these consultations were not formal academic instruction, nor were they compulsory, I considered them as part of participants' informal learning.

The learning advisors that Linda and Kim consulted were part of a central department at the university and were not assigned beforehand. Furthermore, learning advisors in that particular department had to meet a high demand from students. Thus, it was difficult to approach the specific learning advisors to obtain permission for observation. Jane, on the other hand, consulted learning advisors who were based at her faculty and appointments for consultation were made with particular individuals. This made it possible for me to approach the individual advisor to ask for their consent to be observed.

Jane consulted three learning advisors regularly in both Semesters A and B. After I had arranged to meet each of them in person to explain my research, one of them declined to be involved, while the other two agreed and provided their signed consent for their participation. One advisor was from China, the same country where Jane was from, and communicated with her in Mandarin. The other was from New Zealand and spoke in English.

ii) Participant engagement

My engagement with Jane's interactions with learning advisors took place on four separate occasions in a selective intermittent time mode (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004), that is, as and when these meetings were arranged during the semester. In Semester A, I conducted two observations of Jane's writing consultation with the learning advisor from China. Each consultation lasted approximately 40 minutes, and was conducted in Mandarin. In Semester B, I conducted two observations of Jane's meetings with the other advisor. Each meeting was approximately 15 minutes long and conducted in English. Jane informed me of the dates and times of the meetings and I would then ask the learning advisors prior to each meeting for permission to conduct an observation. At the start of the meeting, I would again ask for permission from all participants to audio-record their conversation. The recordings were transcribed and made available to participants for verification.

During observations, I aimed at having minimal engagement with the participants. Since I had already explained to Jane and her learning advisors the purpose of my research and my intention to collect data during their meetings, I took on an overt observer role. In addition, my inquiry into participants' brokering interactions was self-directed, instead of collaborating with participants. As I was conscious of collecting data as they naturally occurred, I made a point of not sitting at the table where they had their meeting so as to avoid distracting them or influencing their interaction. Instead, I placed my audio-recorder on the table, and sat a short distance away from the table where I could observe and take field notes of the participants' interactions according to an observation schedule (Appendix H).

iii) Researcher roles

Although I assumed a spectator-observer role during the observations, there were nonetheless effects of reactivity, that is the influence of the researcher on the behaviour of participants (Patton, 2015). For example, at the end of one of the writing consultations, the learning advisor directed Jane to use the computer in the meeting room to make amendments to her document. As the learning advisor was now engaged with another student, Jane turned to me and asked me a question about formatting her document, to which I responded with a few suggestions. At that point, it would have been awkward to maintain a disinterested or unknowledgeable position, having been privy to the entire conversation about Jane's assignment. Thus, in that moment, I switched roles from spectator-observer to participant-observer.

In terms of my interpretation of what I observed, I took on both insider and outsider perspectives. As a former polytechnic lecturer and EAL teacher, I was familiar with the role of learning advisor, and so was not completely unfamiliar with the setting. However, I was very much an outsider with regard to the particular context of receiving academic help from learning advisors as I had not experienced it myself. To develop an insider perspective, I conducted follow-up interviews with Jane separately after each observation. Attempts to follow up with the learning advisors, however, did not materialise owing to conflicting schedules.

3.6.3 Digital Records

During my interviews with participants, all mentioned some level of brokering interaction occurring through mobile phone instant messaging applications such as *Facebook Messenger* and *WeChat*. These were messaging applications that I was also familiar with, and I used them as informal communication channels with participants. To obtain data related to participants' interactions on these messaging applications I employed digital ethnographic methods (Boellstorff et al., 2012; Pink et al., 2015). Pink et al. (2015) highlight that digital ethnography refers not only to using digital technology to collect data but also involves researchers in the digital communication practices they seek to investigate. By using messaging applications as part of my own digital communication practices I became familiar with the functions of the applications and how one could use them for social interaction. Furthermore, as I used these applications to communicate informally with participants I was also developing an insider perspective on how participants themselves used these applications.

When collecting digital data, Boellstorff et al. (2012) point out the importance of archiving data beyond the particular digital platform. They caution that "anything on the internet is transient [and it would be] unwise to … assume the material will be online indefinitely" (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 119). While the messaging applications were private communication channels and retained the messages both sent and received, I was aware of several scenarios that I had experienced where messages would no longer be available. For example, messages may be deleted to make more space available for other applications on a mobile phone. Also, a re-installation of an application or removal of contacts may also result in the loss of those messages. My awareness of the potential transience of digital communication therefore made me realise the need for messages to be identified and archived as soon as possible.

Although all participants indicated that their brokering interactions took place via some type of messaging application, only two participants, Kim and Linda, appeared to engage in them in a sustained manner throughout the semester. By around mid-semester, these two participants had shared with me in some detail about their brokering interactions on messaging applications with their classmates. They were also forthcoming about sending me screenshots of the messages, that is, images of what is displayed on the screen of a mobile device or computer. As there were less than two months before the semester ended, I was eager to archive their messages in a timely manner. However, I was also conscious about needing to obtain informed consent from the brokers as well. It was relatively easy to obtain consent from Kim's broker as he was a current primary participant, Josh. Thus, it was during the regularly schedule interviews that I obtained permission from Josh to view those messages, as well as ask him questions about his exchanges with Kim.

On the other hand, I did not have prior contact with Linda's two brokers, Grace and Emily (pseudonyms), who were Linda's classmates in different papers. Grace was a domestic student, and Emily an international student from China, both in their final year of study. I asked Linda to relay to them my request for their permission to read their messages. After Linda communicated her brokers' informal consent to me, I asked her for screenshots, and at the same time started the process of contacting her brokers to explain my research in more detail, and formally obtained their signed consent to be secondary participants. I also arranged to interview them regarding the message exchanges. The process of engaging with

Linda's brokers took several weeks as it was during a busy period of the semester and my availability to meet did not always coincide with theirs.

Thus, through the processes of timely archiving and obtaining informed consent, I obtained digital records of academic-related brokering interactions that took place over the semester. As I collected these records, I organised them into discrete brokering episodes about particular topics. Linda typically communicated with Grace in English through the default text messaging application on their mobile phones, and I obtained eight episodes of brokering interactions between them. Linda and Emily communicated in Chinese on *WeChat*, a messaging application popular with Mainland Chinese, and the data collected from them yielded 12 episodes of brokering interactions. Kim and Josh communicated in Chinese using *Facebook Messenger*, a more widely used messaging application, and there were 12 episodes of brokering interactions between them.

The procedure of obtaining the digital records, however, posed a potential problem related to the completeness and partiality of the data. As the message exchanges took place in a private communication channel, academic-related messages appeared among various other types of messages. I did not feel it was appropriate for me to select the messages because, in order to do so, I would have had to physically use my participants' communication device and read all of the messages before I could decide what was relevant. It was thus less intrusive and more expedient for participants to make the selection. In doing so, participants might have deliberately or accidentally left out some messages. However, I felt that participants were genuine about sharing their digital interactions, and I was satisfied with the records they provided, since the episodes covered a range of topics over a period of time. Thus, I did not consider the potential for omission a threat to the validity of the data. In any case, it was more important to respect the rights of my participants in what they chose to share.

Another potential difficulty with using digital records is not fully understanding the context of the interactions or the nuances of the communication. Unlike my real-time observations of brokering interactions, I could only view records of these digital brokering interactions after their occurrence. Furthermore, these records were provided to me in batches, that is, the messages were accumulated over a month or so before they were sent to me. Thus, I was physically and temporally detached from the digital interactions. While the detachment removed the issue of reactivity, it nonetheless raised the potential for misinterpretation. Thus, to mitigate interpretive errors, I followed up with primary participants to clarify my understanding of the interactions during the course of our regular interviews, as well as after the data collection period, during the time of data analysis.

3.6.4 Artefacts

Artefacts related to brokering interactions were also collected in the course of the research, in particular, those relating to consultations with learning advisors. These artefacts took the form of annotated essays, that is, draft essays produced by participants with written comments from their advisors. Kim provided me with two copies of annotated essays in Semester A, and Linda provided me copies of two annotated essays in Semester A and two in Semester B. Jane provided the most artefacts, with six annotated essays in Semester A and six in Semester B.

Copies of these annotated essays were requested from participants as soon as they made mention of their consultations with learning advisors. There were instances where participants had misplaced their annotated essays, or when the advisors' feedback was verbal, and so the artefacts collected did not represent a comprehensive account of all the feedback provided by learning advisors. Nonetheless, the annotated essays were included in the data analysis as they provided information on the aspects of academic writing that were brokered.

3.6.5 Summary of Data Collected

To summarise, data were collected through interviewing, observation, digital records, and artefacts. In Semester A, I conducted a total of 46 interviews with 10 primary participants, as well as one-off interviews with two secondary participants. In terms of collecting data of brokering interactions, I conducted two observations of Jane's consultations with a learning advisor, and obtained a total of 32 episodes of private message exchanges. In addition, I obtained 10 annotated essays as a result of three participants' consultations with learning advisors. In Semester B, I continued to interview Linda and Jane regularly over the semester, in anticipation of collecting more data related to brokering interactions. I conducted a total of 10 interviews, five interviews with each of them. I also observed two consultations Jane had with a different learning advisor. In addition, I obtained annotated essays, two from Linda and six from Jane. An overview of data collected is presented in Appendix I.

Comparing Semester B to the previous semester, I did not collect as much data from Linda and Jane. While I had anticipated Linda's brokering interactions to continue to take place within private message exchanges, this was not the case. During interviews with Linda, she reported few brokering interactions and most of them were with learning advisors. Jane's brokering interactions continued with learning advisors, but the observations of those consultations were much shorter than in the previous semester. While my additional efforts at data collection did not appear to be reciprocated, the continued interactions with my key informants Linda and Jane gave me the opportunity to better understand their attitudes towards academic learning and brokering interactions, as I noted in my journal:

> Although the interviews with the two participants in Semester B have not yielded as much brokering as I had hoped for, their relative inactive brokering reinforces for me the transitionary period of first-time international students in their first semester and how the disjuncture between expectations and reality reinforces the gaps in knowledge/language/culture. These gaps … are probably most keenly felt in that first semester. (Researcher Journal, 26 September 2016)

Thus, tracking the changes in participants' brokering interactions in the subsequent semester proved to be helpful, at the very least, in understanding the broader nature of brokering practices.

The final point to highlight is that a significant portion of the data was in Chinese or Mandarin, the standardised form of spoken Chinese. Mandarin was used during interviews with five of my Chinese participants, including one of the key informants, Jane. Mandarin was also used during the two observed brokering interactions between Jane and her Chinese learning advisor. Chinese was the primary medium of communication in the message exchanges between Linda and her broker, Emily, and between Kim and her broker, Josh. As a bilingual and sole researcher, I was the primary instrument through which the Chinese language was interpreted, translated and transcribed during data collection and analysis. Thus, the next part of the chapter will discuss the processes of translation and transcription in relation to communicating Chinese language data to an English-speaking audience.

Part Three: Data Translation and Analysis

3.7 Being a Bilingual Researcher[5]

In qualitative research, "[l]anguage and communication are … fundamental … as they represent the dual functions of *data* and the *method* through which data are generated" (Hennink, 2008, p. 24, italics in original). When the research requires interpretation or translation from one language to another, the role and influence of interpreters/translators are complex, "but the effect of their actions

[5] An earlier draft of Section 3.7 was developed into a journal article (Lee, 2017b).

is [often] not acknowledged or discussed" (Hennink, 2008, p. 26). Temple (2006) points out that this lack of discussion is based on an essentialist assumption that the interpreters/translators have "a direct access to the views of supposedly homogeneous communities" (Temple, 2006, p. 3). Bilingual researchers further "[assume] a double role, functioning as interpreter[s] and translator[s] in [their] inquiry with … non–English-speaking research participants" (Shklarov, 2007, p. 530). Shklarov (2007) argues that while bilingual researchers have the perceived advantage of immediate cultural understanding, their dual role may also be perceived as having "a 'monopoly' on interpreting [their] own research findings" (p. 535). Thus, being a bilingual researcher demands both epistemological and ethical clarity.

Researchers' theoretical orientations frame their views and processes of translation (Hennink, 2008; Shklarov, 2007; Squires, 2009; Temple, 2006). While essentialist or positivist epistemologies view translation as neutral and objective, a social constructionist perspective seeks to examine how the bilingual researcher's identity and background influence translation (Temple, 2006). Temple (2006) argues that the position bilingual researchers take on issues "is influenced by their intellectual and emotional auto/biographies, where gender and age may be as important as the language spoken" (p. 9). She calls for bilingual researchers to articulate their *language biography* since "people experience being bilingual in different ways" (Temple, 2006, p. 10).

While Temple (2006) highlights the importance of the researcher's epistemological stance, Shklarov (2007) raises the ethical issue of the bilingual researcher having greater power and a higher level of responsibility than an external translator. Being the sole translator, the researcher's translations may not be viewed as credible, especially when the source language is ambiguous and may hold multiple meanings. Shklarov (2007) proposes that the bilingual researcher "remain open to the opinions of others in all instances of debatable meanings in cross-language exchange to avoid the accounts of uncertainty or doubt[,] … [by] taking into account the diversity of perceptions and the limitations of personal knowledge" (p. 535). In addition, Squires (2009) suggests that the trustworthiness of the data is further enhanced if the researcher explains why one language was chosen in place of another for the analysis, especially "if the analysis did not take place in the same language as that of the participants" (p. 285).

Just as translation is not a straightforward and unproblematic process, so is the process of transcription, the written representation of speech. Transcripts, rather than the recorded speech, are relied on as data to be analysed as the static form is more manageable (Edwards, 2005; Lapadat, 2000). Lapadat (2000) highlights that the process of transcription requires the researcher to make important decisions at various levels, such as the layout of the transcription, the amount of detail to include (e.g., words spoken, prosodic elements, speaker turns), and the way the details are presented, for example, according to a set of transcription conventions. Far from being objective, these decisions reflect the researcher's theoretical assumptions and analytical purposes (Lapadat, 2000; Mishler, 1991). Mishler (1991), for example, demonstrates how a conversation can be represented in different versions, each version representing a particular view of the relationship between language and meaning; no one version is more accurate or valid than the other.

In addition, Lapadat (2000) stresses the importance of constructing transcripts that suit the research purpose, rather than transcribing all aspects and features of speech which may not be appropriate or practical. For example, for purposes of analysis, the researcher may select specific incidents for detailed transcription, and transcribe the rest of the data more broadly. In another example, if the researcher is interested primarily in the content of the interview, it may not be necessary for a narrow transcription inclusive of overlaps, pause length, and the like. Thus, rather than producing transcripts that will meet all needs, Lapadat (2000) concludes that is it more useful to create "multiple versions of transcripts for multiple purposes" (Lapadat, 2000, p. 215).

Apart from making decisions about how transcription is to be done, researchers also need to take steps to ensure the rigour or trustworthiness of the transcription process. Lapadat (2000) suggests working collaboratively with participants or research colleagues to check the accuracy of the transcripts, as well as to negotiate interpretations of the data. She also highlights the option of hiring an assistant to undertake the transcription process, but points out that just like the researcher, the assistant "will be making interpretive decisions while transcribing, which can range from deliberately 'tidying up' sentence structures to omitting or mishearing" (Lapadat, 2000, p. 216). Thus, it is important to engage in frequent dialogue with assistants and critically evaluate their role in the research.

To explain my processes in translation and transcription as a bilingual researcher, I present my language biography to highlight important differences between the linguistic backgrounds of myself and my Chinese participants. I then discuss my particular approach to translation and the process of transcription for analysis.

3.7.1 Language Biography

As highlighted in Chapter 1, I am a Chinese Singaporean, where Chinese refers to my ethnicity, and Singapore refers to my birth country and citizenship. Singapore has a multi-ethnic population of Chinese, Malay and Indian communities, with Chinese being the dominant group. With the use of English as its lingua franca, as well as the default language in civic, educational, and business spaces, Singapore is essentially an English-speaking society (Tupas, 2011). I am part of the third generation of Chinese Singaporeans whose ancestors were from the southern part of China. Within the Chinese community in Singapore, there is a further differentiation between those who are *English-speaking* and *Mandarin-speaking*, depending on family language background and communication preferences. As with my broader Singaporean identity, I identify with being English-speaking, with my formative years spent in English-speaking environments at home, in school and other areas of life. While observing Chinese social and ceremonial customs was very much part of growing up, using the Chinese language was limited to formal lessons in school and with relatives and acquaintances where necessary. Thus, I placed less emphasis on identifying as Chinese during my adolescence.

During my time of study at university, however, I became more conscious about developing my Chinese identity as I interacted with more diverse social groups and took an interest in sociolinguistics. Even though I had accomplished only a basic grasp of the Chinese language during compulsory lessons in school, I was determined to increase my Chinese language proficiency. In my early 20s, I switched from attending an English-speaking congregation to the Mandarin-speaking congregation in church. The Mandarin-speaking congregation was made up not only of Singaporeans, but also immigrants from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. As I interacted and formed friendships with different Mandarin-speakers, I began to appreciate the differences among speakers from different social and cultural backgrounds, even within the same country. This realisation was most acute during the two years I spent in southern China, where I worked as an English teacher. While I initially thought my time in China would help me "return to my roots", my experience was more akin to culture shock. I realised that the language, culture, and social norms of China were more strange than familiar, and certain social practices were antithetical to the values I had grown up with.

As a result of my interactions with Chinese diasporic communities in Singapore, and my experience of living and working in China, I developed greater confidence in using the language and also developed a greater sensitivity to linguistic variations. I now comfortably identify with both English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking groups in Singapore, and have a growing awareness of the subtle differences among Chinese diasporic groups in New Zealand, where I currently reside.

3.7.2 Translation and Transcription Processes

While I had developed a greater proficiency in the Chinese language in my later years, I was still predominantly an English language user. When interpreting or translating data in the Chinese language, I used both English and Chinese to complete the process. To signal the different language I used in the process, I borrow the terms Srivastava (2006), a bilingual researcher, used in her research: *the language of the data* and *the language one thinks in*. In Srivastava's (2006) case, Hindi was *the language of the data* and English was *the language one thinks in*. However, it was not a straightforward matter of translating spoken Hindi into its written form, nor was it a strict separation between data in Hindi and analysis in English. Srivastava (2006) reports "slipping between languages" in the process of translation. For example, when observing interactions in Hindi, significant quotes "were often recorded in English through a process of automatic simultaneous translation" (Srivastava, 2006, p. 217). In other words, *the language one thinks in* became the *language of the data*. At other times, while there was a conscious effort to retain the *language of the data* during the transcription of interviews, much of the initial analysis was done in English.

i) Translating interviews

During my interviews with my Mandarin-speaking participants, I made my notes in English, and subsequently transcribed the recorded interviews in English. Note-taking and transcription were part of the analytical process and I therefore used *the language I think in*. Furthermore, I needed to produce the transcripts in a timely fashion for participants' verification, and it was more efficient for me to simultaneously translate and transcribe in English than to transcribe only in Chinese, *the language of the data.* For me, understanding Mandarin was relatively intuitive. However, decoding Mandarin speech into the written form involved a less commonly used skill, that is, feeding into the computer the correct *pinyin* (the romanised spelling for transliterating Chinese) and then choosing from a list of possible characters. The process of producing English language transcripts involved listening to, and pausing in between, brief segments of the recording, as well as re-listening to segments where necessary.

When there were doubts about the accuracy of my translation, I used external sources such as an online translation tool, *Google Translate*, and also consulted my husband, a native Mandarin speaker. There were also instances in my transcription where I included certain words and phrases in Chinese because I felt that an English translation would not be able to fully reflect their meaning. I also engaged in the process of member checking where I provided participants with a copy of the transcript for checking within a few days of the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When asking participants to check the transcripts, I highlighted parts of the transcript where I needed further clarification. Thus, during the processes of translation and transcription, I was slipping between the two languages, going back and forth between *the language of the data* and *the language I think in* (Srivastava, 2006). Hence, trustworthiness of the translated data was enhanced through a conscious unpacking of meaning by working in two languages throughout the research process.

In producing the transcripts of the interviews, broad rather than narrow transcription was adopted to meet the purposes of thematic analysis and to identify the various aspects of participants' brokering practices. I paid more attention to the content of the interview, rather than minute paralinguistic details such as length of pauses and the precise points of overlaps. Thus, the transcription was done relatively broadly, with non-verbal action and expression indicated within double brackets, e.g., *((pause))* and *((laughter))*.

ii) Translating recorded observations

For the data set involving audio-recorded observations in Mandarin, I paid a professional translator to undertake the transcription and translation (see Appendix J for confidentiality agreement). It was important to transcribe the recordings in *the language of the data* because the analysis of brokering interactions employed conversation analysis which requires a first-hand understanding of the original word meanings and inflections (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). As the interactions were fast-paced and my own Chinese transcription skills were at a rudimentary level, it was thus beneficial for me to engage external assistance. In addition to being professionally certified, the translator held a doctorate in applied linguistics and was teaching translation studies at a tertiary institution. Thus, I was confident that it was worth the expense to obtain high quality transcription and translation.

I briefed the translator on the context of the observations and gave her a copy of my observation field notes. I also explained the level of detail that I required in the transcription and gave her a copy of the transcription key (Appendix K4). After receiving the transcripts, copies were sent to participants for their review, and no issue was raised. I also sampled parts of the recordings to check against the translator's transcripts, and was satisfied that the translator had successfully decoded the speech, as well as captured the interactional details such as pauses and overlaps.

As I started analysing the transcriptions, I used the Chinese transcription together with the English translation, and became more sensitive to how the Chinese text had been translated. Newmark (1988) suggests two broad methods of translation, *communicative translation* and *semantic translation*. In communicative translation, "the translator attempts to produce the same effect on the [target language] readers as was produced [in the source language]" (Newmark, 1988, p. 22). In semantic translation, "the translator attempts, within the bare syntactic and semantic constraints of the [target language], to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the [source language]" (Newmark, 1988, p. 22). Newmark further highlights that the difference between the two methods is in emphasis rather than kind.

Based on my reading of the English translation, the translator appeared to emphasise a communicative, rather than semantic translation. I could appreciate her choice of an idiomatic and coherent translation that conveyed the intended meaning of the speakers, rather than a slavish translation of odd-sounding phrases. However, I considered it necessary for the English translation to reflect the sequence and nuances of the talk as it unfolds, since the analysis was to be informed by what is known about comparable English language interactions in the CA literature (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Thus, when selecting extracts of the transcripts for analysis, I revised the translation by emphasising the semantic meaning of the source language. In other words, my translation more closely resembled the sequence and structure of the Chinese speech, as far as it was intelligible in English. For example, in translating the following Chinese text: "不是 'has become not be ignored', 你这语法有问题啊", the translator expressed the phrase as: "But it is incorrect saying 'has become not be ignored', it is a grammatical error." In my revised translation, however, I chose a more literal rendition that reflects the use of the pronoun 你 (you) which I felt was an important feature of the interaction: "Not 'has become not be ignored', your grammar has a problem."

iii) Translating message exchanges

Similar to the observations in Mandarin, the message exchanges in Chinese were translated using a semantic approach for the purposes of conversation analysis. The textual form of the message exchanges made it easier for me to understand the content since I could easily go back and forth in the text to check my understanding. Without needing to transcribe the already available Chinese text, I undertook the translation of the messages into English on my own. However, there were several instances of ambiguity that needed to be clarified, and I did so by consulting my primary participants who were the ones who provided me with the data.

The most ambiguous aspect of the message exchanges was the use of emoticons or emoji, that is, graphic symbols that allow the user to express one's feelings, moods and emotions (Novak, Smailović, Sluban, & Mozetič, 2015). Some emoticons and emoji were straightforward, such as a smiling face indicating a positive mood, but there were several that I had not used myself or whose meaning was unclear to me. For example, Linda's messages often used the emoji that depicted a face that was simultaneously crying and smiling (😂). While I had initially interpreted that emoji to be tears of joy, Linda pointed out the emoji carried a different meaning in the way it was used with her peers. She described the emoji as a bitter smile (苦笑 *kǔxiào*) where one smiles in the face of difficulty because there is nothing one can do about it (Linda, Personal communication, 9 February 2016). Another example occurred in Kim's messages where an emoticon that was unfamiliar to me was used ((•–•)). Kim explained that the meaning of the emoticon depended on the context of the exchange but could either express a show of concern or someone being speechless (Kim, Personal communication, 4 June 2017).

Another aspect of ambiguity was the use of the Chinese character 恩 (*ēn*) which is often used as a transliteration of the verbal sound 'uhm' or 'um'. The verbal sound can be understood as a speech continuer, or an acknowledgement of or agreement with what was said in the previous turn. Thus, in translating 恩, I had to decide whether it was used as a continuer or an acknowledgement or agreement. In addition, translating 恩 as acknowledgement or agreement in English had multiple options such as ‘yep’, ‘yeah’, ‘yes’, ‘ok’, and the like. After reading the message exchange several times, I interpreted the use of 恩 as an acknowledgement or agreement, and rendered the Chinese character as ‘ok’. In my participants’ review of my translation, there were times where they indicated a preference for a particular rendition of 恩, for example, ‘yeah’ instead of ‘ok’, which I incorporated into the final version of the translation. There was also another type of acknowledgement, 喔喔 (*ōō*), that was open to variation in translation. My initial translation ‘oh ok’ was replaced with my participant’s preference for ‘O I C’ (with deliberate spacing between letters), a common shorthand for ‘oh I see’ in text messaging. Thus, the credibility of my translation of the message exchanges was enhanced by my participants’ involvement in reviewing my translations and incorporating their preferences.

iv) Transcription decisions

One issue common to the audio-recorded data and message exchanges was deciding how the original text and the English translation were to be presented. From a conversation analytic perspective on presenting non-English data to English-speaking audiences, Hepburn and Bolden (2013) recommend a three-line transcription comprising the original orthography in the first line, a morpheme-by-morpheme translation in the second, and an idiomatic translation in the third. However, I hesitated to incorporate such a detailed level of transcription as I felt that the bulkiness of having a three-line transcription would inhibit the general reader’s ease of reading and understanding. Furthermore, although I applied conversation analytic principles in my data analysis, conversation analysis was part of a multi-methodological approach rather than the central methodology. Thus, for the observational data, I chose a two-line transcription with the Chinese characters in the first line, and the English translation in the second. I also displayed the transcription/translation in rows that were sequentially numbered for reference.

For the message exchanges, a similar two-line presentation was adopted. In addition, I wanted to differentiate textual medium from verbal medium for the audio-recording. Thus, I re-created the appearance of the message exchanges as they appear on the mobile phone by placing the content of each message within text boxes (the same was done for the message exchanges in English). The translation of each message was placed below the respective text box, and the message–translation was also presented in sequentially numbered rows for reference. Examples of the transcription of different sets of data are presented in Appendix K.

3.8 Data Analysis

Before discussing how the data were analysed, I want to briefly mention the terminology used when referring to data. In doing so, I adopt Braun and Clarke's (2006) use of the following terms: *data corpus*, *data set*, *data item*, and *data extract*. Data corpus refers to all the data that were collected, that is, interview transcripts, field notes, transcripts of the audio-recorded observations, digital records of message exchanges, and artefacts. Subsequently, a data set refers to a selected group of data that reflect the particular analytic interest. For example, I organised separate data sets comprising all data that were associated with each participant. I also organised and labelled specific data sets related to data collected from particular participants. For example, the message exchanges between Linda and Emily were labelled *Data Set: Linda–Emily Message Exchanges*. Within the data corpus or data set, a data item refers to each individual piece of data collected, such as an individual interview, or one particular episode of a message exchange. Finally, a data extract refers to a chunk of data identified within, and extracted from, a data item.

To obtain an overview of the brokering practices among all participants, I used thematic analysis to analyse the data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This cross-sectional approach was helpful for determining the coverage and scope of brokering practices represented in my sample (Mason, 2002). However, it was also necessary to use a contextual approach to understand how brokering practices were influenced by the personal and learning circumstances unique to individual participants. Hence, there was additional analysis of the data sets related to individual participants. Thematic analysis was supported by what some scholars refer to as writing as a method or mode of analysis (Coles & Thomson, 2016; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Such writing included informal journal entries, ongoing analytical writing, and more formal writing such as conference papers, and these were incorporated in the final analysis presented in the Findings (Chapter 4), as well as case studies (Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

In the case studies, the contextual analysis of each key informant is elaborated, before the analysis of the brokering interactions between the key informant and her broker(s). To enhance the credibility of the contextual analyses, I engaged in an additional level of member checking where the key informants were invited to read and comment on my analysis by annotating the document, as well as during a face-to-face meeting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The analysis of the brokering interactions entailed an adapted conversation analytic approach that highlights the interactional turns and features of requesting, and responding to requests for, help or advice. Chapter 5 examines the text messages between Linda and Grace, and the *WeChat* messages between Linda and Emily, while Chapter 6 examines the *Facebook Messenger* exchanges between Kim and Josh. Finally, Chapter 7 is about Jane and examines her interactions with a Chinese learning advisor, Tim (pseudonym). An overview of the process of data analysis is presented in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4. Overview of the Process of Data Analysis

Time period	**Form of analysis**
March–June 2016	• Journal writing • Data collection, transcription, organisation of data • Member checking of transcripts of interviews and observations
June–July 2016	• Journal writing • Thematic analysis of data corpus
July–October 2016	• Journal writing • Thematic analysis of data corpus and data sets of individual participants from Semester A • Data collection, transcription, organisation of data • Member checking of transcripts of interviews and observations
October– November 2016	• Thematic analysis of data corpus and data sets of individual participants from Semester B • Writing for publication • Member checking of initial analysis of data set related to Kim
December 2016 – Break	
January–March 2017	• Draft analytical writing for Findings • Conversation analysis of Data Set: Linda–Grace • Member checking of initial analysis of data set related to Linda and Jane
April–May 2017	• Conversation analysis of Data Set: Linda–Emily • Draft analytical writing for Case Study: Linda
June 2017	• Conversation analysis of Data Set: Kim–Josh • Draft analytical writing for Case Study: Kim
July 2017	• Conversation analysis of Data Set: Jane–Tim • Draft analytical writing for Case Study: Jane
August–September 2017	• Writing for publication
October–November 2017	• Writing for conference paper
December 2017 – Break	
January–March 2018	• Final analytical writing for Findings and case study chapters

3.8.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis can be broadly defined as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ryan and Bernard (2003) consider themes as abstract constructs that link different kinds of *expressions* found in the data. These expressions can take the form of incidents, quotations, or any other types of occurrences. The significance of a theme is further influenced by its prevalence, such as the frequency with which it occurs across the data set, or the space it occupies in relation to the individual data item (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that determining prevalence is a matter of researcher judgement, since quantifiable measures such as the number of occurrences do not necessarily equate to significance. Rather, it is whether or not the theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Similarly, Ryan and Bernard (2003) conclude that the dependence on researcher judgement means that there can be "no ultimate demonstration of validity [of themes]" (p. 103). Nonetheless, these authors agree that making the process of analysis explicit and clear allows the validity of themes to be judged by readers. To explain my process of thematic analysis, I explain how I used theoretical and inductive analyses to generate conceptual categories, the methods I used to identify themes, and how I organised them.

i) Theoretical and inductive analyses

Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between inductive and theoretical or deductive analyses, where an inductive analysis focuses on restricting the analysis to the data themselves without the influence of the researcher's preconceptions, while a theoretical or deductive analysis is guided by a prior theoretical framework. In engaging with ethnographic research of a relatively unknown learning phenomenon, I adopted Schensul and LeCompte's (2013) approach of "creating an initial formative theoretical framework or model that [is used to] structure initial inquiry in the field and whose 'goodness of fit' as an explanatory framework then is assessed against what actually exists in the study site" (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013, p. 82). This is a recursive process where researchers "respond to variation and contradiction in the field, altering their models and explanatory theories so that they remain congruent with reality as it occurs at the study site" (Schensul & LeCompte, 2013, pp. 83-84).

The initial theoretical framework was based on a range of literature related to brokering, and provided the initial categories into which various elements of data were linked. These categories included concepts such as *language brokering*, *literacy brokering* and *peer brokering*. It was also necessary to consider other aspects of data that did not fit neatly into those concepts: data that appeared to be variations of existing concepts, those that seemed to be outside of current concepts, and even those apparently contradictory in terms of the theoretical framework. In such instances, sub-categories of existing categories or new categories were created. For example, a new category, *non-peer brokering*, was created to account for brokering interactions between participants and learning advisors in contrast to the category of *peer brokering*. These categories were subsequently adopted or modified to become themes, as explained below.

ii) Identification of themes

To identify themes, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest that the most obvious way is to look for repetition in the data: "[the] more the same concept occurs in a text, the more likely it is a theme" (p. 89). Apart from looking for repetition, the authors also suggest using comparative methods. One comparative method is to take pairs of expressions from the same or different participants and ask: How is one expression similar to or different from the other? The abstract similarities and differences that the question produces can then be considered themes. If the theme is a result of similar expressions, a subsequent question to ask is whether there are any differences in degree or kind between the expressions.

In my data, for example, several participants provided similar reasons (or expressions) for seeking brokering assistance with their academic work, that is, they were unfamiliar with the English language. Upon closer inspection, some instances of brokering were related to making sense of some academic text or practice, while other instances were related to obtaining some form of academic material without necessarily understanding the content. As a result, I differentiated between two themes: *literacy brokering* (making sense of some academic text or practice) and what I termed *resource brokering* (obtaining some specified material).

Apart from linking existing patterns to themes, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest further scrutinising any expressions that are not already associated with a theme. This is done by reading through the data multiple times. As recommended by the authors, on the first reading I highlighted portions of the data that were readily identified as themes (e.g., based on prior categories), and in subsequent readings looked for themes in the unmarked portions.

iii) Organisation of themes

To organise the process of identifying themes, I engaged in what Ryan and Bernard (2003) refer to as cutting and sorting, that is, "identifying quotes or expressions that seem somehow important and then arranging the quotes/expressions into piles of things that go together" (p. 94). This was done using spreadsheet software, Microsoft Excel. The software allowed me to create individual sections (or tabs) within a single file, where each tab contained each participant's brokering instances found in the interview data set. Each tab had a table where each row referred to an instance of brokering mentioned during interviews, and the multiple columns reflected the various aspects of brokering practices I was examining. The naming or description of themes and corresponding data extracts were placed in the last two columns. Figure 1 in Appendix L1 presents an annotated sample of the use of *Microsoft Excel* for data analysis.

The analyses of individual participants' interview data contributed to a systematic overview of the data corpus in order to arrive at a cross-sectional analysis to determine the coverage and scope of the data collected (Mason, 2002, p. 152). The themes that are produced from the cross-sectional analysis are treated as "unfinished resources" (Mason, 2002, p. 157) rather than final themes, and are used in a subsequent analysis of specific data sets such as the digital records of the key informants. In addition to a cross-sectional analysis, I also did a contextual analysis of the individual participants, who had differences in their educational backgrounds, disciplines and levels of study, English language confidence, and attitudes towards study. Engaging in both cross-sectional and contextual analyses led to the following structure for my findings (Chapter 4):

- An overview of themes in relation to research sub-questions 1–4;
- Organising participants into categories of brokering frequency;
- Contextual analysis of each participant's brokering practices within each category of frequency; and
- A typology of brokering practices as derived from the preceding analyses.

Thus, thematic analysis through cross-sectional and contextual approaches provided an overview of brokering practices among international EAL students as evidenced in my sample of participants.

iv) Writing as Analysis

While it is important to pay attention to the technical aspects of data analysis such as cutting and sorting (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2003), it is also necessary to acknowledge the process of thinking about how data and themes are relevant and significant to the research. Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the importance of writing an "accompanying narrative" that "[does] not just paraphrase the content of the data extracts … but identif[ies] what is of interest about them and why" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). While Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that this writing takes place at a later stage of analysis, others have highlighted that the act of writing reflects analytical thinking and consider writing itself a method of data analysis (Coles & Thomson, 2016; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, "[t]hought happen[s] in the writing" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 970). Similarly, Coles and Thomson (2016) view "[w]riting as thinking and rewriting as continuing to think" (p. 258).

Coles and Thomson (2016) refer to this process of writing and re-writing as *inbetween writing*, "a process in which different attempts at writing—some more focused on empirical description and some more on the development of more abstract theory—are either abandoned or developed to become part of one finished text" (p. 257). My own inbetween writing occurred as informal journal entries, ongoing analytical writing about the data, as well as formally presented writing such as journal articles and conference papers. Table 1 in Appendix L1 provides an example of how the different stages of writing contributed to the final analysis in the thesis.

3.8.2 Conversation Analysis

The fifth and final research sub-question, "What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?", is addressed in three case studies related to each key informant and her respective broker(s). Each case study chapter begins with an overview of the data sets related to the key informant's brokering interactions, followed by an analysis of the data. An adapted conversation analytic approach was used to examine how brokering was accomplished through sequences of interactional turns.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, conversation analysis (CA) is a method for analysing how interactions are accomplished by participants whose speaking turns are typically organised according to particular types of interactional sequences (Heritage, 1984; Sacks et al., 1974). According to the model of turn-taking developed by Sacks et al. (1974), participants take turns to speak, and a series of turns can be identified as a particular type of sequence. The basic structure of a sequence involves two turns or actions in which the first action performed by one speaker invites a particular type of second action to be performed by another speaker; for example, a question in the first turn invites an answer in the next. In addition to describing conversational structures, CA investigates how actions are accomplished at the level of utterance through linguistic structures (e.g., grammar, lexical choice), prosody (e.g,. intonation), and pragmatics (e.g., speech acts, implied meanings) found in speech (Schegloff, Ochs, & Thompson, 1996).

CA is part of a larger methodological inquiry known as ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), explained by Heritage (1984) as "the study of … the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves" (p. 4). CA, in particular, aims to explicate "the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction" (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984, p. 1), and to provide "systematic insight" into how participants engage in interaction (ten Have, 1990). Ten Have (1999) further distinguishes between what he terms *pure* CA and *applied* CA: whereas pure CA examines interaction as an entity with its specific patterns and characteristics, applied CA focuses on the participants' management of turns in their particular social interactions. In this research, it is applied CA that is relevant for the examination of the data of brokering interactions.

While CA appears to be prescriptive in defining the rules and structures of turn-taking, its highly-descriptive and often technical analyses, in fact, illuminate the socially constituted nature of interaction (Mazur, 2004). As explained by Heritage (1984), the meaning or significance of participants' communicative actions is "both *context-shaped* and *context-renewing*" (p. 242, emphasis in original). Participants' turns of speech are context-shaped in that one's contribution cannot be adequately understood except by referring to the context of the speech, most commonly by referring to the immediately preceding talk and more generally by the sequence of previous actions. Participants' own actions are context-renewing because each of their turns will contribute to the context in terms of maintaining, altering, or adjusting the "prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientations and actions" (Heritage, 1984, p. 242).

While not situated in any one specific epistemology, CA is nonetheless compatible with the social constructionist perspective of this research as CA analysis infers the meaning of participants' interactions on the basis of co-constructed, interdependent discursive practices (Mazur, 2004). Day and Kjærbeck (2013) further argue that the CA concepts of alignment and affiliation (see section 2.8.5) are useful micro-analytical tools to understand naturally occurring interactional practices, particularly from the perspective of positioning theory (see 2.2), which has tended to focus on analysing autobiographic narratives (Bamberg, 2006, as cited in Day & Kjærbeck, 2013). In my data analysis, I applied several CA concepts, and drew from non-CA literature that informed an understanding of the interactional pragmatics occurring in mobile phone message exchanges, as well as in the Chinese language and culture. Samples of the analyses using the conversation analytic approach as described in the remainder of this section are presented in Appendix L2.

I used the CA concept of epistemic asymmetry to analyse brokering interactions as the relative positioning of participants as being more (K+) or less (K-) knowledgeable (Heritage, 2012, 2013) in accomplishing a type of question–answer sequence known as an advice sequence (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). Based on an initial analysis of the data sets related to brokering interactions, I found that seekers (i.e., the key informants) were engaged in asking their brokers for information or advice about some academic-related topic. The CA literature refers to such information or advice-seeking sequences as *advice sequences* occurring in stretches of conversation in face-to-face settings (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Park, 2014; Waring, 2007), as well as in virtual environments such as internet-based chatrooms (Tsai & Kinginger, 2015). Similarly, I use the term *advice sequences* in my analysis of the data sets on brokering interactions.

In my analysis of the data sets from message exchanges (Linda–Grace, Linda–Emily, and Kim–Josh), however, I found distinctive features associated with whether the seeker was asking the broker for information or advice, as well as sequences that were related to some academic-related topic but whose questions were *not* about asking for information or advice. In the latter type of sequences, the participants' questions and responses contributed to a demonstration of affinity, that is, creating positive feelings in the social relationship (Bell & Daly, 1984). Hence, in the data sets of message exchanges, I distinguished three types of sequences: *information*, *advice*, and *affinity*.

In my analysis of audio-recorded brokering interactions between Jane and Tim, all sequences were considered advice sequences, similar to the analysis of writing consultation sessions in the CA literature (Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). As with the data sets of message exchanges, I also found distinctive features in the data sets of verbal exchanges, but, in this case, related to whether the broker's advice was accepted, resisted, or rejected. Hence, the Jane–Tim data set was analysed according to the following three types of sequences: *acceptance*, *resistance*, and *rejection*.

The analysis of all the interactional data-sets also made use of the CA concepts of alignment and affiliation (Steensig, 2013; Steensig & Drew, 2008; Stivers et al., 2011), as well as the non-CA concepts of politeness and face strategies in pragmatics (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Gu, 1990; Pan, 2000), which were articulated in individual interactional turns. I examined the interactional turns at the level of the semantic or literal content of the utterance (verbal and non-verbal), as well as how they made use of interactional resources such as acknowledgement tokens (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Jefferson, 1984; Pudlinski, 2002); complaints (Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005); laugh particles (Glenn, 2003); and troubles-talk (Jefferson & Lee, 1981). The analysis also included the pragmatic meaning of grammatical constructions such as interrogatives (Raymond, 2003) and verbs of obligation and imperatives (Shaw & Hepburn, 2013). However, as noted by Schegloff et al. (1996), different languages "provide different grammatical resources and structures" for accomplishing interactions (p. 28). For example, tag questions in English are often used to seek a response or confirmation from the addressee. On the other hand, tag questions in Chinese have a much wider range of functions (Hsin, 2016). Thus, I provided a more detailed explanation of Chinese grammatical constructions (e.g., tag questions, use of modals) in my analysis which was supported by formal references (Shei, 2014) for clarity.

The analysis of technology-mediated phone message exchanges further warranted an examination of interactional features unique to computer-mediated communication (CMC). One notable feature is the use of emoticons and emoji to expresses the sentiment or mood of the user (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Novak et al., 2015; Vandergriff, 2013). Although emoticons and emoji can be associated with positive and negative sentiments, as implied by the facial representations, the precise meanings are context and culture dependant (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Vandergriff, 2013). In addition, emoticons and emoji do not necessarily indicate feelings alone, but may be used in a pragmatic sense, that is, to display attitude, imply or perform actions, and other illocutionary acts (Dresner & Herring, 2010). Apart from emoticons and emoji, there are other non-linguistic resources used in CMC communication such as the non-standard use of punctuation (e.g., '!!!'), vocalisation (e.g., 'haha' to indicate laughter), and spellings or characters that represent prosody (e.g., 'hmm') (Herring, 2012; Vandergriff, 2013). As these various non-linguistic resources approximate some state of emotion, they are henceforth referred to as affective markers.

3.9 Summary

A multi-methodological approach was used to investigate the brokering practices of international EAL students at a New Zealand university. Focused ethnography was used to collect a range of data, namely interview responses, observational records, and interactional data. This research was situated within a social constructionist paradigm to recognise that social reality is co-constructed by participants in social processes and interaction. The use of self-reflexivity further recognises how I have positioned myself in this research, as well as contributing to the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations in the research process were also discussed as part of self-reflexivity. The following four chapters present the findings and analysis of the research. The general findings based on thematic analysis are presented in Chapter 4, while the CA analyses of the brokering interactions between the key informants and their respective broker(s) are presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

In presenting an account of brokering practices among my research participants, I first provide an explanation of the terms I use in this chapter as derived from the literature as well as from an analysis of the data. I then present an overview of the extent of brokering practices that each participant was involved in, categorising participants as non-seekers, moderate seekers, and active seekers. In describing participants' brokering practices, I highlight the types of brokering they engaged in, whether they approached peer or non-peer brokers, and the characteristics of their brokers[6]. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the findings in relation to the research sub-questions 1–4.

4.1 Brokering Practices: Terms and Definitions

To recap, the definition of brokering used in this research is: engaging in help-seeking social interactions outside the boundaries of formal instruction, so as to obtain valued resources (e.g., information or knowledge) related to the academic texts and practices encountered in the English-speaking academic institution. The person seeking help is referred to as the *seeker*, and the person providing help, the *broker*, that is, one who is able to provide such valued resources that would otherwise be difficult for the seeker to access.

From the analysis of the data, I identified three types of brokering: *language brokering* and *literacy brokering*, existing terms from the literature, and *resource brokering* which is derived from the data. Language brokering is the informal translation and interpretation from one language to another (Tse, 1995, 1996), and in this case, from English to the seekers' native language of Chinese/Mandarin. Literacy brokering is about making explicit the meaning and/or implications of academic texts and practices in relation to different areas of knowledge, i.e., genre knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and sociocultural knowledge (Perry, 2009). *Genre knowledge* refers to the features, purposes and organisation of academic texts such as essays and test questions; *linguistic knowledge* refers to grammar, vocabulary and other technical aspects of language; and *sociocultural knowledge* refers to the beliefs, values, and expectations associated with academic texts and practices.

[6] The findings relating to the types of brokering has been published in Lee (2018), and that relating to the characteristics of peer brokers has been published in Lee (2017c).

Resource brokering takes its name from a dictionary definition of *resource*: "A stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person … in order to function effectively" (Resource, 2017). The term is used to describe how brokers made available materials they were already in possession of, or demonstrated to the seeker how to access the materials, which then allowed the seeker to fulfil some academic demand such as completing assignments or preparing for tests. An overview of the various types of brokering is presented in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1. Overview of Types of Brokering

Type of brokering and definition	**Example**
Language brokering Informally translating or interpreting from English to the seeker's target language.	The broker provides an explanation of some academic text in Mandarin, the seeker's native language.
Literacy brokering Making explicit the meaning and/or implication of academic texts and practices in relation to different areas of knowledge.	Genre knowledge: The broker provides information about how to structure an essay. Linguistic knowledge: The broker provides correction of grammar usage in writing. Sociocultural knowledge: The broker provides advice on how to interact with classmates.
Resource brokering Making materials available to the seeker in order for the seeker to function effectively.	The broker shares his/her audio recording of a lecture with the seeker. The broker provides instructions on how to access an academic resource.

Apart from different types of brokering, I also distinguish between two types of brokers, peers and non-peers. Peers are defined as those from similar social or status groups who do not have power over each other as a result of their positions or responsibilities (Boud et al., 2001). Participants referred to peers in several ways: *classmates,* those enrolled in the same paper as them; *acquaintances*, who were fellow students but enrolled in other papers, sometimes loosely referred to as *friends*; *seniors*, who were students at the same institution but at an advanced level of study (e.g., in the second or third year); and finally *high achievers*, who were those with demonstrated academic capabilities (e.g., obtaining a top grade).

The latter two terms, *senior* and *high achiever*, were used by several Chinese participants and have additional connotations not obvious in the English renditions. *Senior* is derived from the Chinese term 学长 (*xuézhǎng*) and is used relationally in that a person's senior is someone who is at an advanced level of study relative to the person, rather than used as a label for students in a specific level of study (e.g., *senior* refers to undergraduates in their final year in a US university context). *High achiever*, on the other hand, is derived from a contemporary Chinese term, 学霸 (*xuébà*), literally meaning "academic overlord". Depending on the individual usage, the term may acknowledge the person's dedication to academic endeavours, or imply the person's desire to outdo others, and in the latter case, the term *overachiever* would be more appropriate.

While participants typically found brokers among their various peers, the key informants Linda, Kim and Jane also referred to seeking help from non-peer brokers. Non-peers can be described in almost opposite terms to peers; they are older and in more powerful positions or of higher status. The most commonly mentioned non-peers were learning advisors, typically English-speaking academic staff at a centralised or departmental unit at the institution. While learning advisors support all areas of learning, many of them focus on writing-related issues. Other non-peers included librarians, lecturers, and tutors. These non-peers were considered brokers as their assistance to participants existed outside formal instructional settings in that consultations were initiated by students and were not part of timetabled lessons. An overview of the types of brokers are presented in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2. Overview of Types of Brokers

Type of broker and definition	Example
Peer Peers are those from similar social or status groups who do not have power over each other.	*Classmates*: Those enrolled in the same paper *Acquaintances/Friends:* Fellow students who are enrolled in other papers *Seniors:* Students at the same institution but at an advanced level of study *High achievers:* Those with demonstrated academic diligence and capabilities
Non-peer Non-peers are typically older and have a higher level of power because of their positions or responsibilities.	*Learning advisors:* Academic staff at a centralised or departmental unit at the university who provided assistance with students' learning, particularly written assignments. *Librarians:* Those working at the university library. *Lecturers/Tutors:* Those who conduct lectures or tutorials of papers students are enrolled in.

4.2 Overview of Participants' Brokering Practices

I categorised participants according to the extent of their brokering practices within the period of one academic semester (see Table 4-3). There were four participants, Kevin, Simon, Annie, and Josh, whom I considered non-seekers as the brokering interactions they mentioned appeared to be one-off instances. The remaining six participants each reported several instances of brokering interactions with varying degrees of regularity. Two participants, Cindy and Henry, were considered moderate seekers as they made references to a few brokering interactions related to particular academic tasks such as assignments. Four participants, Sarah, Linda, Kim, and Jane, were considered active seekers because of the relatively broader range of brokering interactions they engaged in. Participants' brokering practices are explored in more detail in the subsequent sections that highlight participants' educational backgrounds, their particular academic challenges, and their choices of brokers.

4.2.1 Non-Seekers: Kevin, Annie, Simon, and Josh

Kevin

Kevin, a Mainland Chinese student in his early 40s, was enrolled in a Bachelor's degree programme. Prior to coming to New Zealand, he ran his own business in China. He continued to do so alongside his studies, and was often busy with non-academic matters such as business meetings. Because of his busy schedule I managed to conduct only two interviews with him in the early part of the semester, and as a result, obtained limited information on his brokering interactions. In any case, Kevin did not appear to be in need of much academic assistance. When I asked him about how he felt about his papers, he expressed confidence in succeeding, explaining that he had an advantage over his younger peers in terms of his higher English language proficiency and his ability to comprehend the academic content because of his related work experience (Kevin, Interview, 17 March 2016).

Furthermore, when I asked if he needed to ask for help, he indicated that there was not much he needed help with except for general English expressions which he clarified with domestic students, at the same time adding that he was the one who helped other Chinese students:

> Mostly, if I really need some language help, I prefer to ask help from my Kiwi classmates. For all the other things, sincerely speaking, I do not ask for any help from the Chinese students. Because they ask for my help instead ((laughs)). (Kevin, Interview, 7 April 2016).

Table 4-3. Overview of Participants' Brokering Practices

Category / Participant	**Non-seeker**				**Moderate seeker**		**Active seeker**			
	Kevin	**Simon**	**Annie**	**Josh**	**Cindy**	**Henry**	**Sarah**	**Linda**	**Kim**	**Jane**
Extent of brokering practices	Asked classmates about general English expressions.	Clarified assignment instructions with classmates through *WeChat* group chat.	Exchanged records of presentations with classmate. Clarified assignment instructions with classmate through *WeChat*.	Clarified assignment instructions with classmate through *Facebook Messenger*.	Clarified lecture content with lecturers in person and through email. Clarified lecture content and assignment instructions with classmates in person. Clarified assignment instructions with classmates in *Facebook Messenger* group chat.	Clarified lecture content with classmates in person. Exchanged photographs of slide presentations with classmate during tutorials. Asked senior about lecture content and test questions in person.	Clarified lecture content with classmates in person. Sought advice about assignments from classmate in person. Asked senior about test questions and study strategies in person.	Sought advice about lecture content and assignments regularly from two different classmates through text messages and *WeChat*. Sought feedback on written assignments from learning advisors.	Sought advice about lecture content and assignments from several different classmates in person and in *Facebook Messenger* individual and group chats. Sought feedback on written assignments from learning advisors.	Clarified assignment instructions with classmates in person and through *WeChat*. Sought feedback on written assignments from learning advisors and other staff members in person.

Kevin's role as a broker for his peers was verified by interviews with Sarah and Jane, who were his classmates in several common papers. Thus, Kevin's non-seeking behaviour can be explained by his own confidence in language and academic matters, as well as having to manage his own business.

Annie

Like Kevin, Annie was a mature student from Mainland China enrolled in a Bachelor's degree programme. She was in her early 30s and had prior working experience in China. She had also spent a short period of time in New Zealand for English language lessons in her mid-20s. She expressed confidence in her studies, and appeared to be a diligent and self-reliant student who made every effort to understand academic materials. When I asked Annie about her studies, she often mentioned listening to lecture recordings and translating lecture hand-outs from English into Chinese in order to gain a thorough understanding of the academic content. Furthermore, Annie was not inclined to interact with her classmates as they were typically much younger than she, and was particularly averse to interacting with younger students from China:

> Take for example our small group, those who are younger will not listen to your opinions. … Whatever you say, it's as if they didn't hear you. … . Younger domestic students will respect you. Even if they don't agree with your opinion, they will ask you to explain your point of view. There is this process of discussion. Chinese students will not do so. (Translated from Mandarin; Annie, Interview, 6 May 2016)

When she did mention instances of seeking help from others, she judged them as potentially inappropriate. On one occasion, Annie shared an incident where she and a co-national classmate helped each other capture the slide presentations which were only available during the tutorial:

> The tutor was talking about important points about the test. And I used my phone to record. But I couldn't take the photo of the PowerPoint slides, so I asked her if she could help me take a photo of it. … Perhaps what we're doing is not right. (Translated from Mandarin; Annie, Interview, 11 April 2016)

Audio-recording lessons and taking photographs of slide presentations were also mentioned by several other participants, and to my knowledge, were practices that were neither uncommon nor prohibited at the university. Nonetheless, Annie was self-conscious about using such resource brokering, that is, openly using mobile devices to capture important information that would otherwise be unavailable. Annie's ambivalence about the appropriateness of her actions suggests that this was not a regular occurrence, and neither did she mention other instances of such brokering elsewhere.

On another occasion, Annie mentioned a co-national classmate who was similarly aged and with whom she regularly communicated through the instant messaging application *WeChat*. When I asked if they discussed academic matters, Annie responded that they did not discuss much, and only about "very simple things" such as clarifying what the lecturer said in class (Translated from Mandarin; Annie, Interview, 6 May 2016). When I mentioned that other participants used *WeChat* to ask classmates about their assignments, Annie responded emphatically that she and her classmate would not do such a thing, citing the potential of committing plagiarism:

> We will not use WeChat to discuss our assignment. There's no way to discuss it. My %idea% your %idea%, when we talk about them together, there's a great possibility that our ideas start to become similar, and by the time it reaches the teacher, it becomes %copy%. So we just ask about things like whether the teacher defined the scope of the assignment, no, the teacher didn't, then we'll just have to read the book. (Translated from Mandarin[7]; Annie, Interview, 6 May 2016)

Thus, Annie's attitude of self-reliance and cautious approach towards seeking or receiving help appeared to discourage brokering interactions.

While Kevin and Annie's status as mature students, their self-confidence, and relatively richer life experience resulted in a lack of reported brokering practices, at least with their younger peers, Simon and Josh did not engage much in brokering practices for different reasons. Simon's brokering practices were at best half-hearted attempts, while Josh expressed discomfort with communicating with domestic peers.

Simon

At the time of participant recruitment, Simon, a Mainland Chinese student, gave the impression that he was a new student as he was enrolled in a first-year paper. It was only at the end of the first interview that I established that he was in his second semester of his first year, and that he was re-taking the first-year paper because he had failed it in the previous semester. Although Simon was more familiar with university life than the rest of the participants, he mentioned that he was taking a particularly difficult paper, and that he would seek help from fellow Chinese classmates through a *WeChat* group chat (i.e., multiple users sending messages to one another within a private group).

[7] Text enclosed within a pair percentage signs (%text%) indicates code-switching from Chinese/Mandarin to English in this and subsequent chapters.

However, Simon's brokering intentions did not appear to be realised as actual interactions. When I followed up with him in a subsequent interview about his discussion with classmates, he revealed that "not all of them [attend] class, let alone discuss anything" (Translated from Mandarin; Simon, Interview, 6 May 2016). According to Simon, his classmates were more interested in pursuing leisure activities than having academic discussions. While it would seem that Simon's peers let him down, it was also likely that Simon himself was occupied with non-academic interests as well. In our first interview, Simon shared with me how he was keen on building up his social network, and talked about helping friends with buying cars as he had already made connections with car dealers. Furthermore, our interview appointments were postponed or cancelled on several occasions because of some change in plans on Simon's part. As a result, I only managed to have three interviews with him and had limited opportunities to inquire about his brokering interactions, if indeed, there were any in the first place.

Josh

While Simon did not appear to be interested in having academic discussions in general, Josh, a Malaysian Chinese student, was a keen learner, but found it intimidating to interact with classmates who were overwhelmingly domestic students. Josh was enrolled in an honours-year programme after having completed his Bachelor's degree in the same discipline at a private English-medium university in Malaysia. Josh had completed much of his education in Malaysia in English-medium institutions, and was also confident of his own English language skills, particularly in reading and writing. However, he found it difficult to initiate conversation with his domestic classmates as he was "quite reserved" (Josh, Interview, 16 March 2016). Josh's reluctance to initiate conversation was also a result of his unease with interacting with people he found "too different" from his perspective:

> I think I gave up, actually, talking to the local Kiwis. They speak really fast. And their background is too different from me. I think if they don't choose to interact, if they don't take the initiative, then I won't as well. (Josh, Interview, 4 May, 2016).

In addition to communication and cultural barriers, Josh also encountered an age barrier between him and his domestic peers. In two of the four papers he enrolled in, there were a number of mature students in their 30s and 40s who had vastly different life experiences from Josh. Thus, during group discussions, these students would "speak a lot from their work experience" while Josh was hesitant to contribute because he only had experiences of being a student (Josh, Interview, 4 May, 2016). As a result, Josh preferred to engage in independent study ("manage [it] myself") rather than having to "take the initiative" to ask his classmates for help (Josh, Interview, 18 May 2016).

4.2.2 Moderate Seekers: Cindy and Henry

Cindy

In comparison to the non-seekers and active seekers, Cindy and Henry can be categorised as having a moderate level of brokering activity. Cindy was a Japanese undergraduate student who had already studied two years at her university in Japan, and had a reasonable foundation in her discipline. As an exchange student, she was enrolled in a 100-level paper (taken by first-year students) and two 200-level papers (taken by second- or third-year students), and was motivated to do well as the results of those papers counted towards her Bachelor's degree. Cindy shared that while she understood most of the academic materials she read, her main challenge was understanding what lecturers were saying, especially in the initial weeks. She often stayed behind after the lecture or emailed lecturers to ask questions about what she was not sure of, and thus demonstrated some level of engaging in literacy brokering in terms of better understanding the academic content. Cindy preferred to approach non-peers such as lecturers since, in her experience, they were the most knowledgeable and reliable:

> I think professor is better because he is the teacher. So in Japan, I also ask the professor more than friends because friends sometimes say wrong ((laughs)). (Cindy, Interview, 7 April 2016)

However, there were also times where Cindy engaged in peer brokering interactions, but in an incidental manner. For example, Cindy would sometimes ask classmates immediately after class to clarify the meaning of what the lecturer said or about the assignment instructions. Another occurrence of peer brokering took place in one of the 200-level papers, where students were typically in their second or third year of study. Cindy and other students took part in group chats via an instant messaging application, *Facebook Messenger*, to communicate about their group assignments. Cindy also used the group chat to clarify her understanding about individual assignments.

As I was unable to obtain permission from other members of the group chat to view the messages, I asked Cindy to describe to me her brokering interactions on *Facebook Messenger*. She said that she would ask questions about her assignments by posting messages in the group chat during the weekend before the assignment was due as that was the time most students would be working on assignments. The reason for doing so was because “the professor doesn’t check email on weekends” (Cindy, Interview, 7 April 2016). Cindy’s questions were about clarifying assignment instructions, and were usually answered by one or two domestic students immediately after posting her message. This manner of brokering was helpful for Cindy as the textual medium of *Facebook Messenger* allowed Cindy to read her broker’s answers at her own pace:

> Because I’m not good at listening and I sometimes miss words that are said. So I think text is good because I can read many times. (Cindy, Interview, 7 April 2016)

Cindy’s academic-related peer interactions, however, appeared to be on a superficial level. When I asked Cindy if she interacted with her classmates outside of lectures, she responded:

> No, because I think they have other friends. Because they are second or third year. So I don’t want to interrupt with their relation because I have other friends I meet out of the lecture. So I can communicate with the other friends. So that’s ok for me. (Cindy, Interview, 7 April 2016).

Cindy’s ‘other friends’ referred to fellow international students who stayed at the on-campus halls of residence, but whom she did not approach for academic help since they did not study the same papers as her. On the other hand, there was little opportunity to interact with potentially more knowledgeable peers such as classmates for a number of reasons. Cindy explained that after lectures students moved on to other lessons or activities, while she often stayed behind to speak to the lecturer. Even members of group assignments whom Cindy was acquainted with through *Facebook Messenger* were not regularly present during lectures. In addition, Cindy’s limited interaction with classmates could also be influenced by her verbal communication in English:

> I can listen but I can’t say my opinion clearly because first, I think about my opinion in Japanese, then translate to English. This takes a lot of time so when I try saying my opinion, the topic will change. (Cindy, Interview, 17 March 2016).

Thus, non-peer brokering appeared to be more effective than peer brokering as Cindy believed lecturers were more reliable than peers in providing clarification around academic content. While peer brokering provided supplementary support when lecturers were not available, these interactions were brief and addressed academic content at a superficial level as a result of the limited social interactions Cindy had with classmates in general.

Henry

Unlike Cindy, Henry did not consider non-peer brokers for assistance, but derived more benefit from peer brokers instead. Prior to commencing his Bachelors study, Henry had been in New Zealand for a period of six months to complete the university's preparatory programme to meet the entry requirements. Henry's chosen discipline was the most technical area of study among the participants. Henry did not find the academic content difficult to understand if it referred to mathematical calculations or technical terms that could be translated literally. However, he found it challenging to comprehend content that was descriptive and referred to abstract concepts which could not be easily translated. This was especially so when the content was verbally delivered during lectures.

Although his understanding during such lectures was usually partial, Henry did not find this to be a huge obstacle in managing his studies. He said that he would review lecture notes or look up reference materials, or simply memorise the model answers in English in preparation for tests:

> … because my English is not good, I will not pass if I write what I'm trying to say. If my English is good, I could understand something and then write the answer. But my grammar might interfere with my actual meaning. It's better if I memorise the answers. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 4 May 2016)

When I asked if he had asked the lecturers or tutors for help, Henry said he did not like to speak to them because of his "poor English speaking skills" (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 16 March 2016). When I asked if he had approached his Chinese classmates, Henry said he had, but found most of them to be of limited help:

> 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. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 16 March 2016)

Thus, Henry initially considered both peers and non-peers to be inadequate resources of academic help, appearing to rely on his own learning strategies.

There were, however, two scenarios of peer brokering that proved to be useful as revealed in later interviews. One scenario was similar to the instance of resource brokering in Annie's case, where Henry and his Chinese classmate helped each other take photographs of the slide presentations during tutorials using their mobile phones. The slides contained model answers to tutorial questions and were therefore valuable for test preparation. However, the sheer amount of detail on the slides made it difficult for Henry and his classmate to copy them verbatim, leading them to engage in a series of photo exchanges:

> 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. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 6 April 2016)

Another scenario involved language and literacy brokering between Henry and his senior, whom Henry came to know through a mutual acquaintance. Henry's senior was in her third year of Bachelors study in the same discipline as Henry, and had previously completed the paper that Henry was currently taking. While Henry and his senior were connected on *WeChat*, their brokering interactions took place mostly in person. The senior engaged in language brokering by using both English and Mandarin to explain the lecture notes for that particular paper, thus helping Henry understand the material more 'efficiently':

> If I had looked at materials in Chinese, it would not have impacted my productivity much. But with materials in English, my productivity is quite low; I would have to read it over and over again before I gained any information. So now I'm quite pleased with my study method. I will read the lecture slides [in English] once through and ask her the parts which I don't understand. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 6 April, 2016)

Henry's use of the term 'study method' (学习方法 xuéxífāngfǎ) reveals Henry's strategic attitude towards his senior's brokering assistance. This attitude was echoed when he approached her before the test to ask her about "special features of the test" and how to answer particular questions (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 4 May, 2016). The senior thus engaged in what can be described as literacy brokering in her explication of a particular type of academic text, that is, test questions. The senior's desirability as a broker was additionally influenced by her reputation as a high achiever (in the positive sense), which was in contrast to the indifferent attitude of Henry's classmates:

> When I'm with my classmates, they are the types who won't even look at the books. There's not much to talk to them about. I can only ask %senior%. That %senior% is the type who is better in her studies. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 4 May 2016)

Thus, the two scenarios of brokering can be said to be strategic, as Henry's choice of brokers addressed particular academic goals. Henry's brokering interactions with his senior appeared to be particularly helpful since his senior was able to address his queries about potential test questions which had had a relatively more direct and higher value in terms of maximising his academic results.

4.2.3 Active Seeker: Sarah

Among the active seekers was Sarah, a Mainland Chinese enrolled in a Bachelor's degree programme. Prior to enrolment, she had completed a year of tertiary level study at a private university in China, and had completed a six-month English language programme in New Zealand to meet the language entry requirements. Sarah appeared to be an academically motivated student, expressing on several occasions her desire to do well in her papers. To help her understand dense academic material encountered in several of her papers she would translate key information from lecture notes and tutorial questions into Chinese using online dictionaries, or use online resources such as *Wikipedia* to aid her understanding. When these strategies were insufficient, Sarah often reported asking a range of peers for help, preferring peers to the lecturers or tutors as she was worried about her "poor speaking language" in terms of being understood, as well as feeling embarrassed in front of teachers (Sarah, Interview, 14 March 2016).

Many of the peers Sarah approached, however, did not materialise as brokers. Sarah tended to approach fellow Chinese classmates for assistance because they shared a common language, thus easing the process of communication. However, she recognised that many of them were not much more knowledgeable than her, hence were unsuitable as brokers (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016). Towards the end of the semester, Sarah also realised that many of her peers did not share her academic goals, thus contributing to the lack of brokering interactions between them:

> Sometimes I think I want to go for a higher result, they would say, oh come on, pass is okay. (Sarah, Interview, 13 June 2016)

On other occasions, Sarah approached domestic students on the assumption that their native language proficiency meant having greater understanding of the academic content. However, these native English speakers were not able to offer assistance either. While some domestic students were more knowledgeable about some topics, they were unable to communicate effectively with Sarah. For example, Sarah asked domestic students in her tutorial group to explain the meaning of the tutorial questions, but found that she could not make sense of their answers as they "mov[ed] on very quickly", and she felt it was impolite to ask them to slow down (Sarah, Interview, 14 March 2016). On another occasion, Sarah asked to look at a domestic student's tutorial notes but found his handwriting to be indecipherable, and was similarly too embarrassed to seek clarification concerning what he had written (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016). On other occasions, the domestic student was not as knowledgeable as Sarah had imagined:

> Yeah, I mean, he's Kiwi. He should have [studied] global history in his high school in English, so I asked him and he said, "Sorry, this is also so difficult for me". I imagine it's easy for native speaker because you're required to write such long paragraphs in your mother language. It would be easier for you, a native speaker, but not so easy for international student. (Sarah, Interview, 13 June 2016)

On the other hand, the peers whom Sarah did engage with as brokers had particular characteristics. Firstly, they were either co-national or ethno-linguals, and could therefore communicate easily with Sarah; and secondly, they had a proven academic track record, so to speak, and thus could be relied upon for assistance. Among such peers were classmates, and similar to Henry's case, seniors who were part of Sarah's wider social network outside the classroom.

One of Sarah's classmate brokers was Kevin, introduced earlier in this chapter. Sarah and Kevin were classmates in three papers, and also group members for an assignment for one of the papers. Based on her personal interactions with him and observations of his academic performance in class, Sarah concluded that he was a reliable broker:

> We have three papers together. I think … 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)

Sarah referred to their brokering interactions as "talk[ing] about studies" (Sarah, Interview, 4 April 2016). However, it was not clear what aspects of academic learning Kevin provided help with, except for one mention of a particular brokering interaction regarding an assignment about world cultures. Sarah had found it difficult to write an essay on a topic of a particular culture within a 100-word limit. In response, Kevin suggested that she write about only one aspect of the topic (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016), thus engaging in literacy brokering of genre knowledge by providing guidance on essay structure.

Unlike Kevin, whom Sarah became familiar with through their frequent interactions, Sarah's other classmate brokers were identified only later in the semester, when results of assignments were released. For example, one of them had demonstrated her capabilities through her consistently excellent results in a paper on academic writing:

> One of my classmates, she's really good at writing. For her, whatever test or assignment, the assignment she post on Moodle or through the Faculty, she always got A or A+. … I will ask for [her for] some help because I want to improve my final results. I don't want any C. (Sarah, Interview, 13 June 2016)

In the one-off brokering interaction that took place just before the end-of-semester examinations, Sarah asked the classmate about academic referencing, thus suggesting that they engaged in literacy brokering of genre knowledge in relation to a particular feature of academic writing.

Just as classmate brokers were chosen on the basis of their demonstrated academic competence, seniors were approached because of their prior achievement in the papers that Sarah was taking, particularly the economics paper which Sarah found the most challenging. One of these seniors was Sarah's flatmate and provided Sarah with a copy of the Chinese version of the economics textbook which she herself had used, thus demonstrating resource brokering:

> She just emailed me a PDF of the text book, it's a Chinese version. I think it's a lot of help. They have a lot of professional words and vocabulary in our textbook I can't just understand it as good as the native speakers. So maybe I need some help from the Chinese version. So I think that's actually a lot of help. (Sarah, Interview, 4 April 2016)

Another senior was found through the use of Sarah's social network on *WeChat* with Sarah posting a message to find out who among her contacts of primarily co-national classmates and acquaintances had taken the economics paper before. One of her acquaintances replied that he took the paper the previous year and "had very good results," which Sarah interpreted as an invitation to ask him for advice:

> He answered, I took it last year and I had very good results. So I said, I will probably ask you some time. (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016)

Similarly to Henry, Sarah also highlighted that her senior was a high-achiever, suggesting that this was an important criterion in selecting him as a broker:

> 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. (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016)

Sarah met with her senior several times in person to ask him about how to do well in tests for the economics paper. The senior engaged in literacy brokering of genre knowledge of economics tests by sharing with Sarah strategies to answer test questions. He also engaged in language brokering as he was able to explain economics-related terms and concepts in Mandarin, thus bridging the language gap that Sarah encountered when communicating with native English speakers:

> But I did very badly in the short answer, only 10 points or 10 percent. So I asked my senior who is also Chinese. … I asked my senior to teach me. 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. (Sarah, Interview, 9 May 2016)

In addition to language and literacy brokering, the senior also engaged in resource brokering by sharing his lecture notes and test papers from the previous year, and suggested *YouTube* videos that Sarah could view to revise test topics (Sarah, Interview, 13 June 2016). Like Henry's, Sarah's brokering interactions with her senior were not only helpful in terms of being able to communicate in their shared native language, but also addressed test questions and preparation strategies which increased her potential for achieving better academic results.

In sum, Sarah's brokering practices were made up of both failed and successful attempts. Failed attempts at receiving brokering assistance resulted from approaching co-national peers who could not provide answers to her questions or were academically less motivated, or approaching domestic native-English speaking peers who were either also limited in their knowledge or unable to communicate their knowledge effectively. Successful brokering attempts, on the other hand, occurred with academically capable co-national peers and seniors, especially those who had demonstrated their mastery of particular academic topics.

4.2.4 Active Seeker: Linda (Key Informant)

Linda was a Mainland Chinese student enrolled in a one-year bridging programme for students who wanted to pursue postgraduate qualifications such as a Master's degree but who did not meet all the entry requirements. Linda had previously completed her Bachelor's degree at a public university in China, and was enrolled in 200- and 300-level papers typically taken by second- or third-year undergraduate students at the university in New Zealand. Like Sarah, Linda was a highly motivated student. The prerequisite grade average for entry into a Master's level qualification was a B+, and thus Linda was focused on achieving high grades for her assignments and tests to secure entry into the postgraduate programme of her choice. Like those participants who had previously completed university study for a Bachelor's degree (e.g., Annie and Josh), Linda engaged in personal study strategies such as spending more time on reading academic materials and finding out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Apart from personal study, Linda also regularly sought out peer and non-peer brokers in her first semester, but only non-peer brokers in her second semester. Her non-peer brokers included lecturers and tutors from whom she sought clarification as and when the need arose (e.g., on lecture content and assignment instructions), as well as learning advisors whom she had to make appointments to see.

The learning advisors were based at a centralised learning advisory unit of the university and provided feedback on students' draft assignments. Linda encountered two different methods of feedback from these advisors, referred to by Linda as 'direct' and 'indirect' methods. In the direct method, the advisor read Linda's draft carefully and corrected all errors in grammar, logic and structure, essentially "replac[ing] [the] wrong sentences" with the corrected versions (Linda, Interview, 24 May 2016), as seen in the analysis of the writing sample below:

Sample 1. Linda, Annotated essay, 26 April 2016

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final step-integration. After the new perspective is created, people may find it is highly objective and personal, and be willing to test whether it is true or authentic. In order to examine it, Mezirow (1990b, p. 11) recommended ~~to find~~ finding "the best judgment of the most informed, objective, and rational persons" and engaging in have a "special form of dialogue" ~~which is~~ a process called "discourse". During discourse, educators are believed to have an important role in creating safety and supporting

with those judgments,

a safe and supportive environment.

Aspects of linguistic knowledge brokered

- Sentence construction: Introducing additional words or re-ordering words to make sentence meaning clearer or more coherent (e.g., "engaging in a special form of dialogue with those judgments", instead of "have a special form of dialogue")
- Vocabulary: introducing appropriate vocabulary (e.g., "a process" instead of "which is called") or correcting words (e.g., "a safe and supportive environment" instead of "safety and supporting"
- Grammar: Made changes to grammatical expression (e.g., "finding" instead of "to find")

Thus, in direct feedback, there is evidence of literacy brokering of linguistic knowledge in terms of supplying the corrected versions of various language items. On the other hand, in the indirect method, the advisor pointed out Linda's errors but asked Linda to suggest possible answers instead. Linda recognised the benefit of the indirect approach to help her become more independent in writing, particularly in the second semester. Nonetheless, she was focused on the short-term goals of doing well and therefore preferred receiving surface or superficial corrections, rather than being involved in the process of making the corrections herself:

> I think she's trying to tell me the problem in the essay that I should take care of very carefully rather than correct it for one time. … But you know, for students who need to submit the assignment, the most important thing is that you correct it ((smiles)). (Linda, Interview, 16 August 2016).

While Linda viewed non-peer brokers as helping her enhance her written assignments and therefore maximise her results, Linda approached two particular peer brokers, Grace and Emily, to help her become more familiar with a new academic environment in her first semester of study. Both Grace and Emily were Linda's classmates in different papers and had already completed at least two years' study, and were therefore already familiar with academic expectations and requirements at this particular university. Although Linda saw her classmates in person during lectures, most of their communication was via instant messaging applications, as they did not have other shared activities or social spaces apart from lessons. Linda and her brokers provided permission for me to collect data on their brokering interactions, of which a detailed analysis will be presented in Chapter 5. The rest of this section presents an overview of the backgrounds of Linda's peer brokers, and the types of brokering they engaged in.

Grace was a third-year domestic undergraduate student whom Linda had met during the first lecture in one of Linda's papers. Although Linda typically "searched [for] help from Chinese student[s] first" (Linda, Interview, 3 May 2016), the absence of other Chinese students in the lecture and the impression that Grace did not know anyone else in the paper (as she was sitting by herself) prompted Linda to initiate contact with her and thereafter often communicated with her through mobile phone text messages. Emily, Linda's other peer broker, was a Chinese international student, also in her final year of study, and a classmate in one of Linda's other papers. Like Linda's interactions with Grace, Linda's interactions with Emily occurred mostly through mobile phone messages, in this case, through *WeChat*. Linda, however, pointed out that her interactions with Emily were more frequent ("almost every day") and were about both academic and non-academic matters, since they could communicate through their common native language:

> Of course for her, we communicate more, because we all speak Chinese. I will ask something including academic things. … Every time I have a question about life, or lectures, I will text her. (Linda, Interview, 5 April 2016)

Linda's brokering interactions could be classified as either concerned with obtaining information or facts, or requesting advice. Information-seeking interactions were related to clarifying the content of lectures, or locating academic resources, as well as clarifying procedures related to tests and assignments. Advice-seeking interactions, on the other hand, were concerned with the evaluation or interpretation of some academic text or practice. Information- and advice-seeking interactions could also be further categorised as resource brokering or literacy brokering.

Information-seeking interactions about academic resources were essentially resource brokering. For example, Linda sought to clarify paper-related information such as the tutorial schedule, as well as determine the location of academic resources such as lecture recordings. In some instances, the process of resource brokering involved detailed and specific directions as seen in Emily's responses in Extract 1.

Extract 1. *WeChat* exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box), 23 March 2016

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	**23 March 2016 approx. 13:34** 你知道有些课录像了， 可以在网上看回放不？ You know those lessons that have been recorded, can we watch them online?
2	可以的啊 Yes sure
3	moodle 课点进去 Click on the subject in %moodle%
4	我找不到 I can't find it
5	**23 March 2016 13:39**  {Emily: Image of the website}
6	先点进来 First click to enter the subject
7	哦哦 Ok
8	然后右边拉下去 Then on the right side pull it down

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
9	看到 captureapp see %captureapp%
10	那就是录像 That is the recording
11	哦哦， 我瞅瞅 Ok, I see it
12	**23 March 2016 13:40** 点那 society and technology 就是今天的 Click on %society and technology% which is today['s lecture]
13	昂昂， 瞅见了 Yeah yeah, found it

Not only was Emily able to use the image of the website to aid her explanation but, as the timestamps in turns #1, #5, and #12 indicate, she also provided the information in quick succession, thus meeting Linda's brokering needs in an efficient and immediate manner. Considering that previous mentions of resource brokering involved digital media as well (e.g., photographs of slide presentations, PDF files), resource brokering can thus be said to be afforded by participants' personal digital communication devices.

Information-seeking interactions related to tests and assignments, on the other hand, demonstrated literacy brokering in that the features or processes of these academic texts and practices were made explicit by the brokers. For example, Grace explained the meaning of 'multi-choice questions' with regard to an upcoming test (Extract 2), and Emily explained the process of submitting assignments (Extract 3).

Extract 2. Text message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Grace (White box), 4 April 2016

Turn #	**Text message**
1	Grace...I am confused about the meaning of multi-choice questions. How many right answers should we choose? one answer or one answer more?

Turn #	Text message
2	It means that there are a range of answers given to you, generally four, and you choose one answer that you think it is :)
3	Excellent clear explanation! I got it. Cheers~

Extract 3. *WeChat* message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box), 4 April 2016

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	老头那个课的论文纸质版就直接交给学院的前台吗？ 还是有信箱之类的啊 For grandpa’s subject, his essay is in paper format so do I just submit it at the faculty front desk? Or is there a letter box or something?
2	前台左面进去有信箱交的 To the left of the front desk when you enter there is a letter box for submission
3	作业都是要找到信箱交的不是交前台的 You need to find the letter box and submit the assignments, not submit it at the front desk
4	前台是领改好的作业的地方 Front desk is the place for collecting assignments that have been marked
5	昂，好来，知道了知道了 Yeah, ok, now I know

Understanding the procedural aspects of assignments, in particular, was a recurrent topic in the brokering interactions between Linda and Emily. In addition to asking about submission processes, Linda also clarified with Emily about how documents should be named, submitting assignments online, and the time taken for grading assignments.

In contrast to information-seeking interactions, advice-seeking interactions were concerned with the explication of particular academic texts and practices, rather than finding out procedural facts. Emily, rather than Grace, provided more of such interactions in which she demonstrated literacy brokering by explaining what was expected of assignments, as exemplified in Extract 4.

Extract 4. *WeChat* message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box), 21 March 2016

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	嗯， 是， 不过她没说上限是多少吧 Mm, yes, but she didn’t say what the upper limit was right
2	不能写很多的 Can’t write a lot for sure
3	1000 字的话上下多 10％ 的字数允许 For 1000 words, the allowance is no more than 10% above or below
4	超过也是要扣分的 Pass the limit and marks will be deducted
5	反正学校 essay 都这要求上下不超过 10％ 范围 Anyway all school %essay% have this requirement of going beyond the 10% limit

In Extract 4, Linda asks Emily for advice on how to write a particular essay and raises the issue of word count in turn #1. In response, Emily tells Linda what the word limit is (turn #3), but also advises her to observe the limit as she will incur a penalty if she does not do so (turn #4), and reveals that the word limit is a common academic practice (turn #5). Presumably based on her prior experiences with other assignments, Emily was thus not only able to share particular genre knowledge of academic texts (i.e., word limit), but also explain the implications of not abiding by this academic requirement.

In contrast, Linda’s advice seeking interactions with Grace were not only fewer but also demonstrated limited literacy brokering, as seen in the following extract.

Extract 5. Text message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Grace (White box), 17 March 2016

Turn #	Text message
1	Hey, Grace, I have some trouble in one of my assignments.😭😭😭 do you know how to write a journal article review?
2	Hey! I have a bit of an idea!
3	What's that? I am so frustrated now. I never write a journal article review before. Have no idea 😭😭😭😭😭😭😭
4	There's links on the uni page on the library that tell you how to do it all!
5	Um, which section on the library website should I enter?
6	No like on the uni page there's a tab for the library and it should have resources or something on there
7	Ok, I am looking at the web now but find nothing about journal article review……
8	Google it lol
	{“lol” stands for laughing out loud}

In Extract 5, turn #1, Linda asks Grace for advice on how to write a journal article review, a particular genre of academic writing. Grace, however, only directs Linda to an external source (turns #4, #6, and #8), rather than providing an explanation of the features of the text or the writing process. In other words, Grace was not able to meet Linda’s need for literacy brokering, but offered resource brokering instead.

Emily’s relatively greater ability at literacy brokering not only involved explicating genre knowledge but also sociocultural knowledge, as seen in the following extracts.

Extract 6. *WeChat* message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box), 2 March 2016

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	有的课有 required reading，读不完会怎么样啊 Some classes have %required reading%, what happens if I don't finish reading them?
2	哈哈哈那些我基本不看 Hahaha basically I don't read those
3	感觉只有超级学霸才能全读下来 Feels like only high achievers will be able to read them all
4	一般就看 ppt 和老师上课讲到的第几页第几页看一看这样 I usually just read the %ppt% and take a look at the pages the teacher referred to in class

Extract 7. *WeChat* message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box), 7 May 2016

Turn #	**WeChat message**
1	做个视频的话，有个故事在用简单的话说复杂的事儿是不是更吸引人一些... If we're doing a video, using a simple story to tell about complex things wouldn't that attract people's attention more …
2	要不你单独发学霸提提意见 Why don't you send an individual message to Boss and offer your opinion
3	或者就是你写出来周五给她看看 Or you can write it out and let her take a look on Friday

In Extract 5, Linda asks Emily about the consequence of not completing the required readings (i.e., academic texts assigned by the lecturer for students to read) for a paper in turn #1. In response, Emily firstly reveals her attitude towards readings (turns #2–3), before suggesting just reading the presentation slides and selected pages (turn #4). Emily's advice thus reflects her personal beliefs and attitudes towards this academic practice. In Extract 6, the interaction concerned a domestic student and group leader referred to as Boss, an idiomatic translation of the Chinese term 学霸, in this case, meaning *overachiever*. This person had proposed a presentation topic in an email to the group which Linda and Emily were part of. After Linda complains to Emily about Boss's suggested topic in turn #1, Emily provides two suggestions on how to respond to Boss's proposed presentation topic: either replying directly to Boss's email (turn #2), or waiting until a later time to talk to her in person (turn #3). As Emily had experienced working in groups before, her suggestions reflected particular beliefs and values she had about communicating with group members—that suggesting a different opinion should be done privately.

Overall, Linda engaged in both resource and literacy brokering, and had more brokering interactions with Emily than with Grace. Of the two peer brokers, Emily offered a greater degree of literacy brokering by providing both information and advice related to a range of academic needs. This was unsurprising, since as co-nationals Linda and Emily shared the same native language and culture. Their interactions were therefore more frequent and also more nuanced. A detailed analysis of the dynamics of Linda's peer brokering interactions will be presented in Chapter 5.

4.2.5 Active Seeker: Kim (Key Informant)

Kim completed her Bachelor's degree at a private university in Taiwan, and was enrolled in level 200- and 300-level papers as part of a one-year bridging programme as a pre-requisite for a Master's degree programme. Prior to university study she completed a six-month academic English language programme in New Zealand. Kim shared many similarities with Linda, such as being a highly motivated student, actively using study strategies (e.g., previewing lecture content), and having both peer brokers and non-peer brokers, in this case, learning advisors.

Like Linda, Kim approached lecturers and tutors when she needed clarification, and also sought the help of learning advisors at the centralised unit. Kim approached the learning advisors to correct her writing mistakes so that her assignment would be awarded marks based on her mastery of the subject rather than be penalised on the basis of language mistakes:

> … I would like to make it easier for my lecturers to read it. I would like to get the mark I expect it to be. (Kim, Interview, 17 May 2016).

Kim also encountered different advisors who provided both direct and indirect feedback, which she recognised as having different purposes. Kim referred to the direct feedback as advisors correcting "all the mistakes" (Kim, Interview, 17 May 2016) and "proofreading" (Kim, Interview, 31 May 2016), as seen in the following sample.

Sample 2. Kim, Annotated essay, 12 April 2016

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children. Over the past 12 years, ~~Mr. Smith~~ John has never given up the idea of changing his career one day, but he had never really tried since he had to be responsible for raising his children and ~~all the~~ for meeting the ~~expender~~ expence of the family. A Few years ago, he met his ex-wife at a ~~gathering~~ party of high school, and they have been back together since ~~then and~~ they marry ~~for the second time~~ remarried in this January of this year, and his wife gets along with their children ~~quite well~~. Moreover, the couple ~~starts to~~ are now share ing household responsibilities a house and together. Therefore, Mr. Smith finally has a chance to change his career.

Aspects of linguistic knowledge brokered

- Sentence construction: Introduced additional words or re-ordered words to make sentence meaning clearer or more coherent (e.g., "his wife gets along quite well with their children", instead of "his wife gets along with their children quite well")
- Vocabulary: Introduced appropriate vocabulary (e.g., "remarried" instead of "marry for the second time") or correcting words (e.g., "expense" instead of "expender")
- Grammar: Made changes to grammatical expression (e.g., "are now sharing a house" instead of "starts to share household")

As in the sample of Linda's annotated essay (Sample 1), Kim received literacy brokering of linguistic knowledge through direct correction of language errors. On the other hand, advisors who provided indirect feedback were concerned with helping Kim become more independent:

> They tend to ask you the questions that make you aware of your mistakes you've made. And teach you how to be independent in correcting my work. So I think this is also the part that is really helpful. (Kim, Interview, 17 May 2016).

Although Kim appreciated the "different help from different tutors", it was the more superficial correction of her mistakes that allowed her to achieve her desired results, and which, in her view, had a more obvious impact on her academic achievement (Kim, Interview, 31 May 2016).

In addition to non-peer brokers, Kim also received assistance from peer brokers found among her classmates. Some of these brokers were domestic students with whom she worked on group assignments, while others were fellow international students with whom she engaged individually. According to Kim's interview responses, the domestic student members of her group appeared to offer brokering assistance, rather than Kim actively seeking help from them. In the context of group work, they helped Kim with organising the content of individual assignments, and edited her written work by restructuring her sentences and changing vocabulary (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016). As the only non-native English speaker in the class, Kim was also conscious that she was "lucky" to have patient brokers:

> So we pretty much help each other, how to organise, what information we should include. And we even print out our work and we check for each other. That is really helpful for me. Somehow I think I am quite lucky to meet these. So far I know I'm the only non-English-speaker in the class. … So I'm very thankful they are willing to wait patiently for me about my English. …They will explain slowly step by step to me. (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

Nonetheless, Kim felt that her interactions with these native English speakers, particularly face-to-face interactions, were uncomfortable, attributing it to her personal fear of speaking in English:

> Because they are still English speakers and sometimes I really can't catch up with what they are really talking about. I try my best to catch up with them. And somehow, not all the time I feel comfortable. … I think the main problem is not because they are unfriendly. The main problem is because of my English. I'm still afraid to speak English in front of them. Because every time I'm with them, I'm aware that I have to speak English ((laughs)). (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

Kim thus preferred to approach fellow international students when she had questions about assignments, as she felt less intimidated by communicating with those who shared a similar social status or cultural background. However, she was also mindful of selecting brokers who were "good in English" as they were thought to have a better understanding of the academic content (Kim, Interview, 5 April 2016). There were two such brokers, one of whom was a classmate from India who, like Kim, was in her first semester of study in the bridging programme, and was in the same class as Kim for three papers. According to Kim, because they were in the same situation, they had "the same feelings" about the unfamiliar academic environment (Kim, Interview, 15 March 2016). Her Indian classmate, however, had a much stronger English language proficiency than Kim, as she had completed her Bachelor's degree in English, and appeared to display greater academic competence:

> … 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. … 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)

The classmate's explanation of how to organise a report suggests that they engaged in literacy brokering in terms of making explicit the genre knowledge of an academic text. Such interactions with this classmate took place before or after class, as and when Kim needed to clarify her understanding about assignments. However, Kim pointed out that they did not "hang out together" (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016), and thus their interactions were limited to those brief encounters between classes.

In contrast, Kim had much more frequent social interactions with another classmate broker, Josh, who had one paper in common with her. This was partly because of their reciprocal brokering assistance for each other. They had met before the start of semester during a university orientation event. Josh initially approached Kim as a broker for non-academic matters, while she later approached him with her academic queries:

> We kind of help each other because I've been here for roughly a year. And he's not really an active person to explore something different. When he encounters something that's related to life or daily shopping, he will ask me how to do it. For most of the academic problems, I rely on him more than he relies on me. (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016)

Kim recognised that Josh's "English skills [were] better than [hers]" as a result of his previous education in English-medium institutions. In addition, Josh was also knowledgeable about the subject matter as he had taken a similar paper in his previous course of study. Another important reason for their frequent brokering interactions was Josh's ability to communicate with Kim in her native language, Chinese, which made it "easier to do things" (Kim, Interview, 5 May 2016), just as Linda had more frequent communication with her co-national broker, Emily, in their native language.

Kim's academic-related brokering interactions with Josh took place through *Facebook Messenger* as part of their everyday social interactions. Similar to Linda's peer brokering interactions, Kim's brokering interactions with Josh could be classified as either information- or advice-seeking interactions, and were mostly related to literacy brokering. An analysis of the dynamics of their interactions will be presented in Chapter 6.

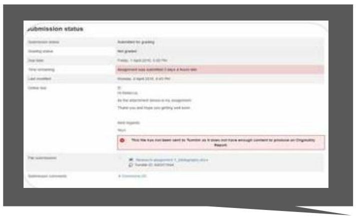
Kim's information-seeking interactions were concerned primarily with understanding the features of a particular reference style, that is, APA (American Psychological Association) style, and the procedural aspects of online assignments (i.e., assignments that had to be completed using an internet-based programme). As mentioned previously, the messaging application allowed the use of images to aid textual explanations, as well as for the information to be delivered in a timely manner. The following extracts illustrate how this was done in the brokering interactions on APA style, and an internet-based plagiarism-checking programme respectively.

Extract 8. *Facebook Messenger* exchange between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box), 21 March 2016

Turn #	***Facebook*** **message**
1	title page 封面嗎? Is the %title page% on the cover?
2	哈哈 Haha
3	running head 又是什麼? 😛 And what's %running head%? 😛
4	 {Josh: Image of APA style guide}
5	第一页 First page
6	running head 就是每一面都会出现的 title %running head% is what will appear on every page as the %title%
7	那有字型大小限制嗎? Then are there restrictions in font size?
8	通常都是 times new roman 十二 Usually it's %times new roman% 12
9	如果老师没说可以改，我以前老师也让用 arial If the teacher didn't say it can be changed, back then my teacher also allowed us to use %arial%

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
10	好喔好喔～ 那 running head 都要大寫是嗎? O I C~ Then %running head% is all in capital letters?
11	第一面的大写而已 Only capital letters on the first page
12	第二面可以普通的 Second page you can use normal
13	好喔～ 謝謝你 OK~ Thank you

Extract 9. *Facebook Messenger* exchange between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box), 4 April 2016

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
1	 {Kim: Screenshot of assignment submission status on e-learning management system}
2	這是成功的意思嗎? Does this mean it’s successful?
3	是交了 It’s been submitted
4	我不清楚 Uni 是怎样啦 I’m not sure about %Uni%
5	可是我之前的大学，第一次 turnitin 十分钟就有结果 But at my previous university, after you use %turnitin% for the first time you get the results in just ten minutes
6	第二次就要一天 The second time then it requires a day

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
7	喔喔～ 好... O I C ...
8	所以可能你明天这个时候再看有没有 percent So you may have to check tomorrow at this time to see if there's any %percent%
9	好喔 謝謝你 Alright thank you

In Extract 8, Kim asks Josh a series of questions about the features of an APA-formatted document. In Turns #1 and #3, Kim asks about the title page and running head respectively. In turn #4, Josh sends an image of an APA style guide and refers to it in turns #5–6 in response to Kim's questions. This is immediately followed by two question–answer sequences, turns #7–9 and turns #10–13, on different aspects of font usage. In Extract 9, turn #1, Kim sends Josh a screenshot, that is, an image of what is on her device screen, to show Josh the outcome of using the plagiarism-checking programme for her assignment, and in turn #2, asks him if that outcome is successful or not. In turn #3, Josh provides his interpretation of the screenshot, but also offers additional information based on his prior experience of using the software, and suggests to Kim that she look for the percentage score when checking the outcome at a later time.

While Kim's information-seeking interactions involved literacy brokering by addressing the technical aspects of assignments, advice-seeking interactions attended to literacy brokering by unpacking the meaning and implications of assignment questions, as seen in the following example.

Extract 10. *Facebook Messenger* exchange between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box), 10 May 2016

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
1	問你喔～ assignment3 的 critical reflection 要看書寫嗎? 還是就自己的想法? Can I ask you~ for the %critical reflection% in %assignment3% do we need to refer to readings to write? Or just our own thoughts?

Turn #	*Facebook* message
2	我有看啊，不然写不出哈哈 I did read up, otherwise won't be able to write it haha
3	也有 reference Also had %reference%
4	WOW 好喔~ %WOW% Alright~
5	我以為是自己的體驗 哈哈 I thought it was about our own experience haha
6	好喔 謝啦! Alright thanks!
7	可以写自己的体验哦, 加自己的经验下去, 老师可能更喜欢 You can write about your own experience, adding your own experience, the teacher might like it even better
8	你看書 怎麼把你的想法濃縮到 500 字阿? You referred to books. How did you manage to squeeze your ideas within 500 words?
9	看書不就有很多資料? Isn't there a lot of material when you refer to books?
10	也还好哦，就各自两个优缺点 It's okay really, just raise advantages and disadvantages of each perspective
11	OKOK 好喔~ OKOK Alright~

In Extract 10, Kim asks Josh about whether writing a critical reflection, a genre of academic writing, requires her to refer to readings or if it is about sharing her own ideas. Josh responds by referring to what he has done in turns #2–3. He not only indicates that readings are required, but that they are also necessary for writing the reflection ("不然写不出" / otherwise won't be able to write it), and that the readings also need to be referenced. In turn #5, Kim reveals that she had thought it was about writing about her own experience, to which Josh explains in turn #7 that it is acceptable and potentially desirable to write about personal experiences as additional content. This leads to Kim's follow-up question in turns #8–9 about managing the word limit. In turn #10, Josh explains that it is not an issue if she organises the writing in a particular way. Thus, Josh engages in literacy brokering when he makes explicit the genre of critical reflection by drawing on his own academic practices which he had developed in his previous study experience.

In summary, Kim did not engage as much with brokers who were native English-speaking domestic students as she did with fellow international students, especially those who demonstrated high levels of English proficiency. While Kim viewed their English language proficiency as a proxy for academic competence, it would be more accurate to say that it was the brokers' prior academic experience in English-medium institutions that contributed to their academic competence rather than their language proficiency alone. Kim's brokering interactions were further enhanced by one particular broker's bilingual competence in English and Chinese, as it enabled her to engage with her broker in her native language of Chinese.

4.2.6 Active Seeker: Jane (Key Informant)

Jane was enrolled in a Bachelor's degree programme and had previously studied at a private university in China. At the university, she took subjects related to Economics, as well as academic English classes, for a period of 18 months before deciding to enrol in a New Zealand university and study a different discipline. Compared to the other active seekers, Jane did not engage as much with the academic content through personal study. During our interviews in the first semester, she often used the phrase "云里雾里" (*yúnlǐwùlǐ*), literally meaning 'in the clouds and fog', to express how she could not fully understand her lectures and tutorials. For her, the English language was "a barrier ... [and] a big problem" (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 21 March 2016). While Jane could understand "a few words and sentences", sometimes with the aid of online translations, "understanding the whole lecture [was] impossible" because of the highly academic and specialised vocabulary (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 21 March 2016). Furthermore, Jane did not consider herself "the hardworking type" in terms of spending extra time and effort to understand her academic materials (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 4 April 2016).

While Jane attempted to search among her peers for help, most of them did not appear to be any more knowledgeable than she was:

> … I only know a few [Chinese students]. 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)). (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 11 April 2016)

Instead, Jane’s strategy was to maximise her chances of securing marks that counted toward her final result. The term *strategy* is derived from a term Jane used herself, “套路” (*tàolù*), a contemporary Chinese term referring to practical methods or behaviour to cope with a difficult situation. The term may also have a derogatory meaning as it may imply an intention to deceive. The potentially ambiguous term is nonetheless apt for the kinds of strategic practices that Jane engaged in, as seen in the ways she “made use” of the grading system. For example, in the first semester, Jane found that group work during tutorials allowed her to complete the assignment “[without having] to think about all the questions on [her] own” and yet achieve a high grade (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 27 April 2016). In another example, in the second semester, Jane realised that it was her physical presence in tutorials and not whether she spoke up during group discussions that counted towards her attendance marks. These methods or behaviours can be considered deceptive, as the academic rewards (i.e., marks or grades) do not necessarily reflect academic competence. Nonetheless, such strategies were important to Jane as her English expressions were “too simple” and not adequate for her to complete these academic demands through her own efforts (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 4 April 2016).

Another aspect of Jane’s strategy was to use non-peer brokers such as learning advisors to “fix” her assignments, or, as she often put it during our interviews, “把它弄好” (*bǎtānònghǎo*), meaning to make something right or better by fixing its problems, as seen in Sample 3. Similar to the previous samples of annotated essays, Jane received literacy brokering of linguistic knowledge in terms of the superficial correction of language errors. Her use of such non-peer brokers echoes Linda and Kim’s intentions of maximising their results by removing language errors from their work. However, while Linda and Kim were exposed to opportunities to become more independent in editing their writing, Jane avoided advisors who would not edit her work:

> I intend to find that female advisor. Because she can correct my grammar. … some [advisors] won't correct my grammar. The first time, the advisor corrected grammar. The second time I went, there was another advisor and she said she wouldn't correct my grammar. (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 4 August 2016).

Jane came to realise that the advisors at the centralised unit were not always willing to entertain editing requests, and so turned to the advisors based at the departmental unit (e.g., “that female advisor”) who were able to accommodate her needs.

Sample 3. Jane, Annotated essay, 10 June 2016

Due to the progress of ~~the~~ our time~~s~~ and a large number of graduates who cannot be hired easily, it appear~~ed~~s ~~a phenomenon of~~ that people need to take an interview ~~which could find~~ when applying for jobs that are advertised in newspapers by recruitment compan~~y~~ies, and HR. Taking into consideration my future employment as a touris~~m~~t guide, this assignment will outline four characteristics that I think ~~it is~~ are essential to be ~~an~~ a successful ~~in~~ job applicant and these are being ~~an~~ an interesting person, passionate, open, and has leadership skills. Then this assignment will consider personal and academic attributes that I will need to be a touris~~m~~t guide. Also, personal attributes include being communicative and responsible. ~~These are~~ Knowledge and practical skills are needed for the academic attributes of a tourist guide's job.

Aspects of linguistic knowledge brokered

- Sentence construction: Introducing additional words or re-ordering words to make sentence meaning clearer or more coherent (e.g., “personal attributes include being communicative and responsible”, instead of “personal attributes include communicative and responsible”)
- Vocabulary: Introducing appropriate vocabulary (e.g., “when applying for jobs that are advertised in newspapers” instead of “which could find in newspapers” or correcting words (e.g., “tourist guide” instead of “tourism guide”)
- Grammar: Made changes to grammatical expression (e.g., “characteristics that I think are essential to be successful” instead of “characteristics that I think it is essential to be a successful”)

Jane’s dependency on advisors to correct her writing was part of her ‘indifference’ towards developing an understanding of the academic content, as revealed in her reflective comment in the second semester:

> Now even though I still don't really understand the lectures, but I feel quite indifferent ((laughs)). I just need to get the assignments fixed and it'll be okay, and I can pass the paper. So it doesn't matter if I can understand the lecture or not. … But I find that everyone is the same. Unless it's someone who is especially hardworking in their studies, and who will pay particular attention to what the teacher has said in class. … It should be the case that the majority of Chinese students can't understand, but everyone makes sure they get their assignments fixed, then they will be able to pass the papers. (Translated from Mandarin; Jane, Interview, 18 August 2016)

According to Jane, her co-national peers had a similar attitude towards their study, and ‘fixing’ assignments was an apparently common practice. Such a strategy could also be interpreted as deceptive since the final version of assignments obscured students’ actual academic competence. However, unlike the scenario where students used the grading system to their benefit, the use of advisors to remove one's language errors was implicitly sanctioned by the institution, thus making these non-peer brokers complicit in an ethically ambiguous situation.

While her brokering interactions with learning advisors were mostly about fixing writing-related issues, Jane went to other non-peers such as librarians and tutors to provide guidance on other aspects of assignments. For example, she approached librarians to check if her references were correctly written, and asked tutors to review her draft outlines of assignments. In the second semester, she was enrolled in a paper where the tutor initiated individual advisory sessions outside scheduled classes for students who had failed previous tests. In these sessions, the tutor reviewed Jane's answers to a list of possible test questions. The advice was not concerned with language usage or the format of the answers, but whether or not students were able to recall specific content. These examples of non-peer brokering can also be said to be literacy brokering as the brokers made explicit particular aspects of academic texts.

Of all Jane's non-peer brokering interactions, I obtained permission to observe and record consultations between Jane and two particular non-peer brokers: the tutor who offered test advice, and a learning advisor from China, Tim, who reviewed Jane's draft essays. Her consultations with the tutor consisted of two brief sessions of ten to fifteen minutes which needed little response from Jane as the nature of the consultation was to confirm the selection of content in response to test questions. Furthermore, the interaction was in English, which did not encourage Jane to engage in the interaction either.

On the other hand, Jane's consultations with Tim, the Chinese learning advisor, consisted of two approximately forty-minute sessions and were the only example of non-peer brokering in Mandarin, Jane's native language. Their common language facilitated nuanced exchanges involving literacy brokering, mostly of linguistic knowledge, and to a more limited extent, of sociocultural knowledge. In addition, while peer brokering interactions as seen in the examples of Linda and Kim's mobile message exchanges involved either information or advice requests related to a range of academic tasks, the non-peer brokering interactions between Jane and Tim were generally concerned with advice about specific written assignments. The dynamics of the non-peer brokering interactions between Jane and Tim will be analysed in Chapter 7, while the remainder of this section will examine the types of brokering they engaged in during their consultations.

During the consultations which I observed, Jane provided Tim with her printed draft essay, together with the assignment question, with the expectation that Tim would read her work and point out any mistakes that needed correction. As Tim read Jane's work, he held a pencil in his hand, underlining parts of the writing that were problematic, making comments on the document, or directly correcting errors. Tim's aim was not to correct all of Jane's mistakes, but to highlight parts of her writing needing correction, and explain to her why there were mistakes or suggest ways to correct them, thus engaging in literacy brokering of linguistic knowledge. In these interactions, language brokering also occurred, where Tim translated English words and phrases into Mandarin or vice versa as he explained the reasons behind language errors in Jane's writing (e.g., in grammar and sentence structure). The following two extracts illustrate how such language and literacy brokering took place during their interactions.

Extract 11. Consultation between Jane and Tim, 4 May 2016

Turn #	Transcription	
1	Tim:	你看，你这第一句啊, %geographic economy in New Zealand it appears many environment problem and resource issues%, 咋啦？ Look here, your first sentence is %geographic economy in New Zealand it appears many environment problems and resource issues%, what's this?
2	Jane:	嗯。 Oh.
3	Tim:	就是，咋们 可以 用中文的, 就是说，随着这个近期的发展。 That is, we can say in Chinese, that is, with the recent development.
4	Jane:	嗯。 Oh.
5	Tim:	这个有很多环境问题， 还有这个资源问题。 This has many environment problems, and also the resource issue.
6	Jane:	嗯。 Yeah.
7	Tim:	怎么啦？出现了，是吗？ And? They appear, right?
8	Jane:	对， 对。 Yeah, yeah.
9	Tim:	那语法问题。 It is a grammatical error.
10	Jane:	这不是有一%appears% 吗？出现。 Isn't there %appears% here? Appear.

11	Tim:	这里的 %appears% 不是做动词来用。 你这里一开始说， 随着这个新西兰经济的发展。你应该倒装一下，就说你把这个 %many environment problems and resource issues appeared%, 或者 %appears%。就这样换过来。这是语法问题。 The %appears% here is not being used as a verb. You started by saying, with the economic development in New Zealand. You should reverse the order, which means you should put it in this way: %many environment problems and resource issues appeared% or %appears%. This is how it is reversed. This is a grammatical issue.
12	Jane:	嗯。 Oh.

In Extract 11, turn #1, Tim points out a problematic sentence. In turns #3, #5 and #7, Tim clarifies Jane's intended meaning of her sentence by interpreting the sentence in Mandarin, in other words, through language brokering. In turn #9, he point outs that the issue with her sentence is a grammatical one. In turn #10, Jane is puzzled why there is a grammatical error, since she has used what she believes to be the correct English word ('appears') to express her meaning. In turn #11, Tim explains that her usage does not convey the meaning of 'appears' as a verb and tells her to reverse the order of her sentence, thus engaging in literacy brokering by addressing aspects of linguistic knowledge that are needed to produce a coherent sentence.

A similar pattern of language and literacy brokering also occurred in the second consultation, as seen in Extract 12.

Extract 12. Consultation between Jane and Tim, 15 June 2016

Turn #	**Transcription**	
1	Tim:	你看你这是说 %second, the passion to be basic requirement to interview%。你的意思就是热情是必须的，是吧？ Here you say %second, the passion to be basic requirement to interview%. You mean that passion is necessary, right?
2	Jane:	对呀。 Yeah.
3	Tim:	那还 %basic requirement%？ Then why %basic requirement%?
4	Jane:	基本必须。 Basically a must.
5	Tim:	基本要求。 Basic requirement.
6	Jane:	对，基本要求。 Yes, basic requirement.
7	Tim:	我认为这不是, 不是基本要求。我认为这是一个– 你可以说它是一个基本特征或者什么。

		I don't think it is, it is not a basic requirement. I think it is a– you could say it is a basic characteristic or something else.
8	Jane:	特征？ Characteristic?
9	Tim:	所以说这个, 你要说语法吧，没错。但是我觉得用词上会有很多混淆的地方。 So you see, your grammar is correct. But I feel that the words you use may cause confusion.
10	Jane:	嗯。 Oh.
11	Tim:	那人家可能就会问你， 那你既然说是 %basic requirement% 就是基本要求. 那你要进一步解释嘛。 那为什么其他不是， 光这个热情是呢？你这里用了个引用， 你听好了， 就是你解释， %passion% 是什么意思。 但是这句， 就是你自己的话进一步去解释 %passion, personal strength% 我觉得就没完。还要再再深入一点。就是如果你实在不会深入，你就可以举例子。 你这里说了，会 %reinforce personal strength% , 那你不会接着往下延伸， 那你就举例什么是 %personal strength, for example% 什么什么 什么。这比较简单。当然如果你可以往下比较深入去了解的话。 ((写)) If you say passion is a basic requirement, you have to explain why, among all other things, only passion is a basic requirement. It's a quotation here, which explains the meaning of %passion%. But this sentence you use to explain, %passion, personal strength% I feel that it's not complete. You need to give further explanation. If you really cannot give more details, you can give examples. You say that it can %reinforce personal strength%, then you can use an example to explain what it is. You can say %personal strength, for example% blah blah blah. It is easy. Of course, you can give further explanation if you want. ((writes))

In turn #1, Tim highlights a sentence in Jane's writing and clarifies her intended meaning through language brokering, that is, by expressing the meaning of the sentence in Mandarin. After Jane confirms Tim's interpretation, in turn #3 Tim questions Jane's use of the phrase 'basic requirement'. In turn #7, Tim suggests an alternative term 'characteristic', and in turn #8, explains that her choice of words may cause confusion. In turn #11, Tim launches into a detailed explanation of why Jane's use of 'requirement' is inappropriate and provides suggestions on how she can make her writing clearer. Thus, Tim engages in literacy brokering by highlighting linguistic knowledge, that is, word choice, as well as writing strategies to improve clarity.

Jane's brokering interactions with Tim also involved the literacy brokering of sociocultural knowledge, although to a more limited extent. In these interactions, it was Jane who raised particular issues or revealed her motivations related to the assignments, to which Tim responded in an evaluative manner. In other words, his advice expressed value judgments on Jane's attitudes and behaviours in relation to her academic tasks. I identified five instances of sociocultural knowledge brokering where Jane highlighted the following: i) that she chose the assignment topic out of convenience rather than personal interest; ii) that she felt the focus on New Zealand topics in assignments disadvantaged international students like herself; iii) her dissatisfaction with lecturers' teaching methods; iv) the usefulness of learning advisors who corrected her English; and v) her intention of only obtaining a passing grade for her assignments.

The following extract provides an example of sociocultural brokering where Tim's advice is expressed through his disapproval over Jane's choice of an "easy" topic:

Extract 13. Consultation between Jane and Tim, 4 May 2016 (see p. 296 for Transcription Key)

Turn #	**Transcription**	
1	Tim:	我觉得首先你以后，你写这个的时候，你不要老想着那个好写，我写那个。你要想想你对那个稍微有点兴趣。我感觉你就对水没有什么兴趣呀，所以自然感觉，好像不好写。 I think in the future, when you have to write on some topic, don't just think about choosing a topic that is easy to write about. You should think about choosing a topic you are at least interested in. I just feel you simply don't have any interest in water, which is why you feel it's difficult to write about.
2	Jane:	啊呀，其实我说个实话我什么都 $没兴趣$。没办法，这作业得需要一个– 我得– 就得找一个能写的。 *Aiyah*, actually, to tell you the truth, I have $no interest$ in any topic. But no choice, this assignment requires a– I need– need to find one that I can write。
3	Tim:	那你得慢慢锻炼自己。那比如说咱俩现在探讨一下这个问题。我俩探讨一下环境问题, 就像你上次写的雾霾似的, 因为你经历过你就愿意写嘛。 So you need to train yourself slowly. Take for example the environmental issues we're talking about now. It's similar to the last time you wrote about smog because you were interested in that topic, weren't you?
4	Jane:	嗯。 Yeah.
5	Tim:	还是这里没经历就不愿意写。但是你也得锻炼自己呀。那下个作业咋办? 是不是? But over here you don't want to write on a topic you haven't experienced yourself. But you have to train yourself. Otherwise what will you do for the next assignment? Isn't it?
6	Jane:	$下个作业再说吧$ $Will deal with the next assignment when it comes$
7	Tim:	慢慢来。 Take it slowly.

In Extract 13, turn #1, Tim negatively evaluates Jane's indifferent attitude towards her assignment and in turns #3 and #5, Tim advises Jane to "train herself" to take an interest in what she chooses to write about for her next assignment. Although Jane acknowledges Tim's advice in turn #4, she does not appear to take it seriously as in turn #6 she admits she will deal with it "when it comes", suggesting her reluctance towards changing her current study attitude.

In summary, Jane did not have adequate English proficiency to fully comprehend the academic content she encountered, but neither was she concerned about that as long as she found other ways to achieve her desired academic goals. Jane shunned peers for brokering assistance as they were likewise limited in their academic knowledge, but looked for a range of non-peer brokers including learning advisors, tutors, and librarians, as part of her strategy to fix her assignments for improved results. Jane was particularly dependent on learning advisors who provided writing support by correcting all her writing errors in her assignments.

Of her non-peer brokers, there was just one who was Chinese and therefore communicated with her in their native language during their consultations. Unlike the English-speaking learning advisors who directly corrected Jane's writing errors, this learning advisor, Tim, provided a deeper level of literacy brokering by interpreting Jane's writing in Mandarin so as to verify her intended meaning, and explaining the reasons for correcting her mistakes. While Tim also provided advice about sociocultural aspects of academic practices, such as urging Jane to take an interest in her assignment topic, Jane did not appear to be interested in adjusting her attitude, probably because she was more interested in using the consultations as a means to fix her work, rather than having to fix herself.

4.3 Summary of the Nature of Brokering Practices

From the above summaries of each participant it can be seen that the nature of brokering practices among this sample of international students was influenced by both instrumental action (academic goals) and expressive action (communication needs). An absence of brokering interactions was, to some extent, influenced by participants' pre-occupation with non-academic matters, as seen in the cases of Kevin and Simon. In other words, there was no desire to engage in instrumental action, that is, to seek and gain academic resources. Where participants saw the need to seek academic help, instrumental action was facilitated by engaging with those with better or more valued resources in terms of academic knowledge and expertise, that is, brokers.

However, an equally salient influence on brokering interactions was the ability of seekers to engage in expressive action, that is, where both seeker and broker had a mutual recognition of each other's resources or sentiments that arose from having the same social status or belonging to the same social group. Among this sample of participants, expressive action was constrained or promoted by factors such as age-group and cultural background.

Among the non-seekers, an age disparity between participants and potential brokers discouraged brokering. As older students among a cohort of students mostly in their early 20s or younger, Kevin and Annie had greater life experience and academic confidence, and thus did not find a need to engage in brokering interactions with their peers. For Josh, it was his relative youth and inexperience that made him feel out of place among his older classmates. On the other hand, moderate and active seekers found brokers among peers of a similar age.

Sharing the same or common language and cultural background further enhanced expressive action. Henry and Sarah, for example, were conscious of their developing but inadequate English oral skills and thus avoided approaching lecturers or tutors for assistance. For Sarah, seeking assistance from native-English-speaking domestic students was also problematic because she was unaccustomed to their style of communication. Instead, Henry and Sarah found brokers among co-nationals who shared a common native language. Even when participants found brokers among native English speakers, as in the cases of Linda, Kim and Jane, such interactions were relatively superficial compared with brokering interactions with co-nationals or ethno-linguals.

Thus, brokering interactions can be construed as involving both instrumental and expressive actions, with different degrees of emphasis among different seekers. The subsequent sections summarise the various facets of brokering practices in terms of the aspects of academic texts and practices involved in brokering interactions; the types of brokers and the reasons they were chosen; and finally, a broader view of the characteristics of brokering relationships.

4.3.1 Aspects of Academic Learning Brokered (RQ1)

The various academic texts and practices that were brokered are presented in Table 4-4, addressing research sub-question 1: "What aspects of academic learning are brokered?" In the table, I summarise the different types of brokering, that is, language brokering, resource brokering, and literacy brokering, in relation to the mode and language of brokering and the type of broker involved.

Table 4-4. Aspects of Academic Texts and Practices that were Brokered

Type of brokering	Academic text/practice	Process of brokering	Mode and language of brokering	Type of broker
Language brokering	Academic content (e.g., lecture notes)	Explanation of English terms in Mandarin	Face-to-face (Mandarin)	Peer broker
	A range of academic texts and practices	Using a common native language to talk about English language texts and academic practices	Face-to-face (Mandarin) Instant message (Chinese)	Peer/non-peer broker Peer broker
Resource brokering	Location of academic content or resource (e.g., submission webpage)	Step-by-step explanation of how to access content/resource	Instant message (English) Instant message (Chinese)	Peer broker
	Academic content (e.g. audio recording of lecture, photographs of presentation slides, e-book)	Transfer of digital media through personal communication device	Instant message/email (Chinese)	
Literacy brokering – Genre knowledge	Academic content (e.g., lecture notes) Specific academic texts (e.g., journal review article)	Explanation of expectations of assignment	Instant message (English) Instant message (Chinese)	Peer broker
		Clarification of information Checking accuracy of assignment answer	Face-to-face (English) Face-to-face (Mandarin)	Non-peer broker
	General academic writing	Explanation of technical features (e.g., word count, APA formatting)	Instant message (English) Instant message (Chinese)	Peer broker
		Checking accuracy of APA referencing	Face-to-face (English)	Non-peer broker
Literacy brokering – Linguistic knowledge	Specific academic texts (e.g. essay)	Direct correction of errors	Face-to-face (English)	Non-peer broker
		Explanation of English sentence construction and grammar in Mandarin (i.e., language brokering)	Face-to-face (Mandarin)	Non-peer broker
Literacy brokering – Sociocultural knowledge	Attitudes (e.g., towards completing required readings) Social interactions (e.g., interacting with group member)	Interpretation of academic practice with reference to broker's own practice or according to broker's personal values	Instant message (Chinese)	Peer broker
			Face-to-face (Mandarin)	Non-peer broker

Language brokering in terms of translating or interpreting English language materials into the seekers' native language was reported or alluded to by several participants (Henry, Sarah, Linda, Kim, and Jane). It some cases, language brokering involved translating specific terminology from English into the Chinese language, but more often than not language brokering was the process of the broker using Chinese (written)/Mandarin (spoken) to unpack the assumptions or intentions behind academic texts and practices encountered by the seeker. This process of language brokering thus underpinned most of the brokering interaction between co-nationals or ethno-linguals.

Resource brokering concerned primarily electronic forms of resources (e.g., digital photographs of slides, online submission page) and took place via digital communication devices. While resource brokering did not necessitate much discussion between seeker and broker, literacy brokering, the predominant type of brokering, had various degrees of interactional engagement. There was relatively less engagement with English-speaking non-peer brokers in situations where brokers provided clarification or were concerned with checking the accuracy of the seekers' work. This limited interaction was exemplified by the learning advisors' direct correction of seekers' draft writing. On the other hand, there was relatively higher engagement with co-national or ethno-lingual brokers, who provided detailed explanations of some academic text or practice.

In terms of the specific aspects of knowledge brokered within literacy brokering, genre knowledge was the most common as it addressed various concerns seekers had with their assignments. Mostly brokered by peers, genre knowledge was related to surface features of academic texts (e.g., formatting) as well as the underlying meaning of assignment instructions or the expectations lecturers had of students. Linguistic knowledge was exclusively brokered by non-peers, specifically learning advisors, who were designated by the institution to provide such assistance. The linguistic knowledge of English language academic writing elements such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, was mostly provided in the form of direct correction, as mentioned previously. In the case of Jane, who sought face-to-face brokering assistance from a co-national advisor, the brokering of linguistic knowledge also involved language brokering. That is, the advisor used Mandarin to explain errors in Jane's use of the English language.

4.3.2 Characteristics of Brokers: Who and Why? (RQs 2 and 3)

This section addresses research sub-questions 2 and 3: "Who are the brokers?" and "Why are these brokers chosen?" respectively. Generally, peer brokers were chosen on the basis of their personal resources (prior experience, academic competence, and language facility), while non-peer brokers were chosen because they allowed immediate access to their expertise. Seekers assumed peer brokers had the requisite knowledge if the brokers had prior academic experience or demonstrated competence. In many cases, seekers also depended on, or preferred, brokers to communicate the knowledge in the seekers' native language (see Table 4-5).

Table 4-5. Characteristics of Peer Brokers

Seeker (study level)	**Peer brokers**	**Reason for choice of brokers**		
		Prior experience	**Demonstrated competence**	**Use of native language**
Cindy (exchange / undergraduate)	Classmates	✓ 2nd or 3rd year student	✗	✗
Henry (undergraduate)	Senior/High achiever	✓ 3rd year student	✓ By reputation	✓ Co-national
Sarah (undergraduate)	Classmates	✗	✓ By assignment results	✓ Co-national
	Senior/High achiever	✓ 3rd year student	✓ By assignment results	✓ Co-national
Linda (postgraduate)	Classmate (domestic student)	✓ 3rd year student	✗	✗
	Classmate (international student)	✓ 3rd year student	✗	✓ Co-national
Kim (postgraduate)	Classmate (international student)	✓ Bachelor's degree in English	✗	✗
	Classmate (international student)	✓ Bachelor's degree in English	✗	✓ Ethno-lingual

Peer brokers' prior academic experience appeared to be a more common factor than academic competence in seekers' choice of brokers. Seekers who were exchange or postgraduate students were enrolled in papers that were typically taken by already seasoned students and thus had access to potential brokers among classmates, their immediate peer relations. Seekers who were newly commenced undergraduate students (i.e., Henry and Sarah), however, had classmates who were mostly at the same academic level as them. In other words, their fellow first-year students did not typically have prior academic experience. Instead, undergraduate seekers found seniors among their extended peer relations (e.g., friends of friends, or acquaintances) who not only had prior experience but who were also high achievers, in addition to be being co-nationals.

In contrast to peer brokers, non-peer brokers were already designated as experts by virtue of their institutional status, and were chosen according to a different set of criteria. The criteria were related to brokers being able to improve seekers' immediate understanding of academic texts, or to provide direct assistance with assignments (see Table 4-6). Lecturers and tutors were the most obvious non-peer brokers since participants had frequent contact with them, and approached them for clarification of academic content related to lecture presentations or assignment instructions. While this was the only category of non-peer brokers that Cindy approached, Jane, Linda and Kim approached other non-peer brokers, namely, learning advisors, whose direct correction of writing errors was viewed as a welcome means to improve participants' academic results.

Table 4-6. Characteristics of Non-Peer Brokers

Seeker (study level)	**Non-peer brokers**	**Reasons for choice of brokers**		
		Immediate clarification of academic content	**Guidance on assignments**	**Correction of mistakes**
Cindy (undergraduate)	Lecturer/tutor	✓	✓	×
Jane (undergraduate)	Lecturer/tutor	×	✓	×
	Librarian	×	✓	×
	Learning advisor	×	×	✓
Linda (postgraduate)	Lecturer/tutor	✓	✓	×
	Learning advisor	×	×	✓
Kim (postgraduate)	Lecturer/Tutor	✓	✓	×
	Learning advisor	×	×	✓

4.3.3 Characteristics of Brokering Relationships (RQ4)

This final section addresses research sub-question 4: "What are the characteristics of brokering relationships?" by summarising the various aspects of brokering interactions along a continuum with *relational* at one end and *transactional* at the other, as well as considering the directionality and point of initiation, frequency, and mode of communication (see Table 4-7). The terms *relational* and *transactional* were derived from the literature review (Lin, 2001b), and found resonance in the data analysis. *Relational* highlights the prominence of similar social status between seekers and brokers, while *transactional* highlights the emphasis on brokers as unidirectional resource-providers. Aspects of interactions that promote expressive action are those that facilitate mutual understanding: *reciprocal*, *regular interactions*, *co-national* and *ethno-lingual* (shaded red). Aspects of interactions that promote instrumental action are those that indicate better or valued resources: *prior experience*, *academic competence*, and *designated expertise* (shaded blue).

On the relational end of the spectrum, brokers were classmates who had prior academic experience, and were in regular contact with the seekers. Their relatively high frequency of interactions was based on their shared native language, Chinese/Mandarin, as well as the reciprocal nature of their instant messaging exchanges. This end of the spectrum is represented by Linda's co-national broker, Emily, and Kim's ethno-lingual broker, Josh. Linda's English-speaking broker, Grace, occupies an adjoining space within the reciprocal and everyday aspect of interactions, but is set apart from her Mandarin-speaking counterparts. This end of the spectrum also features a combination of expressive and instrumental actions, as indicated by the portions shaded in red and blue.

Towards the transactional end of the spectrum were predominantly English-speaking non-peer brokers, and it features instrumental action promoted by the non-peer brokers' designated expertise, as indicated by the shaded blue portion. Seekers approached them as and when they needed assistance with understanding academic content, particularly assignments, with relatively low to moderate frequency. This end of the spectrum is represented by the learning advisors who proofread and edited seekers' written assignments during appointment-based consultations. Jane's co-national learning advisor, Tim, occupies an adjoining space within these appointment-based consultations, but is set apart because of Jane and Tim's shared linguistic and cultural background.

Table 4-7. Characteristics of Brokering Relationships

Directionality/point of initiation (D/I), frequency (F), and mode of communication (M)

D/I	Reciprocal Seeker-initiated	Unidirectional Seeker-initiated						**D/I**
F	HIGH Regular interaction	MODERATE In between lessons	LOW One-off transfer (reciprocal)	MODERATE By prior arrangement	MODERATE In between lessons	LOW Drop-in	MODERATE By appointment	**F**
M	Instant messaging	Face-to-face	Instant messaging	Face-to-face	Face-to-face			**M**

RELATIONAL **TRANSACTIONAL**

PEERS							**NON-PEERS**			
Classmate International	Classmate Domestic	Classmate Domestic	Classmate International	Classmate International	Classmate International	Senior International	Lecturer/Tutor	Librarian	Learning advisor	Learning advisor
Co-national/ Ethno-lingual	English speaker	English speaker	English speaker	Co-national	Co-national	Co-national	English speaker	English speaker	Co-national	English speaker
Prior experience	Prior experience	Prior experience	Prior experience			Prior experience	Designated expertise			
					Academic competence	Academic competence				

In relation to the following seekers:

Linda (Emily) [a] Kim (Josh) [a]	Linda (Grace) [a]	Kim, Cindy[b] (Group members)	Kim (Classmate from India)	Annie, Henry, Sarah[c]	Sarah	Henry, Sarah	Cindy, Linda, Kim, Jane[d]	Jane	Jane (Tim) [a]	Linda, Kim, Jane

Notes. [a] The dynamics of the brokering interactions between these seekers and their brokers are presented in the subsequent case study chapters. [b] Cindy also used instant messaging to ask for help from domestic student classmates, but not as part of reciprocal everyday social interactions. [c] One of Sarah's seniors provided a one-off unidirectional brokering assistance by emailing her a copy of textbook. [d] Only in Jane's case were there broker-initiated interactions, i.e., the tutor who initiated advisory sessions on test preparation.

The remaining brokering interactions in the middle section were with peer brokers of low to moderate frequency, and were mostly promoted by instrumental action, as indicated by the shaded blue portions. Most of these peer brokers were *classmates*, both domestic and international students; among the international students there was one English speaker, while the rest were co-nationals. The instances of co-national peer brokering interactions were in the context of seekers who were generally disinclined towards approaching native English speakers for assistance, thus suggesting the importance of expressive action in brokering interactions. However, it is important to note that a shared native language does not always correspond with a high frequency of interactions, as seen in the middle section of the table, thus highlighting that co-nationality alone, or more broadly, homophily, is insufficient for promoting brokering interactions.

The final research sub-question, "What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?" will be examined in subsequent case studies, Chapters 5, 6 and 7. These chapters will examine the dynamics of brokering interactions with reference to instrumental and expressive actions as highlighted in this chapter. Chapters 5 and 6 will examine peer brokering interactions of Linda and Kim respectively, while Chapter 7 examines the non-peer brokering interactions between Jane and Tim.

CHAPTER 5
CASE STUDY: LINDA

Linda was one of the three key informants from whom I obtained recorded data on brokering interactions. She provided data related to brokering interactions with two classmate peer brokers, Grace, a domestic student, and Emily, an international student from China. Linda's brokering interactions with Grace took place via their mobile phones' messaging application, while her brokering interactions with Emily took place via *WeChat*, an instant messaging application typically used among Mainland Chinese[8]. This chapter, as with the next two chapters, uses an adapted conversation analytic (CA) approach to examine the dynamics of brokering interactions.

I first provide an overview of each set of brokering interactions, highlighting the types of brokering and points of initiation. I also differentiate between different types of interactions using the CA term *sequences*, namely, information, advice, and affinity sequences. Next, I show how these sequences are related to expressive and instrumental actions in brokering using the CA notions of epistemic asymmetry, account giving, emotional reciprocity, as well as the concepts of face and politeness. Finally, I summarise the dynamics of brokering interactions between Linda and her peer brokers.

5.1 Overview of Peer Brokering Interactions

Linda's interactions with Grace and Emily involved similar types of brokering and points of initiation, with eight episodes of brokering interactions between Linda and Grace (see Table 5-1), and 12 episodes between Linda and Emily (see Table 5-2). In terms of the types of brokering, both data sets featured resource and literacy brokering. Resource brokering was concerned with accessing online resources (Linda–Grace Eps 02 and 03; Linda–Emily Eps 04 and 07), clarifying paper-related information (Linda–Grace Eps 01 and 02), and using reference material (Linda–Grace Ep 06). Literacy brokering, however, was more prominent, in relation to genre knowledge and to some extent, sociocultural knowledge.

[8] The initial analysis of brokering interactions between Linda and Emily is found in Lee (2018b).

Table 5-1. Data Set Linda–Grace: Overview of Episodes of Brokering Interactions via Mobile Phone Messages

Episode number [Date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Linda–Grace 01 [02/03/16 Introduction and Tutorial]	**Affinity sequence** Linda's appreciation for Grace's willingness to help her	–	Linda	–	–	7
	Information sequence Clarifying tutorial schedule	Resource brokering	Linda	Linda	Grace	
Linda–Grace 02 [16/03/16 Assignment and Lecture Recording]	**Affinity sequence** Personal disclosure of academic-related behaviour	–	Grace	–	–	22
	Advice sequence Linda asks Grace to be her partner for an assignment	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Linda	Linda	Grace	
	Information sequence Finding video lecture recordings	Resource brokering	Linda	Linda	Grace	
	Advice sequence Skipping lectures	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Grace	–	Grace	
Linda–Grace 03 [17/03/16 Journal Article Review]	**Advice sequence** How to write a journal article review	Resource brokering	Linda	Linda	Grace	11
Linda–Grace 04 [23/03/16 Assignment Deadlines]	**Information sequence** Clarifying assignment deadlines	Resource brokering	Grace	Grace	Linda	4
Linda–Grace 05 [31/03/16 Open Book Test]	**Advice sequence** How to interpret test requirements	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Grace	14

Episode number [Date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Linda–Grace 06 [04/04/16 Multi-Choice Questions and Linda’s Notes]	**Information sequence** Clarifying purpose of test question	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Grace	10
	Advice sequence Linda offers Grace her test preparation notes	Resource brokering	Linda	–	Linda	
Linda–Grace 07 [06/04/16 Test Preparation]	**Affinity sequence** Grace asks about Linda’s emotional state	–	Grace	–	–	12
Linda–Grace 08 [08/04/16 Test Results]	**Affinity sequence** Grace asks about Linda’s results	–	Grace	–	–	14
	Information sequence Grade equivalent of assignment results	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Grace	

Table 5-2. Data Set Linda–Emily: Overview of Episodes of Brokering Interactions via *WeChat*

Episode number [date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Linda–Emily 01 [02/03/16 Required Readings]	**Advice sequence** Completing and using required readings	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	13
Linda–Emily 02 [05/03/16 Taking Exams]	**Advice sequence** What to do during exams	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	14
Linda–Emily 03 [21/03/16 Writing Essay]	**Affinity sequence** Writing an essay	–	Emily	–	–	22
	Advice sequence Word limit for essay	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	

Episode number [date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Linda–Emily 04 [23/03/16 Online Video]	**Information sequence** Finding online lecture recordings	Resource brokering	Linda	Linda	Emily	23
Linda–Emily 05 [23/03/16 Assignment Instructions]	**Advice sequence** Interpreting assignment instructions	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Emily	Emily	Linda	11
Linda–Emily 06 [01/04/16 Submission Format]	**Information sequence** Format of assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	14
	Advice sequence Including name in assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Emily	–	Emily	
Linda–Emily 07 [01/04/16 Online Submission]	**Information sequence** Uploading assignment to website	Resource brokering	Linda	Linda	Emily	20
Linda–Emily 08 [04/04/16 Assignment Results]	**Information sequence** Submission of physical copy of assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	15
	Information sequence Assignment marking process	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	
Linda–Emily 09 [07/04/16 Interpreting Assignment]	**Advice sequence** Interpreting assignment instructions	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	34
Linda-Emily 10 [07/05/16 Dealing with 'Boss']	**Advice sequence** Responding to group member	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	26
Linda–Emily 11 [19/05/16 Assignment Submission]	**Information sequence** Managing online and hard copy versions of assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Linda	Linda	Emily	9
Linda–Emily 12 [20/05/16 Checking Grade]	**Affinity sequence** Announcing assignment results	–	Linda	–	–	12

Literacy brokering of genre knowledge involved explicating various academic texts: the requirements of tests and examinations (Linda–Grace Eps 05 and 06, Linda–Emily Ep 02); the written features of assignments (Linda–Emily 03); procedural aspects of assignments such as formatting and submission (Linda–Emily Eps 06, 08 and 11); and the interpretation of assignment questions or instructions (Linda–Emily Eps 05 and 09). Literacy brokering of sociocultural knowledge, on the other hand, illuminated particular academic practices: using an assignment partner for additional assistance (Linda–Grace Ep 02); strategies to maximise academic performance (Linda–Emily Ep 01); and interpersonal relationships with others (Linda–Emily Ep 10).

In terms of points of initiation, Linda initiated most of the interactions in her role as seeker. On a few occasions, there was reciprocal brokering where the points of initiation and/or the roles were reversed. In the Linda–Grace data set, Grace took on the seeker's role and clarified with Linda about an assignment deadline in Ep 04, and Linda initiated a broker role by offering Grace her notes as reference for a test in Ep 06. Similarly, in the Linda–Emily data set, Emily took on the seeker's role by asking Linda how to interpret assignment instructions in Ep 05. While there was a degree of reciprocity in the brokering interactions, the predominant pattern of brokering was Linda initiating interactions in the role of the seeker.

The three types of sequences, information, advice, and affinity, were almost equally distributed in the Linda–Grace data set, with five information sequences (Eps 01, 02, 04, 06, and 08), four advice sequences (Eps 02, 03, 05 and 06), and four affinity sequences (Eps 01, 02, 07, and 08). On the other hand, in the Linda–Emily data set, there were just two affinity sequences (Eps 03 and 12), and almost equal proportions of information and advice sequences: six information sequences (one each in Eps 04, 06, 07, and 11, and two in Ep 08) and seven advice sequences (Eps 01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 09, and 10). Focusing on Linda's seeker-initiated interactions, I examine how instrumental and expressive actions are demonstrated in information, advice, and affinity sequences in the subsequent sections.

5.2 Instrumental Action in Information Sequences

Information sequences typically followed the structure of question–answer–acceptance: the seeker's question projecting a relatively weak knowledge stance (K-); the broker's answer, a relatively strong knowledge stance (K+); and the seeker's use of acknowledgement tokens in the closing turn(s) of the sequence indicating the acceptance of the broker's knowledge. This straightforward demonstration of instrumental action is exemplified in the following two extracts.

Extract 1. Linda–Grace 01 [02/03/16 Introduction and Tutorial]; Information sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Grace (White box)

Turn #	**Text message**
1	Oh do we have tutorial of the SEC203 this week? Or it starts next week?
2	Next week!
3	Ok, got it ^_^

Extract 1 features an information sequence between Linda and Grace. In the opening turn of Extract 1, Linda asks for confirmation of the tutorial schedule by expressing uncertainty over the tutorial schedule, thereby displaying a K- stance. In response, Grace displays a K+ stance in turn #2 with her answer ("next week"), as well as a high degree of certainty with the use of an exclamation mark. Linda closes the sequence in turn #3 with acknowledgement tokens, "Ok" and "got it", thereby indicating acceptance of the broker's knowledge. The closing turn also includes a smiling face emoticon (^_^). This positive affective marker displays positive politeness, that is, orients towards the positive face of the broker by demonstrating appreciation of her epistemic authority, and further promotes social solidarity. A similar display of epistemic asymmetry occurs in Extract 2 where the information sequence between Linda and Emily comprises two related requests.

Extract 2. Linda–Emily 06 [01/04/16 Submission Format]; Information sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	**31 March 2016, late evening** 要明儿看见了回我一下哈，作业里面要写自己的姓名学号什么的吗？word 的文件名怎么命名啊 If you only read this tomorrow gimme a quick reply, in the my assignment do I need to write my name and student number and so on? How do I name my %word% filename?
2	**1 April 2016 09:51** 不用写的 word 文件名只要不写上自己名字就可以的

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
	No need to write For the %word% filename as long as you don't write your name it's ok
3	你就写 journal article review 就可以 You just have to write %journal article review%
4	哦哦，文件名就用 journal article review 就可以了啊，文章里面还用写自己的名字吗 Ok, just use %journal article review% for the filename and it'll be ok right, do I have to write my name in the essay
5	不用的 No need
6	那她咋知道是谁交的啊 Then how does she know who handed it in
7	因为 moodle 提交 Because %moodle% submits it
8	老师是可以看到谁提交的 The teacher will be able to see who submits it
9	昂，好来 Yeah, great

In Extract 2, turns #1 and #4, Linda displays a K- stance with questions about formatting her assignment for submission. In the responding turns, Emily displays a K+ stance not only by providing the answers, but also through the use of the modal particle 的 (*de*) at the end of phrases in the original Chinese data to express certainty, particularly in turns #2 ("不用写的" / No need to write; "就可以的" / It's ok), #5 ("不用的" / No need), and #8 ("老师是可以看到谁提交的" / The teacher will be able to see who submits it). Linda demonstrates a straightforward acceptance of the broker's knowledge with acknowledgement tokens as seen in turns #4 ("哦哦" / Ok) and #9 ("昂，好来" / Yeah, great), thereby demonstrating the straightforward acceptance of the broker's epistemic authority.

5.3 Instrumental Action in Advice Sequences

While information sequences maintain epistemic asymmetry and social solidarity, as discussed previously, advice sequences may challenge these features of brokering interactions (Linda–Grace Ep 05; Linda–Emily Eps 01, 05, 06, 09, 10, and 12). This was demonstrated particularly in the Linda–Emily data set, where the seeker did not display a straightforward or overt acceptance of the broker's knowledge as new or relevant by establishing the seeker's own claim to a K+ stance. Extract 3, for example, shows how Linda resists Emily's advice as new knowledge.

Extract 3. Linda-Emily 01 [02/03/16 Required Readings]; Advice sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	有的课有 required reading，读不完会怎么样啊 Some classes have %required reading%, what happens if I don't finish reading them?
2	哈哈哈那些我基本不看 Hahaha basically I don't read those
3	感觉只有超级学霸才能全读下来 Feels like only super high achievers will be able to read them all
4	一般就看 ppt 和老师上课讲到的第几页第几页看一看这样 I usually just read the ppt and take a look at the pages the teacher referred to in class
5	我也觉得是，本科的时候中文都不读，英文的更不想看了 I feel the same way too, during my undergrad days it was in Chinese and I didn't read them, now it's in English all the more I don't feel like reading them

In Extract 3, turn #1, Linda displays a K- stance, asking Emily what the consequences are of not completing the required readings. Emily interprets Linda's turn as an indirect question about whether Linda actually needs to read all of the listed materials. Emily responds in turn #2 with a disclosure of her own somewhat deviant academic practice (that she doesn't read the required readings) but signals it as a non-serious aberration through the use of the preceding laugh particles (Glenn, 2003). She then provides an account for her behaviour in turn #3 (that only the very best students can complete all the readings), and elaborates on her own academic practice with regard to the readings in turn #4. In these three turns, the broker establishes a K+ stance by providing advice with justification. In response (turn #5), Linda reveals that she has the same attitude towards required readings (“我也觉得是” / I feel the same way too), and provides an account based on her own academic practice in China. In presenting her prior knowledge, the seeker claims a K+ stance and thus resists overtly accepting the broker’s advice as new knowledge.

This resistance to a straightforward acceptance of the broker’s knowledge, while challenging the epistemic asymmetry of instrumental action, nonetheless appears to promote expressive action as the seeker’s claim to prior knowledge shares the same sentiment as the broker’s advice. A similar occurrence takes place in the following advice sequence where Emily advises Linda to include her name in her assignment.

Extract 4. Linda–Emily 06 [01/04/16 Submission Format]; Advice sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	你要不放心也可以写一个 If you’re worried you can write your name
2	反正这个无所谓的 Anyway it doesn’t matter
3	写了也不扣分🤔 Writing it won’t get your marks deducted 🤔
4	昂，好的，主要是在国内写习惯了......不写自己名字没有安全感...... Yeah, ok, the main thing is that I’m used to writing it back in China ……. Not writing my name doesn’t give me peace of mind ……
5	哈哈哈 Hahaha

Emily’s K+ stance is established in turns #1–3, with the advice given in #1, and the account in turns #2–3. Turn #3 features an affiliative expression of laughter (Glenn,

2003) in the form of an embarrassed laugh emoji (🤭), which gently pokes fun at Linda's insecurity. Linda's response in turn #4 initially accepts Emily's advice with acknowledgement tokens, but is followed immediately by her own account of her intended course of action, thus claiming a K+ stance and resisting accepting the broker's knowledge as new. Emily responds with laugh particles ("哈哈哈" / hahaha) in turn #5 as an affiliative response in support of Linda's knowledge claim. Here, the challenge to epistemic asymmetry results in the broker acknowledging the seeker's sentiment.

The above two extracts show how resisting the straightforward accomplishment of instrumental action appears to be offset by expressive action, that is, shared or acknowledged sentiment between seeker and broker. In other words, while instrumental action is defined by epistemic asymmetry which reinforces the legitimacy of the broker's K+ stance, the threat to the maintenance of epistemic asymmetry is mitigated by a demonstration of social solidarity.

When resistance is more explicit and implies a rejection of the broker's advice, however, the use of expressive action appears to be delayed. In the following extract, both broker and seeker initially respond to epistemic resistance by taking turns to establish their respective knowledge claims.

Extract 5. Linda-Emily 09 [07/04/16 Interpreting Assignment]; Advice sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
1	[我们学科的]历史......新西兰得[学科]历史吗还是世界的(学科)历史啊 [Our discipline's] history …… New Zealand's [discipline] history or is it world [discipline] history
2	新西兰的 New Zealand
3	一般在这边学[这学科]都要写这边的 Usually when you study [this discipline] you need to write about the local context
4	我去......比如第一个问题 What role can [discipline] play in social change 这种很普试的问题，也必须带入新西兰啊 Shit …… For example the first question %What role can [discipline] play in social change%. This kind of

Turn #	***WeChat* message**
	very general question, do we still need to refer to the New Zealand context?
5	最好是在新西兰范围内写 The best is to write about the New Zealand context
6	因为你写别的国家老师不知道 Because if you write about other countries the teacher won't know
7	然后就怕你忽悠他 Then the teacher will be afraid you're deceiving him
8	我就是觉得这是个特别哲学的问题，好像不太牵扯到个别国家，就是个......世界性的问题……也要把新西兰弄进来啊......😭😭😭,不会写了 I just feel it's a particularly philosophical question, doesn't seem like it involves any particular country, it's a …… question about a global issue …… and we have to drag New Zealand into it? …… 😭😭😭I don't know how to write it anymore
9	哈哈哈哈 Hahahaha
10	你可以发邮件问问 You can email and ask
11	不写新西兰肯定不行！ You definitely can't not write about New Zealand!
12	🥺🥺🥺🥺🥺
13	你只能说我能不能除了新西兰之外联系一下世界性的 You can only ask whether you can write about global issues apart from writing about New Zealand
14	🥺🥺🥺🥺🥺🥺
15	😂😂😂

Turn #	*WeChat* message
16	🥺🥺🥺🥺🥺🥺
17	我还是问一下吧……😭😭😭
	I'd better ask about it ……😭😭😭

In Extract 4, turn #1, Linda projects a K- stance by asking Emily whether her essay should focus on the New Zealand context or consider a global perspective with respect to the discipline she is studying. In turn #2, Emily responds with a K+ stance with her answer (that it should focus on New Zealand), and provides an account in turn #3 (that it is the usual practice). In the subsequent turn (#4), Linda assesses Emily's advice negatively by using a mild expletive ("我去" / shit). She then provides an account supporting her disagreement with Emily through a rhetorical statement: "这种很普试的问题, 也必须带入新西兰啊" (This kind of very general question, we still need to refer to the New Zealand context?). Thus, Linda claims a K+ stance by asserting her opinion about the assignment question, and by implication, rejects Emily's advice, thus threatening Emily's positive face as a broker with epistemic authority.

In the subsequent turns, Emily responds by asserting a K+ stance. She reiterates her original advice in turn #5, and provides additional justification for her advice in turns #6–7, that the teacher may not be familiar with the global context and therefore cannot be sure of the validity of Linda's writing. Linda, however, once again rejects Emily's advice. In turn #8, she displays a K+ stance by articulating her opinion of the assignment question (that the question is more philosophical than country-specific), and again makes a rhetorical statement ("就是个世界性的问题也要把新西兰弄进来啊" / It's question about a global issue and we have to drag New Zealand into it?).

At this point of the sequence, however, the challenge to epistemic asymmetry and threat to Emily's positive face appears to be mitigated by Linda's display of troubles-talk, that is, the expression of an untoward state of affairs as a means of soliciting advice or emotional reciprocity (Jefferson & Lee, 1981). In the remainder of turn #8, Linda's troubles-talk is expressed in both emoji and text. Linda displays an affective stance of despair with three consecutive loudly crying face emoji (😭😭😭), and concludes with a statement of surrender ("不会写了" / I don't know how to write it anymore). The troubles-talk projects a K- stance, inviting the broker to respond with a K+ stance and thus restores the epistemic asymmetry.

Emily responds to Linda's troubles-talk both as soliciting advice and emotional reciprocity. In turn #9, Emily treats Linda's emoji of loudly crying faces as mock despair and reciprocates with laugh particles ("哈哈哈哈" / hahahaha), thus acknowledging her sentiment and demonstrating expressive action. In turn #10, Emily offers alternative advice by suggesting that Linda email the teacher to ask about the assignment. However, in turn #11, Emily asserts her original advice with the use of a modal of absolute certainty ("肯定" / definitely) and a sentence-final exclamation mark, projecting a strong K+ stance. In doing so, Emily re-asserts her legitimacy as broker and reinforces the epistemic asymmetry.

In response to the apparent admonishment in turn #11, Linda appears to give up challenging Emily's advice in her display of five consecutive worried face emoji in turn #12 (😟😟😟😟😟). The emoji projects a self-deprecating and negative affective stance and thus displays troubles-talk. In turn #13, Emily treats Linda's troubles-talk as soliciting advice and tells her how she should phrase her question in the email to the teacher, once again asserting her K+ stance. In turn #14, Linda again displays self-deprecating troubles-talk with six consecutive worried face emoji (😟😟😟😟😟😟). This time, Emily treats Linda's troubles-talk as eliciting emotional reciprocity. In turn #15, Emily responds with three consecutive bitter smile emoji (😂😂😂), once again demonstrating expressive action by displaying affiliation through an acknowdgement of Linda's sentiment.

In the closing turns of this episode, Linda displays an overt acceptance of the broker's advice by annoucing that she will take up Emily's suggested course of action (turn #17). This annoucement is prefaced by worried face emoji in turn #16, and concluded with loudly crying face emoji at the end of turn #17, projecting a negative affective stance towards her lack of certainty over the essay. The combination of abiding by the broker's advice and a lack of confidence over her own actions projects a K- stance, which not only re-establishes epistemic asymmetry, but also redresses the broker's positive face.

The above extract thus shows how threats to epistemic asymmetry may result in tensions between seeker and broker in terms of each making their own knowledge or epistemic claims, and threats to the broker's positive face. Nonetheless, that tension ultimately gives way to the need to restore social solidarity through expressive action (i.e., the display of troubles-talk as a means of soliciting emotional reciprocity), and to overtly reinstate the broker's status of epistemic authority.

5.4 Expressive Action in Affinity Sequences

The preceding sections on information and advice sequences highlight the primacy of epistemic asymmetry in instrumental action, where the seeker's goal is to gain some valued resource from a more knowledgeable broker. The maintenance of social solidarity in interaction is demonstrated through the straightforward acceptance of the broker's relatively greater epistemic authority. Where this epistemic authority is challenged, the threat against social solidarity is mitigated through expressive action and/or the explicit re-establishment of the broker's epistemic authority.

By contrast, affinity sequences are not concerned with extracting some valued resource from the broker, but are built around expressive action for the explicit purpose of establishing social solidarity. In such expressive action, social solidarity is demonstrated when one party promotes the positive face of the other, for example, through expressions of praise or approval (i.e., positive politeness) (Brown & Levinson, 1987), as a means of strengthening the social connection or tie between parties (Pan, 2000). Enhancements of the social connection in turn promote instrumental action since this kind of positive relationship maintenance allows the seeker to access the valued resources held by the broker.

Although not indicative of the overall extent of expressive action in all of Linda's social interactions with her brokers, the affinity sequences in these data sets on academic-related topics nonetheless demonstrate reciprocity in expressive action. The affinity sequences in the Linda–Grace and Linda–Emily data sets were either whole episodes or occurred at the beginning or ends of episodes, and displayed either a unidirectional acknowledgement of one party's resources or sentiments, or a mutual recognition of each other's resources and sentiments. In the Linda–Grace data set there were four affinity sequences, two of which feature Linda recognising Grace's resources or sentiments (Eps 01 and 02), while the other two demonstrate Grace's support of Linda's sentiments (Eps 07 and 08). In the Linda–Emily data set, there were two affinity sequences, one displaying mutual recognition of sentiments (Ep 03), and the other demonstrating Linda's support for Emily's sentiment (Ep 12). The following two extracts of affinity sequences from the Linda–Grace data set illustrate reciprocity in expressive action: Linda acknowledges

Grace's sentiment in the sequence from Ep 02, while Grace acknowledges Linda's sentiment in a sequence from Ep 07.

Extract 6. Linda–Grace 02 [16/03/16 Assignment and Lecture Recording]; Affinity sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Grace (White box)

Turn #	Text message
1	I'm in my tutorial, are you proud of me?
2	Wow, I'll reward you some candies on lecture, good girl!
3	😂😂😂😂😂
4	Haha I'm bored already and they haven't even started :(
5	Well, there will be some "fun" you could enjoy like Sam's creepy voice 🙄. Just wait for a sec. It might not take a long time before he talk a lot. a lot...s

Extract 7. Linda–Grace 07 [06/04/16 Test Preparation]; Affinity sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Grace (White box)

Turn #	Text message
1	How you feeling for the test? :)
2	I don't know actually. I am just very nervous, very very nervous. 😭
3	It's open book so it'll be okay! You have that :)
4	I know. But I am still nervous. Because according to my prior experience in my country, open experience is a little harder than close test. You might not able to find answers from readings. So I am not sure whether the open test here is the same I am just worried that I can't even find answers from the book. 😂

Turn #	Text message
5	Yeah I completely get that and it is pretty true. Have you done notes in your book and got tabs reminding you where things are?
6	Yep,but not familiar enough with every tabs and notes and some specific knowledge.The reading is too long…
7	I bet you'll say that and then do really well :)

Extract 6 is a humorous affinity sequence where Linda supports Grace's sentiment of boredom in class through overt expressions of endorsement. Grace's opening turn about her being in tutorial as an achievement ("are you proud of me?") suggests that such academic behaviour is not typical. In turn #2, Linda supports Grace's sentiment of accomplishing a challenge by using an affective marker of admiration ("wow") and promising her a "reward", demonstrating an affiliative stance. In turn #3, Linda displays a series of the bitter smile emoji in acknowledging Grace's 'difficult' but necessary participation in the tutorial class, reinforcing the affiliative stance. Linda thus implicitly expresses approval of Grace's actions and promotes Grace's positive face through these affiliative stances.

In turn #4, Grace affirms the 'difficulty' of her being in class by highlighting that she is feeling "bored" and using an emoticon of an unhappy face. In turn #5, Linda recognises Grace's boredom as legitimate by poking fun at the tutor's speaking style in a bid to alleviate Grace's boredom, and once again promoting Grace's positive face through an affiliative stance. In addition to demonstrating expressive action, this particular affinity sequence also suggests the indirect brokering of sociocultural knowledge in terms of Grace's attitude towards lessons. While Linda does not formally request such knowledge, and Grace does not explicitly signal her behaviour as something to pay attention to, the sequence nonetheless highlights a particular academic practice.

The affinity sequence in Extract 7 is similarly unidirectional. In this case, Grace expresses support of Linda's sentiment regarding an upcoming test. Grace opens the sequence in turn #1, asking Linda how she is feeling about the test. Linda responds in turn #2 that she is feeling "very, very nervous" and ends the turn with a self-deprecating stance of a loudly crying face emoji (😭), thus soliciting emotional reciprocity through troubles-talk. In turn #3, Grace provides reassurance that Linda will be “okay” since it is an open-book test, and ends the turn with a smiling face emoticon, thus mitigating Linda’s negative sentiments and displaying an affiliative stance. In turn #4, Linda engages in a longer turn of troubles-talk by providing a detailed account for her nervousness, and ends the turn with a bitter smile emoji. In turn #5, Grace acknowledges Linda’s account and sentiment (“Yeah I completely get that and it is pretty true”), and asks whether she has prepared her readings. In turn #6, Linda confirms that she has, but continues to project a self-deprecating stance by reiterating that she is not prepared enough. In turn #7, Grace displays apparent disaffiliation by contradicting Linda’s sentiment, but in doing so, indirectly recognises Linda’s personal resources (i.e., academic competence), and thus enhances Linda’s positive face.

While the above extracts illustrate how reciprocity can be expressed between sequences, reciprocity can also be demonstrated by the mutual recognition of both parties’ sentiments and face concerns within the sequence, as seen in the following extract from the Linda–Emily data set.

Extract 8. Linda–Emily 03 [21/03/16 Writing Essay]; Affinity sequence between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	***WeChat m*****essage**
1	作文写了吗 Have you written the essay?
2	不是 4 月 1 才交嘛？！？！ Isn’t it only due on April 1st? ! ? !
3	她是说可以两篇文章比较的吧？　但是怎么个格式她都不给 。 。 She said we can compare two articles right? But she doesn’t even provide a format. .
4	嗯，对 Mm, right
5	没有我就是今天刚开始想一想怎么写，哈哈哈 Nah I just started thinking about how to write it today, hahaha
6	吓死我了 You gave me a fright

Turn #	*WeChat* message
7	那个 reading 你想好看那篇了吗
	Have you decided which %reading% you're going to read
8	我还没想好呢 😂
	I haven't even thought about it 😂
9	哎，我也在犹豫， 写两篇的话，每篇 500 字， 还得有总结， 批判， 总感觉字数不太够用......
	Sigh, I'm also hesitating, if we're writing two essays, and each essay is 500 words, and we still need to summarise, critique, still feel the word count isn't enough ……
10	而且我觉得两篇 summary 一下就听多了 如果比较一下那不就更， ，
	Moreover I feel that two sets of %summary% is quite a lot if we have to compare them wouldn't that be more, ,

In Extract 8, Emily initiates the sequence by asking Linda whether she has completed the essay assignment. In turn #2, Linda expresses exaggerated shock (with the use of exclamation and question marks), interpreting Emily's question as an indication that she has completed the assignment well ahead of the deadline. In turn #3, Emily displays troubles-talk by making a complaint about the lack of an essay format from the lecturer, and in turn #4, Linda expresses agreement with Emily's sentiment and, in doing so, affiliates with Emily and promotes her positive face in terms of being justified for making the complaint. In turn #5, Emily provides a delayed response to Linda's mock exclamation by offering reassurance that she has only just started thinking about the essay, adding laugh particles as a self-deprecating stance towards her supposedly late start. Her self-deprecating stance is also affiliative, as it mitigates the implied one-upmanship (in turn #1) which could be construed as a threat towards Linda's positive face as being equal with Emily. In turn #6, Linda reiterates the effect Emily's implied announcement of completion had on her ("吓死我了" / You gave me a fright), suggesting that Linda herself has not started writing the essay either.

The subsequent turns continue to demonstrate Linda's and Emily's shared sentiment towards their assignment. In turn #7, Linda asks Emily if she has selected the readings for the assignment, to which Emily replies in turn #8 that she has not even thought about it (“我还没想好呢”). Emily ends the turn with a bitter smile emoji (😂), thus projecting a self-deprecating stance. This display of troubles-talk elicits emotional reciprocity from Linda in turn #9 where she produces an affiliative response by expressing a similar sentiment of not having done so either (“哎，我也在犹豫” / Sigh, I’m also hesitating). Linda then provides an account of why she has not started her assignment. In turn #10, Emily acknowledges Linda’s sentiment with a similar account for why she finds the assignment difficult. The turn ends with an apparent unfinished statement (“…那不就更，　，”/… wouldn’t that be more, ,) but, in fact, is a deliberate expression that assumes a tacit or shared understanding between Emily and Linda, i.e., of the difficulty of writing a comparative essay within the word limit.

The reciprocal exchange of affiliative stances not only promotes Linda’s and Emily’s positive faces in terms of their status as equals with regard to their similar attitudes towards the assignment, but also suggests an indirect brokering of sociocultural knowledge. Here, the sociocultural knowledge is related to Emily’s belief that the teacher ought to have provided additional support for the assignment (turn #3), which Linda agrees with (turn #4). Similar to Extract 6 from the Linda–Grace data set, it is not knowledge which is explicitly presented as advice or information for one’s benefit, but is nonetheless an attitude that potentially influences one’s academic practices.

Affinity sequences, as illustrated above, do not appear to be immediately relevant to the instrumental action of brokering in terms of obtaining specific valued resources such as information or advice. However, the sentiments expressed in affinity sequences are derived from one’s set of beliefs and values, and thus may indirectly influence one’s sociocultural knowledge of academic practices. More importantly, however, affinity sequences may serve to sustain brokering interactions. As seen in the earlier analysis of advice sequences, a display of expressive action mitigates the threat to solidarity related to epistemic asymmetry by demonstrating solidarity related to the equal status of seeker and broker as peers. Expressive action in affinity sequences, on the other hand, reinforces the social connection or tie between parties through a reciprocal exchange of affiliative stances in terms of supporting sentiments and enhancing the other party’s face in terms of affirming an equal status as peers. In other words, expressive action reinforces one’s basic needs: the recognition of one’s individual worthiness, as well as one's entitlement to a common social status or membership of a group. At a broader interactional level, the strengthening of social ties additionally promotes the seeker's instrumental action of accessing resources held by the broker, resources which would be otherwise unavailable.

5.5 Summary of Dynamics of Peer Brokering Interactions

The CA analysis of the Linda–Grace and Linda–Emily data sets has demonstrated that brokering interactions feature social solidarity in information, advice, and affinity sequences which are underpinned by instrumental and/or expressive actions. Information and advice sequences revolve around the request for some valued resource and are therefore primarily driven by instrumental action. Information sequences demonstrate the straightforward acceptance of epistemic asymmetry inherent in instrumental action, while advice sequences may result in the resistance or rejection of the broker's epistemic authority, which potentially threatens the social solidarity of social asymmetry. Threats to social solidarity are nonetheless mitigated through expressive action and/or reinstating the broker's epistemic authority.

Affinity sequences, on the other hand, are not motivated by obtaining a specific valued resource. As a proxy for expressive action, affinity sequences reinforce parties' claims to sentiments and resources and therefore maintain the basic needs of social relations. The maintenance of peer relations further benefits the seeker, as the social connection forms the basis of instrumental action, that is, accessing valued resources which are less easily available elsewhere.

The subsequent chapter presents an analysis of the dynamics of peer brokering interactions in relation to another key informant, Kim, and her ethno-lingual peer broker, Josh. Through the examination of information, advice, and affinity sequence in the Kim–Josh data set, the chapter will show similarities, as well as variations, in peer brokering dynamics.

CHAPTER 6
CASE STUDY: KIM

In this chapter, I continue the analysis of peer brokering interactions by examining the records of brokering interactions between another key informant, Kim, and her ethno-lingual peer broker, Josh. Their interactions took place via *Facebook Messenger*, an instant messaging application commonly used by those who were already users of the social media networking site, *Facebook*. Just as Linda communicated with her co-national broker Emily in their native Chinese, Kim and Josh also communicated in Chinese.

6.1 Overview of Peer Brokering Interactions

There were 12 episodes of brokering interactions between Kim and Josh and, similar to Linda's peer brokering interactions, these involved resource and literacy brokering, and were mostly initiated by Kim (see Table 6-1). Resource brokering occurred when Kim offered Josh information about an assignment-related workshop (Ep 05), and some reference material for an assignment (Ep 10), as well as when Josh clarified assignment instructions with Kim (Ep 07). These instances of resource brokering were also the only occasions where there was reciprocal brokering, that is, where Kim took on the role of broker.

On the other hand, literacy brokering was mostly concerned with making explicit the genre knowledge associated with various academic texts: the written features of assignments, specifically APA formatting style (Eps 01 and 06); the procedural details of using an online plagiarism application (Eps 02 and 04) and assignment submission (Ep 08); and the interpretation of assignment questions or instructions (Eps 05, 09, and 10). There was also literacy brokering of sociocultural knowledge about having an assignment partner (Ep 05), and of linguistic knowledge regarding academic writing (Ep 12).

Like the Linda–Emily data set, the Kim–Josh data set featured relatively more information and advice sequences than affinity sequences. In this data set, there were just two affinity sequences (Eps 06 and 11), and roughly similar numbers of occurrences of information sequences as advice sequences: six information sequences found across Eps 01, 02, 04, 06, 07, and 08; and eight advice sequences across Eps 03, 04, 05, 09, 10, and 12.

Table 6-1. Data Set Kim–Josh: Overview of Episodes of Brokering Interactions via *Facebook Messenger*

Episode number [Date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Kim–Josh 01 [21/03/16 APA Format]	**Information sequence** Formatting style for an assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	33
Kim–Josh 02 [04/04/16 Plagiarism Checker Part 1]	**Information sequence** Using an online plagiarism checker	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	24
Kim–Josh 03 [05/04/16 Attending Workshop]	**Advice sequence** Attending a workshop	Resource brokering	Kim	–	Kim	7
Kim-Josh 04 [05/04/16 Plagiarism Checker Part 2]	**Information sequence** Using an online plagiarism checker	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	40
	Advice sequence Reducing the plagiarism score	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge				
Kim–Josh 05 [11/04/16 Research Assignment]	**Advice sequence** Interpreting assignment instructions	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	43
	Advice sequence Kim requests Josh to be her partner for an assignment	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	
Kim–Josh 06 [12/04/16 Title Format]	**Information sequence** Formatting style for an assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	15
	Affinity sequence Completing assignments	–	Josh	–	–	
Kim–Josh 07 [19/04/16 Lecturer's Instructions]	**Information sequence** Clarifying lecturer's instructions	Resource brokering	Josh	Josh	Kim	14

Episode number [Date and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	Seeker	Broker	No. of turns
Kim–Josh 08 [07/05/16 Data Calculations]	**Information sequence** Submitting assignment	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	12
Kim–Josh 09 [10/05/16 Assignment Question]	**Advice sequence** Interpretation of assignment question	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	11
Kim–Josh 10 [12/05/16 Critical Reflection and Reference Book]	**Advice sequence** Interpreting assignment instructions	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	23
	Advice sequence Using reference material	Resource brokering	Kim		Kim	
Kim–Josh 11* [12/05/16 Taking Exams]	**Affinity sequence** Managing assignments and exams	–	Josh	–	–	24
Kim–Josh 12 [13/05/16 Academic Writing]	**Advice sequence** Improving writing	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge	Kim	Kim	Josh	27

Note. *Ep 11 occurred immediately after Ep 10 but is treated as a separate episode for clarity in the analysis.

The analysis in this chapter, as in the previous one, focuses on the key informant's seeker-initiated interactions. I examine how instrumental and expressive actions are demonstrated in information, advice, and affinity sequences between Kim and her peer broker Josh. I use an adapted CA approach that incorporates CA notions of epistemic asymmetry, account giving, and emotional reciprocity, as well as face concerns and politeness. Face and politeness, in particular, are more prominently featured in the Kim–Josh data set, as will be seen in the analysis of advice sequences.

6.2 Instrumental Action in Information Sequences

As established in Chapter 5, the typical structure of information sequences is question–answer–acceptance. The seeker's question projects a relatively less knowledgeable stance (K-), while the broker's answer projects a more knowledgeable stance (K+), and the seeker's acceptance of the broker's offer completes the epistemic asymmetry inherent in instrumental action. The following extracts provide examples of information sequences in the Kim–Josh data set.

Extract 1. Kim–Josh 01 [21/03/16 APA Format]; Information sequence between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	*Facebook* message
1	那 running head 都要大寫是嗎? The %running head% is all in caps?
2	第一面的大写而已 Only the first page is written in caps
3	第二面可以普通的 Second page back to normal
4	好喔～ 謝謝你 OK~ Thank you

Extract 2. Kim–Josh 06 [12/04/16 Title Format]; Information sequence between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	*Facebook* message
1	問你喔~ research proposal 的 working title 可以是一個問題嗎? Can I ask you something~ can the working title of the %research proposal% be a question?
2	還是必須是 statement Or needs to be a %statement%

Turn #	*Facebook* message
3	rather than question? %rather than question?%
4	都可以 🙂 Both possible 🙂
5	好喔~ OK~

Extract 1 occurs in an episode where Kim asks Josh a series of questions about the APA (American Psychological Association) format that is commonly used for assignments in the discipline they are studying. In turn #1, Kim's request for information displays a K- stance, and in turns #2–3, Josh responds with his answer, thus displaying a K+ stance. In turn #4, Kim closes the sequence with an acknowledgement token "好喔～" (OK~), displaying a straightforward acceptance of the broker's knowledge. The turn also includes an expression of thanks ("謝謝你" / Thank you) which demonstrates appreciation of the broker's epistemic authority and thus displays positive politeness by promoting the positive face of the broker.

Extract 2 displays a similar straightforward acceptance of the epistemic asymmetry. In turn #1, Kim displays a K- stance in asking Josh how the title of a proposal should be phrased. In turns #2–3, Kim asks specifically whether she has to phrase the title as a statement or a question, thus displaying some prior knowledge about the issue. In turn #4, Josh responds with a K+ stance in providing his answer, and ends the turn with a smiling face emoji. The positive affective marker suggests a recognition of Kim's prior knowledge, and thus enhances the positive face of the seeker. In turn #5, Kim responds with an acknowledgement token with respect to Josh's answer, and thus maintains the epistemic asymmetry of the sequence.

6.3 Instrumental Action in Advice Sequences

In contrast to information sequences, as seen in the Linda–Emily data set, advice sequences in the Kim–Josh data set demonstrate resistance towards, and rejection of, the epistemic asymmetry. While the disruption to the social solidarity of instrumental action can be restored or mitigated with expressive action, the Kim–Josh data set shows a greater emphasis on face concerns of the parties involved. Extract 3 demonstrates how Kim's 'resistance' results in the mitigation of FTAs.

Extract 3. Kim-Josh 04 [05/04/16 Plagiarism Checker Part 2]; Advice sequence between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
1	你的畫面是這樣嗎? Does your screen show this too?
2	我 6%而已，没有那行红字 😖 Mine is just 6%, don't have that line of red words 😖
3	!
4	怎麼這麼少!! 不是文章的 summary 嗎? How come it's so little!! Isn't it the %summary% of the article?
5	內容不大都是知前文張應該會出現過的? 哈哈 Shouldn't the content have about the same words that appear in the original article? Haha
6	改字啊 😳 Change the words 😳
7	你的 status 是什麼? What's your %status%?
8	我有改呀~ I did change it~
9	上面的一样 Same as above
10	改了順序 Changed the order
11	用詞 Words
12	文法 Grammar
13	等 Etc.
14	好吧 我下次再試試看 Alright I'll try again next time

Extract 3 occurs in the later part of an episode where Kim asks Josh about using an online plagiarism checker. At the start of the episode, Kim shares with Josh a screenshot of her computer showing the outcome of using the plagiarism application, which revealed Kim's plagiarism score to be 15% (indicating an unacceptable level of plagiarism). The extract starts with Kim asking Josh if he had a similar outcome when using the application to check his assignment (turn #1). In turn #2, Josh reveals that his plagiarism score was "just 6%" and his screen did not have the line of red words that appeared on Kim's screen. He thus projects a K+ stance with regard to his successful outcome. Josh's turn ends with a worried face emoji which is, however, not a literal expression of anxiety, but a negative affective marker that attempts to project a self-deprecating stance towards his success, and therefore mitigates the potential FTA of damaging the positive face of Kim, that is, of sharing a common social status with Josh.

In turn #3, Kim expresses surprise through the use of an exclamation mark, and explains her reaction in turns #4–5. She exclaims at Josh's low score as she thinks that a summary of the article will contain words from the original source. The tone of this exclamation is one of indignation as implied by the use of exclamation marks in turn #3 and the phrase "怎麼這麼少!!" (How come it's so little!!) in turn #4. The remainder of turn #4 projects a K+ stance by containing an account or explanation for her outburst. The account is expressed as a rhetorical question ("不是文璋的 summary 嗎?" / Isn't it the %summary% of the article?), with the modal particle 嗎 (*ma*) marking the content of the statement as obvious. In turn #5, the account is expanded upon, also in a rhetorical fashion, thus reinforcing her K+ stance. These K+ stances perform a potential FTA by challenging Josh's epistemic authority, but Kim mitigates this possibility with laugh particles at the end of turn #5 ("哈哈" / haha), thus treating her epistemic assertions as non-serious.

In turn #6, Josh displays a K+ stance by offering advice on how to achieve a low plagiarism score, that is, by changing the words. This knowledge is projected as matter-of-fact through the use of the modal particle "啊" (*a*) which marks "the current contribution as an obvious response and a perfect reply to a question or situation" (Shei, 2014, p. 211). To mitigate the force of advice-giving, however, Josh uses the emoji of an embarrassed face to project a stance of self-deprecation, once again mitigating the potential FTA of damaging the positive face of Kim.

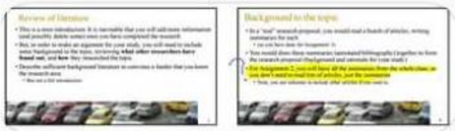
Kim's response to this advice appears in turn #8, where she resists the advice as new knowledge; she states that she has already changed the words, thus projecting a K+ stance. This K+ stance is then reiterated in an emphatic display of the different elements of language Kim has changed, with each element appearing in an individual message, rather than being listed together in one message (turns #10–13). In turn #14, Kim concedes that she will "try again" but prefaces her final decision with the expression "好吧" (Alright), typically used "as a sign of compromise after some sort of argument or confrontation" (Shei, 2014, p. 231). Thus, she projects a sense of resignation at having to make an additional round of changes, thereby weakening her acceptance of Josh's advice.

In addition to resisting Josh's advice as new knowledge, Kim also demonstrates rejection of advice altogether as seen in Extract 4, where she asks him for advice regarding an assignment. In the initial part of the extract (turns #1–8), Kim displays resistance towards Josh's advice, while the latter part (#9–28) demonstrates her rejection of his advice. The tension involved in the FTAs of resistance and rejection is mitigated, however, through the use of affective markers by both seeker and broker.

Extract 4. Kim–Josh 05 [11/04/16 Research Assignment]; Advice sequence between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
1	問你喔~ research assignment 我可以選擇看幾張 summary 就好嗎? 還是一定要看完全部? Can I ask you ~ about the %research assignment%? Can I just choose to read the %summary% of the article? Or do I have to read the whole thing?
2	当然是你决定啊 Of course you can decide
3	你要完全不看也行 😁 It's okay if you don't read the whole thing 😁
4	真假！哈哈 Is that true! Haha
5	我今天確定有一份五月要交的報告 好難 哈哈哈 我五月有五份報告 真的是要命 😜 Today I confirmed that I have a report due in May So difficult hahaha I have five reports in May it's really terrible 😜

Turn #	***Facebook* message**
6	对啊，自己找，我觉得更方便 That’s right, by searching [for the summary] yourself, I think it’s more convenient
7	哇，难怪你压力大啦.. Woah, no wonder you have so much pressure..
8	撑过去后，要好好请自己吃一顿 😏 After you get through it, you ought to treat yourself to a nice meal 😏
9	不是看大家的作業? Aren’t we reading everyone’s assignment?
10	我以為是看大家寫的作業 I thought we were reading everyone’s assignment
11	当然不是啦，那么多哈哈 Of course not, there’s so much haha
12	老师其实想方便我们，因为读起来比真的 article 短 The teacher actually wants to make things easier for us, because it’s shorter than reading the real %article%
13	还是要看你对哪种交通工具有兴趣 You still have to see which mode of transportation you’re interested in
14	喔喔~ 我的意思是說 從大家的作業中 找有興趣的幾篇閱讀？然後寫作業? O I C~ what I mean is from everyone’s assignments select a few you’re interested in reading? Then write your assignment?
15	我的解釋對嗎? 哈哈 Is my explanation correct? Haha
16	err
17	我觉得应该是你有你的题目后 I think it should be when you have decided on your topic

Turn #	*Facebook* message
18	去找有关的来阅读 (•—•) Then you find the relevant ones to read (•—•)
19	 {Kim: Screenshot of instructions about assignment annotated with highlighted portion and a question mark}
20	 {Josh: Voice recording lasting 0:17}
21	所以我也可以說 我從大家的作業中找資料 然後只讀 summary 嗎~ So I can also say I'll be looking for material from everyone's assignments Then just read the %summary%?~
22	哈哈哈哈哈 Hahahahaha
23	謝謝你還傳語音訊息誒 Thanks for even sending a voice message
24	不确定哈哈，和你们相处后，觉得我中文很烂 Can't be sure haha, after spending time with you guys, it feels my Chinese is really lousy
25	没啦，我只是懒惰打字而已哈哈 It's nothing, I was just too lazy to type it out haha
26	不會啦 不要這想 Not at all don't think like that
27	你幫我很多了 You've already helped me a lot
28	我想 我就那樣做吧 哈哈 :P I think I'll just do it that way haha :P

In turn #1, Kim displays a K- stance by asking whether she can choose to read the summary instead of the whole article, indicating a preference for the former option. Josh responds in the following turn with a strong K+ stance by prefacing his answer with “当然” (of course) and ending the statement with the modal particle “啊” (*a*), both of which signal a high degree of certainty by marking the fact that Kim can exercise her own choice in the matter is obvious. In turn #3, he addresses the main intention of Kim’s question, that is, whether it is sufficient to read the summary. He says that it is acceptable not to read the whole article (“完全不看也行”), but ends the statement with an emoji of a grinning face (😁), playing down the seriousness of what may be considered an improper academic practice.

The potential inappropriateness of the practice is confirmed by Kim’s exclamation of disbelief in turn #4 (“真假!” / Is that true!), demonstrating her resistance to accepting Josh’s advice. This disbelief, however, is mitigated by the laugh particles that come immediately after (“哈哈” / haha), which, as in Extract 3, turn #5, recast her prior assertion as non-serious. The following turn (#5) suggests Kim’s tentative acceptance of Josh’s advice by displaying troubles-talk of her heavy workload which serves as an account for preferring to read the summary instead of the entire article.

In response, Josh first attends to Kim’s disbelief in turn #6, and then to her troubles-talk in turns #7–8. In turn #6, Josh reasserts a K+ stance by emphasising the correctness of his advice (“对啊” / that’s right) with the use of the modal particle “啊” (*a*) marking the statement as obvious. He then offers a personalised account for his advice, highlighting the convenience of searching for the summary as his personal view (“我觉得” / I think) rather than a taken-for-granted practice, thereby softening his epistemic stance. In turns #7–8, Josh responds to Kim’s troubles-talk with emotional reciprocity by recognising Kim is under pressure from her workload (turn #7) and attributing the hard work she has to do as deserving of a reward (turn #8). The expressive action of supporting Kim’s sentiments serves to demonstrate social solidarity, and further buffers Josh’s display of epistemic authority.

In turns #9–10, Kim raises doubt over Josh’s comment in turn #6 about searching for particular summaries to read. She presents her own interpretation of completing the assignment (i.e., reading all the articles), firstly in turn #9 in the form of a question seeking confirmation, and immediately after in turn #10 as a statement reiterating her interpretation. Thus, in these two turns, Kim projects a K+ stance with her prior knowledge, and displays resistance towards accepting Josh’s advice as valid.

Josh rejects Kim’s interpretation in turn #11 with a strong K+ stance with the use of the modal phrase “当然不是啦” (of course not). “当然” (of course) indicates the obviousness of the statement, while the sentence-final particle “啦” *(la*) is used to “dismiss an idea or object as unimportant or unworthy of consideration” (Shei, 2014, p. 290), thereby asserting his epistemic authority in this matter. In the remainder of turn #11, Josh gives an account to support his view, citing the large number of articles. In the subsequent two turns (#12–13), Josh provides further accounts to support his view and thus reasserts a K+ stance. In turn #12, he cites the lecturer’s intention of making it easier for students by having them read the summary instead of the article, and in turn #13, he brings attention to an additional task that needs to be done before reading the summaries.

Kim, however, continues to resist Josh’s advice. In turn #14, she starts with acknowledgement tokens (“喔喔” / O I C) but only as a lead-in to reformulating her assertion of her understanding of the assignment. She prefaces her assertion with the phrase “我的意思是說” (what I mean is), thus signalling a K+ stance. Kim’s epistemic assertion is expressed as questions seeking confirmation, thus bringing attention to her prior knowledge. In the following turn (#15), however, she treats the knowledge as tentative by asking if her interpretation of the assignment is correct, thus mitigating her previous K+ stance. She also ends the turn with laugh particles (“哈哈” / haha), thus reducing the forcefulness of her epistemic assertion, and mitigating the FTA against Josh’s positive face as the more knowledgeable broker.

In Josh’s subsequent response, his display of epistemic authority becomes less forceful. The hesitation filler in turn #16 (“err”) signals that he is going to provide a dispreferred response (Heritage, 1984), that is, not aligning himself with Kim’s epistemic stance in the prior turn. Josh’s epistemic assertion is distributed across turns #17–18 and, at the beginning of turn #17 he prefaces his assertion with a hedging phrase “我觉得应该是” (I think it should be), thus mitigating the forcefulness of his K+ stance. At the end of turn #18 he concludes this assertion with an emoticon that depicts a speechless face with eyes wide open. Used in this context of a dispreferred response, this emoticon projects a self-deprecating stance of awkwardness, and again mitigates the force of his epistemic assertion, as well as the potential FTA against Kim’s positive face in terms of her equal status with Josh.

Kim continues to resist Josh’s advice in the remaining turns. In turn #19, she establishes a basis for her interpretation by sharing an image of the assignment instructions with a portion highlighted that is related to the point of contention between them. In response, Josh sends a voice message in turn #20. Although the content of the voice message was not made available as data, it was most likely a response to the highlighted portion of the image. Notwithstanding the missing data, Kim does not appear to align herself with Josh's response in the voice message. In turn #21, she re-asserts her interpretation by expressing it as a question seeking confirmation, once again attempting to project a K+ stance. The subsequent turn (#22) contains just laugh particles ("哈哈哈哈哈" / hahahaha), a series of five rather than the usual two or three particles. As with the previous display of laugh particles, the affective markers reduce the seriousness of her epistemic assertion. The increased number of particles also suggests a greater degree of mitigation of an FTA against Josh's positive face in line with the multiple epistemic assertions she has made thus far. In turn #23, the mitigation against the FTA is done through expressive action: an overt expression of gratitude for Josh's voice message by using the particular phrase "謝謝你…誒" where the sentence-final particle "誒" (*ei*) in this context emphasises the acknowledgement of what the other party has done. Thus, in spite of the series of "resistance" turns, Kim manages to restore Josh's positive face by bringing attention to his contribution as a broker.

In turn #24, Josh responds to Kim's epistemic assertion (in turn #22) with an even more tentative epistemic assertion than previously (see turns #16–18). He states that he is unable to verify whether her interpretation is accurate ("不确定" / can't be sure) which he immediately follows with laugh particles ("哈哈" / haha). Here, the laugh particles project a self-deprecating stance for his inability to verify Kim's interpretation. In the remainder of turn #24, Josh's self-deprecating stance is reinforced by attributing his uncertainty to his "lousy Chinese" ("中文很烂"), and an emoji of a frowning face (indicating dissatisfaction with his own limitation) at the end of the turn. In turn #25, Josh continues a self-deprecating stance in response to Kim's display of gratitude about his sending a voice message. In a requital display of modesty (Gu, 1990), Josh dismisses his action as not taking much effort ("没啦" / It's nothing), and a matter of convenience ("我只是懒惰打字而已" / I was just too lazy to type it out), and further downplays his contribution through the use of laugh particles at the end of the turn ("哈哈" / haha).

In the remaining turns of the advice sequence, Kim continues to restore Josh's positive face through expressive action before the final assertion of her epistemic stance. In turn #26, she refutes Josh's negative self-assessment of his Chinese proficiency and, in turn #27, draws attention to the help Josh has given her. Kim's final decision regarding Josh's advice, however, is to reject it, as seen in the main phrase in turn #28: “我就那樣做吧” (I’ll just do it that way). However, the force of the rejection is softened with the use of the modal article “吧” (*ba*) at the end of the phrase, implying a sign of compromise in an argument or confrontation (Shei, 2014). The reduced forcefulness is also seen in the preface to the assertion, and the closing affective markers of the turn. The preface uses a hedging phrase “我想” (I think) which reduces the certainty of Kim’s epistemic stance, while the end of the turn displays laugh particles (“哈哈” / haha), which reduce the seriousness of her actions, and an emoticon of a face with a tongue sticking out (:P) which implies embarrassment at ultimately not taking up Josh’s advice. Thus, the reduced forcefulness of Kim’s rejection and affective markers of self-deprecation serve to mitigate the FTA against Josh’s positive face, and cushion the disruption to the epistemic asymmetry.

The above examples from the Kim–Josh data set reinforce the previous chapter’s findings of the seeker’s resistance towards accepting the broker’s epistemic authority in advice sequences (e.g., by referring to prior knowledge), and the mitigation of the threat to social solidarity associated with asymmetrical instrumental action. The examples from this data set also reveal that both broker and seeker actively seek to mitigate this threat. Kim (seeker) uses laugh particles during her turns of resistance to minimise the severity of the threat to Josh’s positive face as the more knowledgeable broker, while Josh (broker) uses hedges and self-deprecating stances during his turns of rebuttal to redress Kim’s positive face as an equal.

6.4 Expressive Action in Affinity Sequences

As with affinity sequences in the previous chapter, affinity sequences in the Kim–Josh data set demonstrate the reciprocal exchange of sentiments and resources in expressive action. The two affinity sequences in this data set were related to the completion of assignments (Eps 06 and 11), as well as taking exams (Ep 11), and feature the mutual recognition of sentiments and resources within each sequence. This is illustrated in Extract 5 where Kim and Josh discuss their assignments.

Extract 5. Kim–Josh 06 [12/04/16 Title Format]; Affinity sequence between Kim (Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	*Facebook* message
1	你改了那个 annotated bibliography 吗? 很好笑我觉得 xP Have you corrected that %annotated bibliography%? It seems very funny xP
2	有阿～ 我改了 也交了 哈哈 I have~ I've corrected it and also submitted it Haha
3	好快啊 那我要赶紧了 That's fast Then I'd better hurry up
4	沒關係啦～ break 過後才交 No problem~ you only need to submit it after the %break%
5	我 proposal 也才剛開始做而已 I only just started doing my %proposal%
6	哈哈 Haha
7	那个我这两天也没动过哈哈 I've not touched that for the past two days haha

In turn #1, Josh initiates the affinity sequence by asking whether Kim has completed an assignment, and remarks that the assignment is "very funny" ("很好笑"), but the meaning of the remark is unclear. However, the following emoticon of a tongue sticking out (xP) indicates a cheeky attitude, suggesting that Josh's remark about the assignment was a negative evaluation and thus displays troubles-talk. In turn #2, Kim does not respond with emotional reciprocity to the troubles-talk, but instead states that she has completed the assignment and submitted it as well. However, she displays an affiliative stance by ending the turn with laugh particles ("哈哈" / haha) which project a non-serious attitude towards her achievement. The use of laugh particles thus mitigates the FTA of one-upmanship of completing the assignment earlier than Josh, and redresses Josh's positive face in his equal status with Kim.

Josh's response in turn #3 first recognises Kim's personal resource of being able to complete the assignment quickly in the phrase, "好快啊" (that's fast), with the sentence-final particle "啊" (*a*) used for emphasis. However, the phrase is immediately followed by a display of troubles-talk. Josh projects a self-deprecating stance using an emoji of a loudly crying face (😭), an exaggerated display of feeling distressed. He then states that he needs to "hurry up" ("那我要赶紧了") and finish his assignment, thus suggesting that he is progressing too slowly.

Kim, however, does not endorse Josh's display of self-deprecation. In turn #4, she first treats his 'troubles' as being unfounded ("沒關係啦" / no problem), with the use of the sentence-final particle "啦" *(la*) for emphasis. Kim then provides an account, highlighting that the assignment is not yet due. The turn thus projects an affiliative stance by affirming Josh's personal resource of being able to complete his assignment, and reinforcing his positive face as being equal with Kim.

Kim continues to reinforce her affiliation with Josh in turn #5 where she displays a reciprocal response to Josh's troubles-talk in turn #3. She refers to her similar state of affairs, that she has only just started on another assignment ("我 proposal 也才剛開始做而已" / I only just started doing my "proposal"), and in turn #6 uses laugh particles ("哈哈" / haha) to project a self-deprecating stance towards her own tardiness. In response, Josh reciprocates with similar troubles-talk in turn #7. He reports that he has avoided working on the same assignment, ending with similar self-deprecating laugh particles at the end: "那个我这两天也没动过哈哈" (I've not touched that for the past two days haha). His display of a similar set of 'troubles' thus affiliates with Kim's sentiments and maintains their social status as equals.

6.5 Summary of Dynamics of Peer Brokering Interactions

The analysis of brokering interactions between Kim and Josh reinforces the findings of the previous chapter. Firstly, information sequences feature the straightforward acceptance of epistemic asymmetry in instrumental action. Secondly, the instrumental action in advice sequences may be disrupted by the seeker's turns of resistance and/or rejection which have the potential to threaten social solidarity. Such threats are, however, mitigated through expressive action. Finally, affinity sequences demonstrate the reciprocal recognition of sentiments and resources between parties.

The analysis of the Kim–Josh data set further reveals a greater degree of attention to face concerns, as seen particularly in the advice sequences (Extracts 3 and 4). In resisting Josh's (broker) advice, Kim (seeker) mitigates the threat to social solidarity by treating her epistemic assertions as non-serious through the use of laugh particles, thus reducing the threat to the broker's positive face. When rejecting the broker's advice altogether, Kim softens the force of rejection through hedging phrases and self-deprecating affective markers to signal her contrition in performing the FTA. In response to Kim's resistance to accepting his advice, Josh, the broker, subsequently reiterates his epistemic stance but uses hedging phrases to reduce the certainty of his epistemic assertion, or mitigates the forcefulness of his epistemic authority with affective markers (e.g., embarrassed face emoji) that project a self-deprecating stance that projects a sense of modesty around his knowledge or success.

The following chapter reports on my analysis of Jane's non-peer brokering interactions, and highlights how non-peer brokering interactions contrast with peer brokering interactions as reported in this and the previous chapter.

CHAPTER 7
CASE STUDY: JANE

In this final case study chapter, I analyse the audio-recorded observations of brokering interactions between Jane and her non-peer broker, Tim. Tim was one of the faculty-based learning advisors for international students, as well as being a co-national with Jane. I observed and recorded two face-to-face consultation sessions in Mandarin which were held in an office at the university. During the two consultations, Jane presented Tim with a physical copy of her assignment (a different one at each session) for him to read and provide feedback on. The feedback was mostly verbal explanations, at times supported by written annotations on the document itself.

7.1 Overview of Non-Peer Brokering Interactions

The audio-recorded data (data set Jane–Tim) were treated in a slightly different manner from the messaging application exchanges in the previous two chapters. The two consultations were considered separate brokering episodes, each made up of a series of sequences. Episode 01 was about an essay for a geography assignment, while Episode 02 focused on an essay about career development. Each episode lasted approximately 40 minutes and the transcription of audio recordings produced approximately 300 (verbal) turns for each episode. These turns were divided into sequences based on aspects of the assignment or other academic-related topics. The two episodes of brokering sequences are presented in Table 7-1 and Table 7-2.

Sequences were labelled according to the particular type of brokering. Apart from the initial scene-setting sequence where Jane made some explanatory remarks about the assignment, sequences related to various aspects of literacy brokering. The brokering of genre knowledge addressed aspects of the assignment such as structure, organisation of ideas, the use of reference materials, and formatting requirements. Brokering linguistic knowledge, on the other hand, was concerned with grammar, sentence structure, and word choice, and thus involved language brokering in terms of translation of words and phrases from English to Mandarin and vice versa. To a lesser extent, there was also brokering of sociocultural knowledge in terms of Jane's attitudes toward academic study.

Table 7-1. Data set Jane–Tim, Episode 01: Overview of Brokering Sequences during Writing Consultation, 4 May 2016

Brokering sequence [Turn numbers and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	No. of turns
Jane–Tim 01 [#1–14 Setting the scene]	–	–	Jane	14
Jane–Tim 02 [#14–33 Choice of topic]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	20
Jane–Tim 03 [#34–47 Writing segment 1: Word choice and sentence structure]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	14
Jane–Tim 04 [#48–58 Writing segment 2: Grammar, sentence structure and word choice]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	11
Jane–Tim 05 [#58–64 Writing segment 3: Technical term]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	7
Jane–Tim 06 [#64–75 Writing segment 4: Logic problem]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	12
Jane–Tim 07 [#76–90 Writing segment 5: Paragraph on river pollution]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	15
Jane–Tim 08 [#90–103 Writing segment 6: Paragraph on solutions]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	14
Jane–Tim 09 [#104–114 Writing segment 7: Paragraph on tourism]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	11
Jane–Tim 10 [#114–126 Interpreting assignment]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	13

Brokering sequence [Turn numbers and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	No. of turns
Jane–Tim 11 [#126–134 Explaining why water is "an urgent issue"]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	9
Jane–Tim 12 [#134–151 Understanding how to choose a topic]	Rejection	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	18
Jane–Tim 13 [#152–167 Suitability of topic]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	16
Jane–Tim 14 [#168–205 Finding references]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	38
Jane–Tim 15 [#206–218 Using a news article]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	13
Jane–Tim 16 [#218–235 Choosing an easy topic]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Tim	11
Jane–Tim 17 [#229–235 Writing by a foreign student]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Jane	7
Jane–Tim 18 [#236–268 Focusing on the chosen topic]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	33
Jane–Tim 19 [#268–295 New Zealand teachers]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Tim	28
Jane–Tim 20 [#296–308 Other learning support staff]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Tim	13

Table 7-2. Data set Jane–Tim, Episode 02: Overview of Brokering Sequences during Writing Consultation, 15 June 2016

Brokering sequence [Turn numbers and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	No. of turns
Jane–Tim 01 [#1–5 Setting the scene]	–	–	Tim	5
Jane–Tim 02 [#6–10 Formatting requirements]	Rejection	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	5
Jane–Tim 03 [#11–28 Writing segment 1: Word choice]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	18
Jane-Tim 04 [#29–40 Writing segment 2: Grammar checked by other tutor]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	12
Jane–Tim 05 [#41–52 Writing segment 3: Expression and style]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	12
Jane–Tim 06 [#53–63 Writing segment 4: Sentence structure]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	11
Jane–Tim 07 [#63–72 Writing segment 5: Style and grammar]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	10
Jane–Tim 08 [#73–87 Formatting details]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	15
Jane–Tim 09 [#88–94 Writing segment 7: Narrative perspective in quotation]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Jane	7
Jane–Tim 10 [#95–114 Writing segment 8: Expression and logic]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	20
Jane–Tim 11 [#115–133 Writing segment 9: Word choice]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	19

Brokering sequence [Turn numbers and brief title]	Type of sequence	Type of brokering	Sequence initiated by	No. of turns
Jane–Tim 12 [#133–161 Writing segment 10: Using direct quotations]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	29
Jane–Tim 13 [#162–177 Writing segment 11: Word choice]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	16
Jane–Tim 14 [#178–192 Writing segment 12: Translating a Chinese sentence]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	15
Jane–Tim 15 [#192–212 Writing segment 13: Using the internet to translate]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	21
Jane–Tim 16 [#212–233 Writing segment 14: Elaborating on ideas]	Rejection	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	22
Jane–Tim 17 [#233–246 “Just a pass”]	Rejection	Literacy brokering: Sociocultural knowledge	Jane	14
Jane–Tim 18 [#246–254 Writing segment 15: Meaning of “openness”]	Rejection	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	9
Jane–Tim 19 [#254–260 Writing segment 16: Sentence structure]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Linguistic knowledge (also language brokering)	Tim	7
Jane–Tim 20 [#261–277 Cover sheet for assignment]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Jane	17
Jane–Tim 21 [#278–284 Reviewing essay]	Resistance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	7
Jane–Tim 22 [#284–301 Creating the cover sheet]	Acceptance	Literacy brokering: Genre knowledge	Tim	18

While peer brokering interactions took place via discrete message exchanges and were differentiated as information, advice, and affinity sequences, non-peer brokering interactions between Jane and Tim took place in face-to-face consultations that featured continuous stretches of talk, as had been noted in the literature on advice sequences (e.g., Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). Similarly, all the sequences in each episode were treated as advice sequences, but were also labelled according to the seeker's response to the broker's advice: *acceptance* of advice, *resistance* against accepting advice as new or relevant, or *rejection* of the advice altogether.

While the previous chapters on peer brokering interactions featured both instrumental and expressive actions, non-peer brokering interactions in the Jane–Tim data set primarily featured instrumental action. Instrumental action was accomplished not only through the seeker's acceptance of the broker's epistemic authority but also through the broker's particular projections of epistemic asymmetry, as will be explained in the section on acceptance sequences. Disruptions to instrumental action were demonstrated in resistance and rejection sequences where the seeker displayed claims of knowledge and/or personal competence. However, in resistance sequences, the broker's epistemic authority was reinforced and eventually accepted by the seeker. Rejection sequences, on the other hand, demonstrated the seeker's legitimacy in claiming epistemic rights through the broker's display of concession.

7.2 Acceptance Sequences

Acceptance sequences in this data set reinforced the epistemic asymmetry between the seeker and her non-peer broker. The asymmetry can be seen in the broker's display of a K+ stance through multi-unit turns, and the seeker's straightforward or marked acceptances of the broker's knowledge stance. The multi-unit or extended turns consisted of a stepwise structure of advice-related moves, such as activating the problem (Vehvilainen, 2001), making evaluations of the problem, presenting a solution, and giving accounts of the solution (Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). In contrast, the seeker's turns were typically less dense, and thus the broker's relatively longer turns reinforced the epistemic asymmetry.

In response to the broker's display of epistemic authority, the seeker often displayed minimal or unmarked acknowledgement tokens,[9] and thereby a straightforward acceptance of the broker's advice. At times, the seeker's acknowledgements were marked with requests for further advice, inviting the broker to display additional K+ stances. Epistemic asymmetry was thus maintained through both straightforward and marked acknowledgements that recognised or reinforced the broker's epistemic authority.

The maintenance of epistemic asymmetry is illustrated in the following four extracts. In Extract 1, Tim undertakes the advice-giving in a stepwise fashion where he 'activates' a problem by eliciting a response from Jane before giving his advice (Vehvilainen, 2001).

Extract 1. Ep 01, Jane–Tim 04 [#48–58 Writing segment 2: Grammar, sentence structure and word choice]

1	Tim:	然后你想说特别是这个水的资源,
		Then what you intend to say is that water as a natural resource,
2		不能被忽略, 是吧?
		should not be ignored, isn't it?
3	Jane:	嗯。
		Yeah.
4	Tim:	不是 %has become not be ignored%,
		Not %has become not be ignored%,
5		你这语法有问题啊。(3)
		Your grammar has a problem. (3)
6		就简单来说这个 %cannot be ignored%,
		It should simply be %cannot be ignored%,
7		不是什么%has become not%。
		instead of %has become not%.
8		((写, 读)) (13)
		((reads, writes)) (13)
9	Tim:	这里逗号啊,
		A comma should be put here,
10		就, 这句话应该是作为,
		then, this phrase should become,
11		你阐述你观点的一个前半句。
		what you elaborate on in the first half of the sentence.

[9] In face-to-face interactions, acknowledgement tokens may function in multiple and ambiguous ways. While minimal or unmarked acknowledgements may be understood as passive recipiency (Jefferson, 1984; Pudlinski, 2002), they may also be interpreted as passive resistance (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Park, 2014). For unmarked acknowledgements to be interpreted as passive resistance, analysts cite evidence of the advice giver orienting to them as such, for example, by reformulating the advice to elicit a marked response in subsequent turns. In the analysis of the two data sets, displays of the unmarked acknowledgement token "嗯" were not treated as resistance to advice since there was no indication of follow-up action by the advice-giver. Thus, such acknowledgement tokens were treated as *prima facie* straightforward acceptance of the advice in the data set.

12	Jane:	嗯。 Yeah.
13	Tim:	就是说这个水资源是新西兰, It means water resource is New Zealand’s,
14		就是自然资源里面最值钱的一个, is the most valuable resource in New Zealand,
15		最重要的一个, 对吧？ the most important one, right?
16	Jane:	嗯。 Yeah.

In lines 1–2, Tim brings attention to the problem by eliciting confirmation of his interpretation of Jane’s writing by using the interrogative “是吧?” (isn’t it?) in line 2. The interrogative expresses the speaker’s certainty about his proposition “and only requires a minimum of confirmation from the listener” (Shei, 2014, p. 222), similar to what Raymond (2003) describes as a yes/no interrogative preferring an agreeing answer. Jane affirms Tim’s interpretation in line 3 with an acknowledgement token “嗯” (yeah).

In the following multi-unit turn, Tim displays a strong K+ stance across several advice-related moves. He first identifies the problem (line 4) and provides an account (line 5), and offers the solution of replacing the problematic words with the correct words (lines 6–7). Immediately after, Tim makes notes on Jane’s document and continues to read her work (line 8). In line 9, he identifies another problem by presenting the solution, after which he provides an account of why it is correct (lines 10–11). Jane responds in line 12 with the acknowledgement token “嗯” (yeah). Tim continues to explain what the remainder of the sentence should contain in lines 13–15. In line 15, Tim ends with the interrogative “对吧?” (right?), again setting up the expectation for Jane to agree, which she does in the next turn (line 16).

Such sequences of straightforward acceptances occurred throughout Episodes 01 and 02. In Episode 02, however, acceptance of advice was sometimes marked with follow-up requests for clarification on the corrections to be carried out. While Episode 01 occurred earlier on in the semester, Episode 02 occurred towards the end of the semester, by which time Jane was seeking more specific feedback on her writing. Such marked acceptance of advice reinforced the seeker’s K- stance, while inviting the broker to offer additional advice and thus re-assert his K+ stance, as illustrated in the following extract (arrows indicate seeker’s turns of marked acceptance).

Extract 2. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 14 [#178–192 Writing segment 12: Translating a Chinese sentence]

1	Tim:		这 %creative thinking comes from necessity% This %creative thinking comes from necessity%
2			啥意思啊? what does it mean?
3			[你想表达什么?] [What do you intend to express?]
4	Jane:		[就是:] [It is:]
5	Jane:		因为有需要所以才会有创新的想法。(4) Because there is demand so there are innovative ideas. (4)
6	Tim:		就是因为有需要才会有创新的想法? It is because there is demand so there are innovative ideas?
7	Jane:		[嗯] [Yeah]
8	Tim:		[你是] 这么认为的? [Do you] think so?
9	Jane:		嗯。 Yeah.
10	Tim:		我认为是有需要才会刺激创新的想法。 I think it is demands that trigger innovative ideas.
11			不是, 不是%necessary%, 不是 %necessary%。 Not, not %necessary%, not %necessary%.
12	Jane:	→	°那我该°- ° Then I should°-
13	Tim:		你可以就像我刚才说的中文意思翻译过来。 You can take what I just said in Chinese and translate it.
14	Jane:	→	刺激。 Trigger.
15	Tim:		对呀。 That's right.
16	Jane:	→	然后就把 [它们] And then put [them]
17	Tim:		[是因为有] 需求, [It is because of] demands,
18			人才会去不断地去创新, that people keep on having innovations,
19			不断地去变革吗, 对不对? keep on making changes, isn't it?
20			不是说是你, 你原话怎么说的? Not what you said, what's your original expression?
21	Jane:		嗯, 创新来自于需求。(1) Uhm, innovative ideas come from demands. (1)
22	Tim:		对这句话中文, 中文没什么, This expression in Chinese, Chinese is no problem,

23	但是在逻辑上的话, but in terms of logic,
24	你应该反过来倒推。 you need to reverse the order.
25	你的需求会刺激创新, Your demands trigger innovation,
26	从而 %begin to% ((写)) therefore %begin to% ((writes))

Like the advice sequence in Extract 1, advice-giving in Extract 2 is presented in stepwise fashion that leads to a display of Tim's K+ stance across several advice-related moves. Tim elicits the intended meaning of Jane's English sentence in lines 1–3. After Jane responds in line 5, Tim elicits confirmation of Jane's meaning (lines 6–9) before pronouncing his advice in the form of an assessment (lines 10–11), thus establishing his K+ stance.

Jane's marked acceptances of Tim's advice are found in lines 12, 14 and 16, where her responses display acceptance of Tim's initial advice by requesting further help. In line 12, Jane responds to Tim's advice with the words "那我该" (Then I should), prompting Tim for a specific solution, but expressed in a soft tone and thus mitigating the force of her request. After Tim's solution is presented in line 13, Jane clarifies the Chinese term that needs to be translated in line 14. After receiving confirmation from Tim, Jane prompts him again for specific directions by saying "然后就把它们" (And then put them) in line 16, after which a more detailed response is presented in Tim's multi-unit turns (lines 17–20 and lines 22–26). Tim's K+ stance is again displayed using an interrogative preferring agreement "对不对" (isn't it) in line 19, and an imperative phrase "你应该" (you should) in line 24. There is no verbal acknowledgement from Jane after line 26, indicating her tacit acceptance of Tim's K+ stance. Thus, this sequence of follow-up requests is similarly displayed in a stepwise fashion where the K- stance of each request made by Jane elicits a display of Tim's K+ stance.

The above two extracts illustrate knowledge asymmetry in terms of the seeker's straightforward and marked acceptances of the broker's epistemic authority as displayed through multi-unit turns. These extended turns comprise a range of advice-related moves such as activating the problem through elicitation of confirmation or clarification, problem identification, making an assessment, presenting a solution, and giving accounts of the assessment or solution. While it is not uncommon to have such density in knowledge asymmetry, what is striking about this data set is the forcefulness of the broker's epistemic authority, as seen in the use of interrogatives preferring agreement and imperatives. In a Chinese cultural context of hierarchical relations, the non-peer broker also takes on a superordinate role (Pan, 2000). Thus, being in a more powerful position, the broker enhances his own positive face through his epistemic assertions of authority, at the expense of the seeker's negative face by directly or indirectly imposing solutions.

Such hierarchical assertions were also demonstrated through a disregard for the seeker's positive face by making complaints against her competence (Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005). These complaints projected a negative evaluation of the seeker's actions (e.g., I told you this was wrong), thus holding the seeker culpable for her actions. Complaints were also at times performed through "overdetermined descriptions of actions" that portrayed the deliberateness of particular actions, and hence emphasised the seeker's responsibility (Drew, 1998, p. 318). The following extracts illustrate how the broker's epistemic stance is projected through complaints (indicated by arrows), in conjunction with the use of interrogatives, imperatives, and other modal elements. Extract 3 below begins after Tim has elicited from Jane the main discussion points of her essay, and starts to project a series of epistemic assertions.

Extract 3. Ep 01, Jane–Tim 10 [#114–126 Interpreting assignment]

1	Tim:	我建议呀, 就是, 你不需要选三个点 I suggest, that is, you don't need three points
2	Jane:	[嗯] [Ok]
3	Tim:	[来] 解释到底是什么是这个 [to] explain what exactly is this
4		%urgent environment issue in New Zealand%。 %urgent environment issue in New Zealand%.
5	Jane:	嗯。 Ok.
6	Tim:	你应该, 就是有一到两点就行了。 You should, that is have one or two points will do.
7		然后呢, 这个作业的关键是什么, And then, what's the key to this assignment,
8		就是说你要展开讨论, 去讨论, that is you have to expand and discuss, to discuss
9		到底说是政府或者说是, whether or not the government or,
10		其他机构有没有做， other organisations have made any effort,

11		提供有效的这个去 %solve%. To provide something effective to %solve%。
12		而不是说是， It’s not saying,
13	→	你看你的, 你之前的一个就是， you look at your, your previous point which is,
14	→	你还大概用了一段来介绍, you even used about a paragraph to introduce,
15	→	来介绍怎么解决它啊。 to introduce how to solve it.
16	→	第二段就是变成三句话啦。 The second paragraph then turned into three sentences.

In Extract 3, line 1, Tim initially projects his advice as a suggestion, using the relatively weaker form of imperative “建议” (suggest), thus mitigating the FTA of imposing advice on Jane. After Jane’s acknowledgements in lines 2 and 5, however, Tim launches into a multi-unit turn that displays FTAs involving stronger imperatives and complaints (lines 6–16). Tim uses the modal verbs “应该” (should) in line 6 and “要” (have to) in line 8 in communicating the solution to the problem in Jane’s writing. Only after describing the solution in lines 6–11 does Tim reveal the problem by signalling an upcoming contrast in line 12 with the phrase “而不是说是” (It’s not saying).

The problem identification is then displayed over lines 13–16 through complaints, that is, by attributing the problem directly to Jane. In line 13, Tim draws Jane’s attention to her problematic writing with the phrase “你看你的” (you look at your), the emphasis on the personal pronoun “你” (you) attributing the problem to Jane. In line 14, Tim highlights Jane’s writing infelicities by using the adverb “还” (even), signalling a deliberate action on Jane’s part. Tim’s accusation is made complete with the sentence-final particles of assertion “啊” (*a*) (line 15) and “啦” (*la*) (line 16). This extract thus shows how Tim reinforces a K+ stance through complaints.

Extract 4 similarly highlights Tim’s use of complaints by ‘working up’ (Edwards, 2005) Jane’s culpability through specific descriptions of her actions and assertions of negative assessment. In this extract, Tim focuses on a problematic sentence in Jane’s writing.

Extract 4. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 15 [#192–212 Writing segment 13: Using the internet to translate]

1	Tim:		这个是你自己, 自己总结的吧? This one you, you summarised it yourself right?
2	Jane:		哪个? Which one?
3	Tim:		就是说 %to be (-), you need good human relation skills%。 This one %to be (-), you need good human relation skills%.
4	Jane:		对呀。 That’s right.
5	Tim:		%good persuasion%。 %good persuasion%.
6	Jane:		对呀。 That’s right.
7	Tim:	→	为什么要特别强调 %human relation%? Why especially emphasise %human relation%?
8	Jane:		就是人际关系嘛。 Because it’s human relations.
9	Tim:		那你 %relationship% 可以啦。 Then your %relationship% will do.
10		→	你干嘛非要, Why on earth do you have to,
11		→	添油加醋的? ((写)) add oil and vinegar (add unnecessary words)? ((writes))
12	Jane:		%Human relationship% 还是直接就是 %relationship%? %Human relationship% or just use %relationship%?
13	Tim:		不要 %human%。 Don’t use %human%.
14	Jane:		就是 %relationship%。 So just %relationship%.
15	Tim:		不是, 有些是, No, for some of them,
16		→	这是累赘你知道吗? this is cumbersome you know?

After verifying that Jane authored a particular sentence (lines 1–6), Tim describes Jane’s use of the term “human relation” as a deliberate act by using the phrase “特别强调” (especially emphasise). The deliberate nature of Jane’s action is then worked up in lines 10–11. In line 10, Tim makes a negative assessment with the use of an informal phrase “干嘛” (why on earth) which implies an egregious action on Jane’s part, and Jane’s wrongdoing is characterised as wilful (“非要” / trans. “have to” or “to insist on”). In line 11, the superfluous use of “human relation” is described with an idiom “添油加醋” (whose original meaning refers to adding oil and vinegar when cooking but spoiling the flavour).

Subsequently, lines 12–16 display Jane’s acceptance of Tim’s advice as she clarifies with Tim how she should change her sentence. Jane proposes two alternative amendments, ‘human relationship’ and ‘relationship’, the former violating the principle of sufficiency that Tim was trying to put across to Jane previously. This results in Tim’s reiteration of his complaint, a negative assessment in line 16 that describes the use of ‘human relationship’ as “累赘” (cumbersome), a highly evaluative adjective describing the superfluous use of words. The line also ends with the interrogative “你知道吗” (“you know” or “do you know”) that is used rhetorically to emphasise the other party’s lack of knowledge or understanding. The above analysis thus shows how the working up of complaints is accomplished through a series of overdetermined descriptions. The performance of these FTAs not only projects a strong K+ stance on the part of Tim the advice-giver, but also serves to project a K- stance on Jane in positioning her as an incompetent writer.

Acceptance sequences thus demonstrate the maintenance of epistemic asymmetry, that is, the seeker’s K- stance and the broker’s K+ stance, as seen through straightforward and marked acceptances of advice. In addition, the epistemic authority of the broker is enhanced through the broker’s use of modal constructions (e.g., interrogatives, imperatives), and particularly through the use of complaints signalling the seeker’s incompetence.

7.3 Resistance Sequences

While acceptance sequences reiterate the seeker’s lower hierarchical position, resistance sequences demonstrate the seeker’s attempts at projecting a K+ stance and thus positioning herself as competent. In Extract 5, for example, Jane displays a K+ stance in lines 9–10 (indicated by arrows) in her response to Tim’s advice about using a specific term in her writing.

Extract 5. Ep 01, Jane–Tim 05 [#58–64 Writing segment 3: Technical term]

1	Tim:	你说 %produce water or electricity energy% You say %produce water or electricity energy%
2		意思是什么? what is the meaning?
3		水可以造水? Water can create water?
4		还是造句? Or create a sentence?

5			你是想说水可以发电是嘛？ You mean to say water can generate electricity isn't it?
6	Jane:		对呀。 That's right.
7	Tim:		那专门有一个词, 叫 %hydro%。 There is a special term, called %hydro%.
8			你回去查一查。 Go back and check it.
9	Jane:	→	哦我知道。 Oh I know.
10		→	[我下面有写] [I wrote it below]
11	Tim:		[就水力发电] [It's hydroelectricity]
12			那你就待会儿改过来呗。(3) Then you just have to revise it later. (3)
13			你这儿要换成 %hydro energy%。 Here you need to change it to %hydro energy%.

After ascertaining Jane's intended meaning in her writing (lines 1–6), Tim introduces to Jane the technical term to use, "hydro" (line 7), and directs her to look up the meaning of the word (line 8). She replies with a marked response, "哦我知道" (Oh, I know) (line 9), displaying a K+ stance towards the term "hydro" and thereby resisting the advice as new knowledge and signalling her own prior knowledge. Jane then provides an account in line 10 ("我下面有写" / I wrote it below) to support her epistemic stance. The account overlaps with Tim's display of his K+ stance in providing Jane with the Chinese translation of "hydro" in line 11.

Despite the overlap, Tim catches what Jane says, and responds to her resistance by re-asserting a K+ stance that issues additional directives. In line 12, Tim starts with a continuer, "那" (then), indicating continued relevance of his advice, and uses the modal modifier "就" (just) to mark the action as an obvious consequence, and ends with the sentence-final particle of assertion "呗" (*bei*) (Shei, 2014). In line 13, Tim uses the imperative "要" (need to) in directing Jane to use the complete term "hydro energy", and Jane does not respond any further to this topic. Thus, this extract shows how the seeker's resistance is met with a more forceful epistemic assertion from the broker, and finally implicitly accepted by the seeker.

Resistance against advice is also demonstrated when Jane does not respond in an expected manner. In Extract 6, Tim makes several assessments of Jane's writing using rhetorical constructions or grammatical particles marking the assessment as obvious, to which Jane responds with disagreement (indicated by arrows).

Extract 6. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 06 [#53–63 Writing segment 4: Sentence structure]

1	Tim:		%Communicative% 是什么?
			What is %communicative%?
2			%Communicative%是个形容词。
			%Communicative% is an adjective.
3			你这个 %personal attributes including%
			Your %personal attributes including%
4			后面不是应该结名词或者形容词吗?
			shouldn’t it be followed with a noun or adjective?
5	Jane:	→	对呀,
			That’s right,
6			<这个就是形容词呀>
			<this is an adjective>
7	Tim:		((读)) (5)
			((reads)) (5)
8	Tim:		那你后面, 那如果你这样的话,
			Then after that, if you explain it this way,
9			你这里就不应该用句号啊。
			then you shouldn’t use a period here.
10			你不是这句话还没有完嘛。
			This is not a complete sentence.
11	Jane:	→	不是啊。
			It isn’t.
12			下面的从句。
			After that is a clause.
13	Tim:		((读)) (9)
			((reads)) (9)
14	Tim:		那这句话你要你要划一下。
			Then this sentence you need to you need to underline it.
15			你说这个 %personal attributes including%
			You say this %personal attributes including%
16			这两个对吧?
			refers to these two right?
17	Jane:		嗯。
			Yeah.

((4 lines omitted; Tim clarifies with Jane which sentence she is referring to))

18	Tim:		那你句子没完嘛。
			Well the sentence is not complete.
19			那就逗号。((写))
			Then just use a comma. ((writes))

In line 4, Tim makes an assessment of Jane's writing implying that she has not used the correct grammatical form (noun or adjective) with the rhetorical use of the interrogative preferring agreement "不是应该…吗?" (shouldn't it be …?). Although Jane agrees in line 5, it is a marked agreement ("对呀" / that's right) that uses the particle "呀" (*ya*) to mark the utterance as obvious. This is followed by line 6 with an assertion that she has used an adjective in her writing, again with the particle "呀" marking the utterance as obvious. Jane thus resists Tim's negative assessment by asserting a K+ stance, and potentially performing an FTA at the same time.

In response to Jane's epistemic assertion, Tim re-reads her writing (line 7) and counters Jane's K+ stance through a revised assessment of her writing (lines 8–10). His K+ stance is reinforced by the sentence-final particles of assertion "啊" and "嘛" (*ma*) in lines 9 and 10 respectively. These particles of assertion mark the statements as obvious and conclusive (Shei, 2014). Jane, however, responds with disagreement, using the sentence-final particle of assertion "啊" in line 11 ("不是啊" / It isn't), and provides an account supporting her disagreement in line 12, and thus displays a K+ stance while performing a potential FTA.

In line 13, Tim re-reads Jane's writing and makes a final revision of his assessment in lines 14–19. Tim once again counters Jane's K+ stance with his own K+ stance reinforced by the use of imperatives and modals. In line 14, he uses the imperative "要" (have to) to refer to a sentence that Jane needs to revise. After clarifying with Jane the content of her writing (lines 16–17 and also in the omitted lines), he uses the sentence-final particle of assertion "嘛" in line 18 to reiterate his assessment, and the modal modifier "就" (just) in line 19 to mark his solution as obvious, thereby reinforcing his K+ stance. At the end of this sequence, Tim makes written notes on Jane's writing and Jane does not respond further, indicating her implicit acceptance of the preceding assessment.

The above two extracts focused on resistance sequences deal with aspects of the English language by means of which Jane attempts to demonstrate her competency through epistemic assertions. However, these assertions of competence are barely recognised by the broker. Instead, the broker treats the seeker's assertions as FTAs that provoke his epistemic re-assertions of directives in order to redress the hierarchical imbalance, which Jane implicitly accepts. The broker's non-recognition of Jane's assertions and Jane's eventual acceptance of the broker's advice is not surprising since the English language is not within Jane's domain of competence. However, as seen in the next extract, Jane's resistance to Tim's advice becomes extended when she appears to have greater epistemic authority in some other aspect of study.

Extract 7 shows Jane searching for supporting references for her essay. The extract begins after Jane tells Tim that she had tried searching for references for her essay but had not been able to find relevant material. Tim consequently offers to look for references (by using the internet on his computer), and line 1 starts after he has identified a suitable source of information. What follows is a protracted resistance on both Jane's and Tim's parts where each party asserts his or her own epistemic stance (Jane's resistance indicated with arrows), and at times mirroring each other's utterance construction (highlighted in grey). The interruptions and overlaps in lines 6–13 further reinforce the tension of reciprocal claims to epistemic authority.

Extract 7. Ep 01, Jane–Tim 14 [#168–205 Finding references]

1	Tim:		这不好多嘛? Isn't this a lot?
2			你确定你搜啦? Are you sure you've searched it?
3	Jane:		你这是在哪儿搜的? Where did you find this?
4	Tim:		我在 Google 哇。 I used Google.
5	Jane:	→	Google 上我搜过呀。 I used Google too.
6	Tim:		你看我= You see I=
7	Jane:	→	=不是, 你关键你得说是克里河的污染, =No, the main thing you need to say is Kori River's pollution,
8			[其他的河不行] [other rivers won't do]
9	Tim:		[这是克里河-] [This is Kori River-]
10			不是, 关键是你有没有好好这个= No, the main thing is whether or not you really did this=
11	Jane:	→	=关键我是选了三个点= =The main thing is I have chosen three points=
12	Tim:		=你看这里, [你看这] =Look at this, [you look at this]
13	Jane:		[针对这方面的污染。] [Directed at this pollution.]

14	Tim:		你看这个也讲的克里河吧? You see this is also talking about Kori River right?
15	Jane:		((看屏幕)) ((looks at screen))
16		→	这个我有看过, 我有。(3) I read it before, I did. (3)
17			它是很多方面的说污染的。 It is about many aspects of pollution.
18		→	这个没什么用。 This one is not much use.
19			这个网页我也见, 见过一面。 I browsed this webpage before.
20	Tim:		(2) 对呀, 所以我就跟你说， (2) That’s right, so that’s why I’ve been telling you,
21			其实你, 你选这个克里河的污染＝ Actually you, you chose about Kori River’s pollution＝
22	Jane:	→	＝不好说。 ＝not easy to discuss.
23	Tim:		是不好说, Indeed it is not easy to discuss,
24			因为我本身就不觉得它是污染。 Because I just personally don’t think the river is polluted.

In line 1, Tim projects a K+ stance by using a rhetorical construction to show that he has found many references, “这不好多嘛?” (Isn’t this a lot?), and asks Jane whether she has performed such a search in line 2, thereby implying that Jane herself has not exercised due diligence. After Jane clarifies with Tim that he used *Google* (line 3), Jane states she has also used *Google* to perform the search, thus establishing her K+ stance and resisting Tim’s knowledge as new.

In line 6, Tim appears to direct Jane’s attention to something (你看我 / you see I) but is interrupted by Jane in line 7 with a bald-on-record disagreement (“不是” / no), who continues with a negative assessment of Tim’s *Google* search. In the remainder of line 7, she asserts a K+ stance by stating that the “main thing” (“关键”) is the need to search specifically on the topic she is writing on (i.e., Kori River[10]), and in line 8, implies that Tim performed only a general search on rivers, thereby performing a potential FTA against the broker’s epistemic authority.

Tim responds immediately after Jane’s disagreement in line 9, in an overlapping utterance with Jane’s utterance in line 8. In line 9, Tim asserts his K+ stance by stating that the article is on Kori River, but ends the utterance abruptly

[10] A fictitious name is used for the river to prevent identification of the research site.

and reformulates his K+ stance in line 10, mirroring the construction of Jane's prior utterance. Tim similarly starts with a bald-on-record disagreement ("不是" / no), and states that the main issue or "main thing" ("关键") is whether Jane has done a thorough search, indirectly implying that she has actually not done so, and disregarding Jane's positive face.

Tim's utterance in line 10, however, is again interrupted by Jane in line 11 where she asserts her epistemic stance, using the same utterance construction of lines 7 and 10 to provide an account of her prior assertions ("关键我是选了三个点" / The main thing is I have chosen three points). Her account is interrupted by Tim in line 12, where he attempts to draw her attention to the computer screen ("你看这里" / Look at this), but is once again interrupted in an overlap as Jane continues her account in line 13 (… "针对这方面的污染" / … directed at this pollution), thereby reinforcing her K+ stance, as well as the FTA.

In line 14, Tim directs Jane to look at the screen with an account to support his prior claim that the article he has found is indeed on Kori River. The utterance ends with a final particle "吧" (*ba*), marking the statement as a rhetorical question which challenges Jane's prior assertions (Shei, 2014). In line 15, Jane looks at the screen but in lines 16–19 projects a K+ stance by repeatedly stating her prior knowledge of the article (lines 16, 17, and 19), and projecting a negative evaluation of the article as "not much use" ("没什么用"), which indirectly casts a negative assessment on Tim's advice, thereby threatening his face.

After a two-second pause, Tim responds in line 20 with a marked agreement with Jane's assessment ("对呀" / that's right), seemingly suggesting solidarity with Jane's point of view. However, Tim's marked agreement serves to highlight his previous advice in earlier parts of the episode ("所以我就跟你说" / so that's why I've been telling you). In line 21, Tim starts to assert his earlier assessment of Jane's choice of topic as not being an easy topic, but is interrupted by Jane in line 22 who completes his utterance ("不好说" / not easy to discuss), which appears to resist Tim's knowledge as new, but in fact, aligns her point of view with Tim's. In line 23, Tim echoes Jane's interruption with a marked acknowledgement ("是不好说" / Indeed it is not easy to discuss), and provides an account in line 24, thereby re-establishing his K+ stance and overall epistemic authority on the matter of Jane's choice of essay topic.

As the extracts have shown, the seeker resists accepting the broker's advice as new or relevant through claims of knowledge and competence. Such resistance, however, also threatens the face of the broker, and is countered with reinforced epistemic stances that re-assert the broker's epistemic authority, and redresses his positive face. Resistance sequences further suggest that it is the broker rather than the seeker who is oriented towards face concerns in the maintenance of epistemic asymmetry and hierarchical relations.

7.4 Rejection Sequences

While resistance sequences highlight the seeker's unsuccessful attempts at claims to knowledge and competence, rejection sequences, on the other hand, highlight the limited circumstances under which such epistemic assertions may be legitimate. In these rejection sequences Jane displays alternative epistemic stances with accounts, to which Tim concedes. Tim's concession appears to be straightforward in cases where Jane's rejection of Tim's advice is accounted for by prior advice from other authorities (e.g., the subject lecturer), as illustrated in the following two extracts, both from Episode 02.

Extract 8. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 07 [#63–72 Writing segment 5: Style and grammar, and about other tutors]

1	Tim:	你接下来这句话, In your next sentence,
2		就不需要老在重复 %to be tourist guide%, then don't have to keep repeating %to be tourist guide%,
3		因为你之前已经说了。 because you have mentioned it before.
4	Jane:	不是不是, No no,
5		我这个照 %Stacey% 模板写的, I wrote it following %Stacey's% model.
6		它就得重复。 Need to repeat in the model.
7		她写的那个模板就是重复的。 The model she wrote does have repetition.
8	Tim:	好吧。 All right.
9		那你既然认为你要重复就重复吧。 Since you think you need to repeat, then repeat.

Extract 9. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 18 [#246–254 Writing segment 15: Meaning of ‘openness’]

1	Tim:	你 %openness% 就是你开放态度。 Your %openness% means your open attitude.
2	Jane:	他, 他其实这个%openness% 的意思不是开放的意思。 This, actually this %openness% doesn’t mean open attitude.
3	Tim:	那它是啥, 表达啥 %openness%? Then what is it, what does %openness% mean?
4	Jane:	我写的是一个猥亵经验, I wrote about one, a harassment experience,
5		还有学到教训。 and also the lesson learnt from it.
6		然后我把这两个点给 %Stacey% 看了, Then I let %Stacey% have a look at these two points,
7		她说可以, 可以算是这个, She said it’s possible, it’s possible to be this,
8		如果是这两个点, If it’s about these two points,
9		那这个 %openness% 的意思就应该不是开放。 Then this %openness% shouldn’t mean open attitude.
10	Tim:	好吧。 All right.
11		那你就当我没写过吧。 Then take it that I didn’t write it.

In Extract 8, Tim displays a K+ stance by providing an assessment of Jane’s writing as having unnecessary repetition (line 2), and also provides an account (line 3). Jane rejects Tim’s advice, firstly by bald-on-record disagreement in line 4 (不是不是 / no no), and followed by an account in lines 5–7, stating that she followed the lecturer’s (Stacey) writing model in which repetition is a feature. Jane’s rejection of Tim’s advice projects a K+ stance and thus positions herself as competent, at least in terms of following the lecturer’s directions, but also performs a potential FTA. Tim displays concession in his response, firstly in line 8 by using the expression “好吧” (all right) as “a sign of compromise after some sort of argument or confrontation” (Shei, 2014, p. 231). In line 9, Tim provides an account, attributing his concession to Jane’s opinion on the matter (“你既然认为你要重复” / since you think you need to repeat), but which is, in fact, based on the lecturer’s implicit directions to do so. Thus, Tim’s concession to Jane’s rejection of his advice can be said to be justified by reference to a competing authority on the subject matter which results in him relinquishing his K+ stance.

A similar concession takes place in Extract 9, where Tim has made a written correction on Jane's essay regarding the English word "openness". In line 1, Tim projects a K+ stance by explaining what the English word means in Mandarin. Jane, however, rejects Tim's explanation in line 2, to which Tim responds by asking what the correct explanation is in line 3. Jane responds with a K+ stance by providing an account in a multi-unit turn in lines 4–9, again appealing to the authority of her lecturer, Stacey. In line 10, Tim uses the concessionary expression "好吧" (all right), and in line 11, retracts his previously written correction.

The above extracts thus demonstrate Tim's straightforward concession when Jane's alternative epistemic stances are derived from sources which are positioned relatively higher on the hierarchy of authority. However, when Jane's rejection of Tim's advice is accounted for with personal attitudes or values, Tim's concession is indirectly expressed through a reformulation of Jane's reasoning. While Tim's apparent concession supports Jane's perspective, it also displays a K+ stance that re-positions him as the advice-giver. This is illustrated in the following two extracts, one from each episode.

In Extract 10 (from Episode 01), Tim points out that Jane has used the lecturer's example of Kori River for her essay, implying that her idea was not an original one, an implication which Jane challenges.

Extract 10. Ep 01, Jane–Tim 12 [#134–151 Understanding how to choose a topic]

((Tim is reviewing the assignment instructions for Jane's essay))

1	Tim:	他这不也有克里河。 Here he also has Kori River.
2		你这不是照着他来了嘛。 You followed his example, didn't you?
3	Jane:	不是啊, 他举的, 他不是举克-克里河。 It's not, he used, he didn't use Ko- Kori River.
4		他是这个, 什么那个%to-topic%. He referred to, that %to-topic%.
5		再说如果我举跟他一样的 Anyway even if I used the same example as his,
6		也应该没什么事情啊, also it shouldn't matter,
7		也 [跟我说的不一样] also [not the same as what I say]
8	Tim:	[他这没什么] [His doesn't matter]
9		对, 你说的不一样, Right, yours is not the same,

10		就是说, 你自己有你自己的侧重点嘛, 对不对？ which means, your example has your own focused point, isn't it?
11	Jane:	嗯。 Yeah.

In line 2, Tim accuses Jane of using the same example as the lecturer with the sentence-final particle of assertion "嘛". In defence, Jane expresses a bald-on-record disagreement that ends with a particle of assertion "啊" ("不是啊" / It's not) in line 3, and provides an account in lines 3–4. In lines 5–7, Jane articulates an argument justifying her actions. In lines 5–6, she argues that even if she did use the lecturer's example of Kori River, her action would be of no consequence ("应该没什么事情" / shouldn't matter), and in line 7, explains that the lecturer's description would be different from hers ("跟我说的不一样" / not the same as what I say), thereby projecting a K+ stance and performing a potential FTA.

Jane's account in line 7 overlaps with Tim's interjection in line 8 where he begins to display concession by echoing Jane's assessment of her actions "没什么" (doesn't matter). He continues his concession in line 9 with an agreement token "对" (right), and repeating Jane's argument ("你说的不一样" / yours is not the same). Tim then provides his own assessment of Jane's action by reformulating Jane's assertion in line 10, and ending his utterance with an interrogative preferring agreement (…对不对 / … isn't it), to which Jane agrees in line 11. Thus, Tim's concession is first expressed as a marked agreement with Jane's assertion in lines 8–9 but then immediately, in line 10, is reformulated as his own assessment that invites agreement from Jane, thus re-positioning Tim as projecting a K+ stance.

A similar reformulation of Jane's epistemic assertion is demonstrated in Extract 11 (from Episode 02). In this extract, Tim advises that Jane should elaborate on her idea. Jane, however, rejects Tim's advice, citing the lack of time to do so, but later on also reveals that she is not interested in making further improvements to her essay.

Extract 11. Ep 02, Jane–Tim 16 [#212–233 Writing segment 14: Elaborating on ideas]

1	Tim:	你把逗号, 然后你进一步解释, You use a comma, and then explain further,
2		你怎么样去赢得 %employee% 的 %trusts% 对吧? how you can win %employee('s) trusts% right?
3	Jane:	可以, 再延伸我都来不及啦。 I could, if I extend it further there won't be time.

4	Tim:	什么东西?
		What?
5	Jane:	要是再延伸就来不及啦。
		If I extend it further there won’t be time.
6		我写完就得交。
		Once I finish writing I have to submit it.
7	Tim:	>可是你很多,<
		>But many of your,<
8		就是表述上面就是你每次,
		that is every time your expression,
9		写半句话然后句号,
		these half-sentences followed by periods,
10		就读的就非常, 就不清楚
		reading them is so, just not clear
11		你最, 最终的重点在哪个地方。
		where your final, ultimate focus is.
12	Jane:	她能读懂就行了。((笑))
		As long as she can understand it’ll be ok. ((laughs))
13	Tim:	你是但求过, 是吧?
		You just want a pass, isn’t it?
14	Jane:	对。((叹息)) 嘿呀,
		Yes. ((sighs)) Aiyah,
15		应该要求不会特别, 那么高吧,
		the requirement shouldn’t be so, so high right,
16		就每句都要分析歧义的话。
		that every sentence is analysed.
17		((Tim continues to read Jane’s essay)) (48)
18	Jane:	你觉得我这篇文章有 %C plus% 吗?
		Do you think that my essay can get a %C plus%?
19	Tim:	我觉得, 就如果她, 不要太严格的话,
		I think if she is not too strict,
20		应该还是给你个过吧。
		should still let you pass.

In lines 1–2, Tim issues a directive to Jane on how to revise her writing, constructing his advice as an interrogative preferring agreement (“对吧?” / right?). In line 3, Jane at first appears to agree (“可以” / I could), but continues with an account for not wanting to make changes to her writing (“再延伸我都来不及啦” / if I extend it further there won’t be time), using the sentence-final particle of assertion “啦” to mark the dismissal of the advice (Shei, 2014). Tim’s response in line 4 suggests that he did not catch what Jane has said and Jane repeats her response in line 5, and follows with an account in line 6 (“我写完就得交” / once I finish writing I have to submit it), thus projecting a K+ stance and performing a potential FTA.

Tim then responds disapprovingly with a multi-unit turn in lines 7–11 detailing his negative assessment of Jane's writing.

In line 12, Jane responds with a counter-argument, revealing that she only requires the teacher to minimally understand her writing ("她能读懂就行了"), and ends the utterance with self-deprecating laughter at her own lack of diligence. Tim reformulates Jane's admission in line 13 as a direct assessment of Jane's attitude, that she is only interested in achieving a passing grade ("你是但求过"), but constructs his utterance as an interrogative preferring agreement ("是吧?" / isn't it?), and thus projects a K+ stance.

Jane responds with agreement in line 14, and provides an account in lines 15–16, reasoning that the requirements should not be so high that "every sentence is analysed". Tim does not respond to Jane but continues reading her essay in line 17. Almost a minute later, Jane asks Tim is she can achieve C+ grade for her essay in line 18. In lines 19–20, Tim appears to align himself with Jane's perspective, but does so by once again reformulating Jane's reasoning. Echoing Jane from lines 15–16, Tim states that the teacher would pass Jane's writing if she is not too strict, thus projecting a K+ stance and re-positioning himself as an advice-giver.

Extracts 10 and 11 thus demonstrate how the broker's response to the seeker's rejection of his advice performs the dual function of indirect concession and re-positioning the broker as the advice-giver. Considering that the seeker's rejection of the broker's advice is face-threatening to the broker, re-formulating the seeker's account for rejection as the broker's own epistemic assertion demonstrates a face-saving strategy. That is, the broker appears to concede his epistemic rights, but in fact redresses his positive face as the superordinate in the hierarchical relation between advisor and student.

7.5 Summary of Dynamics of Non-Peer Brokering Interactions

This chapter has revealed the importance of the hierarchical relation between the seeker and a non-peer broker in a Chinese cultural context. The hierarchical relation maintains epistemic asymmetry in instrumental action, as well as the relative face concerns of participants. Acceptance sequences demonstrate how epistemic asymmetry is maintained not only through the seeker's acceptance of the broker's advice but also through the forcefulness of the broker's epistemic assertions at the expense of the seeker's face. Resistance sequences, on the other hand, demonstrate the limited viability of the seeker's epistemic assertions of prior knowledge or competence because such assertions are inherently face threatening.

The broker's rebuttal in such sequences reinforces his epistemic primacy as much as it restores his positive face as the superordinate.

The seeker's epistemic assertions, however, appear to be legitimate in rejection sequences, albeit within limited conditions. The broker demonstrates concession when the seeker accounts for her alternative stance by appealing to a higher authority relative to the broker, or when she bases her reasoning on personal values or attitudes. In both cases, however, the broker maintains his positive face and hierarchical position. In the former, the broker concedes to a higher authority and not directly to the seeker, while in the latter, the broker re-positions himself as the advice-giver by reformulating the seeker's account as his own epistemic assertion.

CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I embarked on this research in response to the call to make more visible international EAL students' agency (Marginson, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2018; Volet & Jones, 2012). To do so, I examined students' brokering practices or their informal academic-related help-seeking interactions. Brokering entails bridging gaps in knowledge and other valued resources (Lin, 2001b; Stovel et al., 2011), and occurs through translation and/or interpretation of various texts and practices (Perry, 2009; Tse, 1995, 1996). The research also aimed at contributing to an understanding of how international students' social relations provide academic support outside contexts of formal instruction.

My main research question was "What is the nature of brokering practices among international EAL students?", with the following sub-questions:

1) What aspects of academic texts and practices are brokered?
2) Who are the brokers?
3) Why are these brokers chosen?
4) What are the characteristics of brokering relationships?
5) What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?

Focused ethnography was used to investigate participants' help-seeking interactions with others during the academic semester of 15 weeks. In addition to gathering interview responses about participants' brokering practices, I obtained records of brokering interactions between three key informants and their respective brokers. Thematic analysis of all the data using theoretical and data-derived concepts provided an overview of brokering practices among my participants. In addition, case studies of brokering interactions related to three key informants, specifically text messages in Chinese and writing consultations in Mandarin, were analysed using concepts from conversation analysis (CA) and pragmatics, thus providing insight into the dynamics of brokering interactions.

This chapter discusses the findings and case study interactional analyses in relation to the literature related to international EAL students' brokering practices, as well as the conceptual literature related to brokering. The chapter first highlights distinctive features of participants' brokering practices (Section 8.1). In terms of the various types of brokering (Section 8.1.1), resource brokering was mediated by mobile phone technologies; language brokering facilitated claims of communicative competence; and literacy brokering comprised three differentiated aspects of genre, sociocultural, and linguistic knowledge. In addition, genre and sociocultural knowledge was effectively brokered because of the seeker and brokers' similar backgrounds. Linguistic knowledge was pre-dominantly brokered by native English speakers (i.e., learning advisors), but the practice of using experts to remove students' writing errors for better academic reward raises ethical issues.

The chapter also emphasises the complex set of characteristics of brokering relationships (Section 8.1.2). Relationships between participants and their brokers occurred along a continuum whose ends were governed by transactional and relational rationalities. The transactional end of the continuum featured non-peer brokering relationships that comprised mostly instrumental action, while the relational end featured peer brokering relationships that comprised both instrumental and expressive actions. In addition, brokering relationships were influenced by the relative positions of seekers and brokers in a hierarchical structure of academic levels and expertise. While brokering relationships were largely unidirectional in terms of knowledge sharing, reciprocity operated at the subtler level of *guanxi* or reciprocal obligations within insider relations, particularly in ethno-lingual peer brokering relationships.

The chapter then considers the nature of brokering practices, particularly in relation to the agency of seekers, through the perspective of positioning theory (Section 8.2). It presents two contrasting storylines, one of the hegemony of the English language, and the other of mutual communicative competence. While the former storyline limits seekers' participation in meaningful learning opportunities with representatives of the host institution, the latter provides a more equitable learning environment in which much of the brokering takes place. The chapter also discusses how agency is enacted through a conversational analytic view of ethno-lingual brokering interactions (Section 8.3). While peer and non-peer brokering offer different benefits for the seekers, peer brokering relationships have the added advantage of being potentially more enduring, and thus offer seekers greater opportunity to exercise their agency. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this research (Section 8.4), implications for practitioners (Section 8.5), directions for future research (Section 8.6), and concluding thoughts (Section 8.7).

8.1 International EAL Students' Brokering Practices

While I had anticipated international EAL students would regularly seek out brokers in relation to their academic learning, this was not the case for some of my participants, whom I termed *non-seekers*. While not the focus of this research, the findings on non-seekers provide some insight into how social distance from peers and individual academic attitudes influence international students' academic practices. Mature-aged participants, Kevin and Annie, were not inclined towards seeking assistance from their much younger peers, preferring instead to rely on their own study efforts. Annie, in fact, avoided asking others for help as she was cautious about how such help might inadvertently result in plagiarism. Josh, who belonged to the more typical age group of university students, was in the reverse of the situation that Kevin and Annie found themselves in. Josh's peers, mostly domestic students, were much older than he, and he found their personal communication styles and social backgrounds alienating. As a result, he too preferred to engage in independent study.

While Kevin, Annie and Josh had the skills and confidence to pursue their individual academic agendas, Simon did not engage in brokering practices for other reasons. For Simon, who was already in his second semester, it may have been the case that he was already familiar with the university environment and so did not appear to require academic assistance. However, it would be more accurate to attribute his non-seeking behaviour to his greater engagement with non-academic pursuits compared to academic ones. These cases of non-brokering caution teachers and researchers alike against assuming that classroom relationships are welcome opportunities for informal learning, or that academic pursuits are indeed every student's priority. Addressing the broader concern of agency of international students (Marginson, 2014; Tran & Vu, 2018; Volet & Jones, 2012), the findings also suggest that agency is about what students choose to do, as much as it is what they choose *not* to do.

8.1.1 Types of Brokering

Resource brokering

Based on the participants who *did* engage in brokering practices, the findings revealed a range of academic texts and practices students interacted with through the processes of resource, language, and literacy brokering. Resource brokering provided access to some form of academic material which the seeker would then draw on to 'function effectively' as a student, such as completing assignments or preparing for tests. All instances of resource brokering were mediated by technology in one way or another. (The use of technology-mediated communication was not limited to resource brokering, but also extended to other types of brokering, which will be subsequently discussed in more detail.)

While previous studies have suggested that international students engage in academic-related discussion through email and online discussion boards (Krause, 2007), social media (Vivian et al., 2014), and private messaging applications (Goodwin et al., 2010; Vivian & Barnes, 2010), they did not specify the content of such discussion. In contrast, my findings revealed that specific technologies afforded particular types of academic materials or resources being brokered. With multifunctional mobile phones, brokers were able to take photographs of lecture slides, audio-record the lecture and subsequently transfer these artefacts to seekers using a messaging application on their phones. Apart from resources produced by the brokers themselves, there were also resources related to procedural information about lessons and assignments, such as step-by-step instructions, screenshots accompanying video lectures, and online submission pages.

The various instances of resource brokering highlight the practicality and convenience afforded by digital communication. In situations where seekers obtained from brokers their digitally recorded lesson materials, it was for the purpose of their efficiently capturing information that would otherwise be unavailable once the lessons concluded. Similarly, obtaining procedural information from brokers was also a matter of timely convenience, since these brokering interactions took place via everyday communication devices (i.e., mobile phones) as and when seekers needed the information. Thus, findings concerning resource brokering not only reinforce the importance of personal communication devices in informal learning, but also highlight the value of immediacy in obtaining practical resources.

Another point to highlight about the use of technology-mediated communication is that such communication was not limited to brokering interactions. In the cases of two of the key informants, Linda and Kim, their academic-related brokering interactions were part of their everyday virtual communication through messaging applications, particularly with their ethno-lingual brokers. Thus, my findings indicate that it was the common habits of communication which facilitated brokering interactions between seekers and brokers.

While Linda and Kim were similarly engaged in messaging-based interaction, their choices of applications were different. The Chinese instant messaging application *WeChat* was used by Linda, a Mainland Chinese, and her co-national classmate Emily. However, the default text-messaging applications on participants' respective mobile phones were used by Linda and her domestic classmate Grace, not surprisingly, since *WeChat* is not a commonly used messaging application among New Zealand youth. On the other hand, the instant messaging application *Facebook Messenger* was used by Kim, a Taiwanese, and her classmate Josh, a Chinese Malaysian, and was an application they both regularly used in their own social networks. The findings thus not only reinforce that private messaging applications are important for academic-related help-seeking interactions (Vivian & Barnes, 2010), but also highlight the need for compatible private messaging applications between seekers and brokers. The use of *WeChat* between Mainland Chinese students, but *not* other Chinese students, further highlighted how communication tools are differentiated among different groups of international students (Gomes et al., 2014).

Language brokering

In addition to demonstrating the advantages of using technology-mediated communication tools in brokering interactions, my findings also underscored the use of students' native language in understanding academic texts and practices embedded an English-speaking academic environment (Che, 2013; Morton et al., 2015; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). The majority of brokering interactions in my findings, as seen in the data related to Henry, Sarah, Linda, Kim, and Jane, involved language brokering, that is, co-national or ethno-lingual brokers using the seeker's native language (Chinese/Mandarin) to refer to, translate or interpret English language materials (Tse, 1995, 1996). While translation of words and phrases was often and easily done by participants themselves through the use of online dictionaries, it was brokers who helped seekers to understand denser or more complex material. Henry's broker, for example, explained lecture notes (in English) to him in Mandarin, while Jane's learning advisor, Tim, often translated English words or phrases into Mandarin when explaining why Jane's writing was unclear or incorrect.

My findings indicated that the prevalence of brokering interactions with co-nationals or ethno-linguals was motivated by the ease and clarity of communication using a common language, similar to what other studies have found (Che, 2013; Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). In addition, my findings revealed that this preference was motivated by feelings of inadequacy in using English with native speakers. Sarah, for example, referred to her English language as ‘poor’ and ‘not good enough’, while Kim felt ‘uncomfortable’ when interacting with native English speakers. Such sentiments were also reported by several studies noting international EAL students’ self-consciousness in using English (Campbell & Li, 2008; Halic et al., 2009; Ippolito, 2007; Major, 2005; Sawir et al., 2012; Yang, Li, & Sligo, 2008), and highlighting students’ preference for same-language interactions (Holmes, 2005; Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010). While my findings were not surprising with regard to the preference for, and motivation behind, brokering interactions in the seekers’ native language, the findings point to the importance of linguistic environments that allow students to exercise their agency through the use of their native language with others (Blommaert et al., 2005). Thus, while some participants positioned themselves as deficient in relation to English language communication, they nonetheless claimed a positioning of communicative competence through brokering interactions in their native tongue.

Literacy brokering

The findings on literacy brokering provided further insight into the range of academic texts and practices seekers sought assistance with. While discussion about assignments was identified as a common topic in several studies (Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), my findings differentiated between the various aspects of academic literacy, namely, genre knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, and linguistic knowledge (Perry, 2009), as well as the types of brokers associated with each aspect of literacy brokering.

Genre knowledge brokering

The findings on genre knowledge revealed that both technical and interpretive aspects of academic texts were brokered. Technical aspects related to word count, referencing style and the formats for specific types of essay, while interpretive aspects concerned the interpretation of assignment questions, and the expectations of the lecturer in relation to the assignment. As evidenced by the records of brokering interactions, detailed explanations of various academic texts and practices were facilitated in part by the shared native language of seeker and broker. This was most clearly seen in the contrast between Linda’s brokering interactions with Emily, her co-national classmate, and interactions with Grace, a domestic student. Not only were there more brokering interactions with Emily than Grace; Emily also provided longer explanations than Grace. While Linda and Emily's shared native language contributed to detailed explanations in brokering interactions, it is also likely to have been a result of Emily's being able to anticipate Linda's needs, since they both shared a similar cultural and educational background.

Sociocultural knowledge brokering

The benefit of a shared cultural background in brokering is also seen in the brokering of sociocultural knowledge. While this was the least brokered aspect of literacy brokering, the findings contributed to an understanding of academic support not typically explored in previous studies. Instances of sociocultural brokering were found in Linda and Jane's co-national brokering interactions, suggesting that it was the similarity in linguistic and cultural backgrounds that facilitated the discussion of seekers and/or brokers' beliefs and expectations around particular academic practices.

The issues that seekers raised potentially diverged from accepted or correct forms of academic behaviours and attitudes. Linda discussed with Emily whether it was acceptable not to complete readings, and how to 'disagree' with an English-speaking domestic student member of a group. Jane asked Tim about the discriminatory nature of assignments focusing on New Zealand topics, her dissatisfaction with lecturers' teaching methods, the utility of learning advisors who corrected her English, and her low expectation of obtaining a passing grade for her assignments. These instances of sociocultural brokering thus suggest the advantage of raising such issues with co-national brokers, as topics regarding personal beliefs and attitudes may be potentially face-threatening if raised with brokers who have little or no cultural empathy with seekers (Ippolito, 2007; Valiente, 2008).

Linguistic knowledge brokering

While genre and sociocultural knowledge appeared to be effectively brokered by those who were culturally similar to seekers, linguistic knowledge was predominantly brokered by English-speaking learning advisors. As revealed in the three key informants' annotated draft essays, the learning advisors revised the students' writing by introducing additional words or re-ordering words to make sentence meaning clearer or more coherent; replacing words with more appropriate vocabulary; and making changes to incorrect grammatical expression. Similar to how EAL students in other studies approached native English speakers to check for language errors their writing (Che, 2013; Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011), the key informants viewed learning advisors as reliable brokers since they were designated experts in English language and academic writing.

While my findings indicated a positive attitude towards non-peer brokers, previous studies have suggested that EAL students prefer peers over institutional brokers as the latter are unwilling or unable to engage in discussion about the assignment topic. These studies highlight how EAL students favour peers such as classmates who are working on similar assignments (Che, 2013); those who have access to useful resources such as writing samples (Nam & Beckett, 2011); or peer interactions characterised by more equal power relations (Séror, 2011). Although Linda, Kim, and Jane did not explicitly offer reasons for *not* using peer brokers to check their writing, the general findings on participants' minimal or failed engagement with domestic English-speaking peers suggest that there were probably few suitable peer brokers available. In addition, the three informants were conscious of limits in their English proficiency and had a clear motive for consulting learning advisors—to have their writing improved in order to maximise the marks awarded for their assignments. Thus, in my particular sample of participants, ensuring that language errors were eradicated outweighed other possible considerations in seeking writing assistance.

While such brokering of linguistic knowledge made explicit the technical details of writing, it was unclear whether participants learned how to improve their English language and writing skills on their own. Linda, Kim, and Jane indicated that there were occasions where their learning advisors attempted to facilitate students' independent editing skills by making minimal changes to their writing and involving students in suggesting corrections themselves. However, all three preferred advisors to make overt corrections since their aim was to incorporate the experts' editing in their final version. Jane, in particular, made it a point to avoid learning advisors who would not correct her grammar. She used the advisor's proofreading services as part of her overall strategy to 'fix' her assignments in order to obtain her desired grade. In addition to learning advisors, Jane sought out other non-peer brokers such as librarians to check her references. In this regard, Jane exemplified the strategic intent of EAL students who sought out multiple brokers who could fulfil their academic goals, as seen in previous studies (Nam & Beckett, 2011; Séror, 2011; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015).

As suggested in Chapter 4, having learning advisors remove students' English language errors so that they can submit a polished version of their assignment for grading may be construed as ethically questionable. Furthermore, the apparent gap between students' writing efforts and the expert knowledge of English language and academic writing signals an absence around integrating vital linguistic knowledge in the formal study programme. While both these points were not within the scope of this research, the implications warrant an examination of the role of non-peer brokers in assisting students with their academic writing.

8.1.2 Characteristics of Brokering Relationships

Apart from understanding the various aspects of academic learning that were brokered, my findings also provided a unique perspective on brokering relationships. While previous studies that examined peer brokering emphasised the importance of expressive action in terms of collegial or culturally familiar social ties and networks (Che, 2013.; Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), my findings indicated that peer brokering was underpinned by both instrumental and expressive actions, while non-peer brokering was dominated by instrumental action. More broadly speaking, my findings viewed brokering relationships on a continuum spanning the opposite ends of transactional and relational rationalities, and influenced by the relative social positions seekers occupied, the social ties they had with brokers, and the kinds of resources brokers possessed (Lin, 2001b).

The transactional end of the continuum was represented by non-peer brokering relationships where brokers, relative to the seekers, occupied much higher positions on the hierarchy of academic knowledge as institutionally sanctioned experts. Accessing these weak ties, however, was not contingent on the seekers' social network, but rather on their being aware of the availability of such institutional resources through orientation programmes and recommendations from faculty staff. In other words, access to these non-peer brokers was facilitated by the institution. The key informants' strategic use of learning advisors to correct their assignment drafts for the sake of better academic reward, and the assumed obligation of service provision from the advisors, reflect the instrumental nature of the non-peer brokering relationship. Even where there was evidence of expressive action in the case of Jane, who shared a common native language and culture with her non-peer broker Tim, the CA analysis of their brokering interactions in Chapter Seven revealed the predominance of instrumental action.

The relational end of the continuum, on the other hand, was represented by ethno-lingual, peer brokering relationships underpinned by regular social interactions, academically related or otherwise. Unlike the dominance of instrumental action in non-peer brokering relationships, peer brokering relationships comprised both expressive and instrumental actions. Several studies have alluded to expressive action (i.e., shared sentiment) in peer academic support through homophilous interactions found in co-national friendships, and/or strong ties or social networks developed through regular face-to-face, peer-interactional contexts such as sharing common subjects and residing in the same accommodation (Che, 2013; Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Such studies reported greater frequency of interactions based on co-nationality or cultural similarity in which reciprocal instrumental brokering occurred, that is, participants studied together and helped each other understand academic materials. These studies also suggested unidirectional brokering in instances where participants chose brokers who were academically more knowledgeable.

My research, however, found that while peer brokering relationships were based on homophilous interactions in terms of sharing a similar social status and/or culture, the means of accessing brokers did not necessarily result from a seeker's occupying a common setting such as a course subject or residential accommodation. While the latter was commonly identified as an important source of brokers in several studies (Che, 2013; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), participants in my sample were not typically living in on-campus accommodation but had flatting or homestay arrangements. In any case, any mention of seeking help from flatmates appeared to be incidental (e.g., Sarah's flatmate who emailed her a copy of a textbook) rather than part of some regular, academic-related engagement. The more influential factor was, instead, the relative position of seekers and brokers in the hierarchical structure of academic knowledge as indicated by one's level of study, prior experience, and/or competence.

For first-year undergraduate students Henry and Sarah, their seniors in higher-year levels of study were more effective brokers than their classmates, who were not much more knowledgeable than themselves. Seniors were weak ties who were accessed through Henry and Sarah's social network (e.g., through a mutual friend). As posited by Granovetter (1973) and Lin (2001b), these weak ties had access to better resources, in this case, prior academic experience and academic competence in the seekers' disciplinary area. On the other hand, first-year postgraduate students Linda and Kim were enrolled in papers where students were typically in their second or third year at the university. Their classmates were thus potential brokers, since they had prior academic experience. In Kim's case, her classmate brokers included similarly first-year international postgraduate students, but who had prior academic experience in English-medium tertiary institutions. Thus, even though Linda and Kim were new to the New Zealand university environment they were placed in a higher position in terms of study level, and could thus access occupants at that level who possessed comparatively more valued resources.

In addition to demonstrating how weak ties and relatively higher social positions influenced instrumental action, my findings also revealed that instrumental action was not a reciprocal knowledge exchange as suggested by the process of studying or learning together as indicated in previous literature (Che, 2013; Li, Clarke, & Remedios, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Wakimoto, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Apart from the exchange of academic material such as records of lecture materials discussed earlier, instrumental action appeared to be largely unidirectional, where the broker provided valued resources for the seeker. While Che (2013) has suggested that reciprocity could be delayed by providing information and resources at some later time, my study found reciprocity to be operating at a subtler level.

When considering brokering as utilising social capital, that is, accessing valued resources embedded in social ties, reciprocal action takes place at a relational level (Lin, 2001b). While the seeker obtains some valued resource from the broker on the basis of their social tie (e.g., classmate), the broker's willingness to provide the resource depends on his/her being recognised for his/her ability to provide such valued resources to the seeker, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the broker's resources and positions. This relational rationality is exemplified in the Chinese concept of *guanxi*, where reciprocity operates within insider relations based on shared identities and/or life experiences (Lin, 2001a; Smart, 1999) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.5.3). Such familial social relations, while providing opportunities for expressive action, also involve obligations where one party provides favours to the other, depending on who has the capacity to do so, as well as the expectation of the broker's reputation being enhanced in return (Pan, 2000).

Ethno-lingual, peer brokering relationships demonstrate relational rationality or elements of *guanxi*, as seen in the examples of Henry, Sarah, Linda, and Kim. For Henry and Sarah, their co-national brokers were seniors who not only had prior experience but also had a reputation as high-achievers. Their brokers' relatively higher position as *seniors* further implied an obligation to provide assistance to their *juniors*, as it were, as well as an expectation of having their reputations enhanced. Although the data related to these brokering interactions were limited to self-reported interview data from the seekers' perspective, the fact that both Henry and Sarah identified their seniors as highly competent students suggests that the social rules of *guanxi* were relevant to their brokering interactions. Elements of g*uanxi*, however, were more clearly manifested in the cases of Linda and Kim. The CA analysis of the data sets of their brokering interactions illustrated how brokering relationships were fundamentally concerned with maintaining social relations despite having instrumental goals. This will be elaborated in the later section on agency in brokering interactions.

8.2 Positioning Theory in Brokering Practices

The nature of brokering practices among international EAL students can be additionally understood from the perspective of positioning theory, which views agency as a dynamic negotiation of positions within available storylines through speech and action (Davies, 1990; Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). The finding that most of the brokering practices took place in the participants' native language because of their reluctance to engage in brokering interactions with English speakers serves to illustrate two contradictory storylines. One storyline is that of the hegemony of the English language, and the other is that of mutual communicative competence, that is, an equitable communicative environment based on a shared native language and culture.

The dominance of the English language is an obvious but not often articulated feature of higher education (Altbach, 2007; Jenkins, 2014; Sawir et al., 2012; Singh, 2005). As highlighted earlier in this chapter, several participants positioned themselves as inadequate English speakers in the context of communicating with native English speakers in the host institution, and, as a result, had failed or limited brokering interactions with domestic peers. This finding echoes the findings of a study by Sawir et al. (2012) which highlighted how English language proficiency had a direct impact on international students' agency in learning, in terms of being able to "understand, cooperate, and exchange with all parties; …to maintain broad networks of friends and contacts; to navigate personal problems and crises effectively; to exercise the full rights of students and humans" (Sawir et al., 2012, p. 448). While the authors call for English language proficiency acquisition programmes for international EAL students to be formalised and regulated, that is, for the sake of enhancing international student agency, the authors nonetheless fail to recognise the hegemonic effects of the dominance of the English language in higher education, such as disregarding the value of linguistic diversity and the potential for intercultural engagement (Jenkins, 2014; Singh, 2005).

In such a storyline, international EAL students' positioning of themselves as inadequate English users, and hence limiting their agency as seekers in meaningful learning interactions, may be understood as inevitable. This is demonstrated in the key informants' brokering interactions with non-peer learning advisors whose corrections of their English language errors were seen as necessary to secure better results. The limited peer brokering interactions with domestic English-speaking peers also reflect EAL students' notion of linguistic inadequacy as seen in Henry, Sarah, Kim, and Jane's disinclination towards interactions with domestic English-speaking peers.

The brokering interactions between Linda and her domestic English-speaking peer, Grace, however, suggest an exception to this storyline. Linda sought brokering assistance from Grace over the semester in relation to academic tasks such as assignments. Nonetheless, the extent of their brokering interactions conducted *in English* was comparatively less than that between Linda and her co-national peer, Emily, which were conducted *in Chinese*, their shared native language. Thus, while one can interpret Linda as exercising agency by positioning herself as a linguistically competent co-participant in brokering interactions in English, it can be argued that there is greater opportunity for seekers to exercise agency within a more equitable linguistic environment, as seen in other participants' explicit preference for co-national or ethno-lingual brokers.

As Blommaert et al. (2005) highlight, the particular linguistic environment, in this case, the monolingual English language environment of the university "*organizes* a particular regime of language … which *incapacitates individuals* … [in terms of the lack of] connection between individual communicative potential and requirements produced by the environment" (p. 198, emphasis in original). In contrast, alternative storylines or environments that enable participants to display mutual linguistic and communicative competence provide opportunities for them to exercise agency by choosing from among available positionings. This was demonstrated in the data sets of brokering interactions, which will be discussed in the next section. A perspective of positioning theory on brokering practices has thus highlighted the co-existence of two contrasting storylines, one compelling the other: 'the hegemony of the English language' storyline serves to reinforce limiting positions of the non-native English user, thus motivating EAL students to seek more productive help-seeking interactions in the 'mutual communicative competence' storyline. The two storylines also point to the absence of intercultural engagement between the host institution and international EAL students. The following section discusses how agency was enacted in the mutual communicative competence storyline of ethno-lingual brokering interactions, and potentially offers lessons in intercultural engagement by revealing the interactional dynamics in a Chinese cultural context.

8.3 Agency in Brokering Interactions

As highlighted in the discussion on language brokering and positioning theory, international EAL students claimed positions of communicative competence by utilising their native language in their brokering practices, that is, exercising their linguistic and communicative repertoire to achieve their goals (Blommaert et al., 2005). While the studies on brokering in immigrant families (Hall & Sham, 2007; Morales et al., 2012; Tse, 1995, 1996) and bilingual classrooms (Coyoca & Lee, 2009) have suggested that a dependency on brokers may limit the seeker's agency, my case study findings (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) have revealed that this was not necessarily the case, particularly in peer brokering interactions. The CA analysis of recorded brokering interactions demonstrated how agency involved the maintenance and negotiation of seeker positionings, as seen through an analytical lens of multidisciplinary concepts: instrumental and expressive actions in sociology (Lin, 2001b); epistemic asymmetry and sequence management in conversation analysis (Heritage, 2012, 2013); and face and politeness in pragmatics (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pan, 2000).

8.3.1 Peer Brokering Interactions

In Linda and Kim's peer brokering interactions which took place via mobile messaging applications, agency was demonstrated through three discernible types of sequences: information, advice, and affinity. Information sequences were concerned with technical or procedural information, that is, knowledge that was not based on subjective interpretation, and thus did not involve any contestation of the broker's epistemic authority. Thus, in such sequences, instrumental action or epistemic asymmetry between seeker and broker was maintained, as seen in the seeker's straightforward acceptance of the broker's K+ stance. Information sequences were also often concluded with the seeker's appreciation of the broker's provision of knowledge, which thus attended to the broker's positive face, through pragmatic expressions (e.g., "thanks") and affective markers such as emoticons (e.g., ^_^) or emoji (e.g.,😀). Information sequences thus demonstrate how agency is performed through maintaining the relational or *guanxi* norms of peer exchanges: the seeker's gain in instrumental action is reciprocated with expressive action, that is, approval of the broker's resources and the enhancement of the broker's face, and by extension, the broker's reputation.

Advice sequences, on the other hand, were concerned with the interpretation of academic texts (e.g., assignment expectations) and practices (e.g., engagement with readings), and thus the seeker's request for advice in such instances potentially sought confirmation of the seeker's own prior knowledge or interpretation. Similar to Heritage and Sefi (1992) and Park's (2014) studies, my analysis found that the seeker in advice sequences often positioned herself as competent and knowledgeable through resistance towards accepting the broker's advice as new or relevant, or rejecting the broker's advice altogether. The seeker's initial resistance towards accepting the broker's epistemic authority took on several forms: establishing a similar epistemic stance to the broker's and providing her own account; projecting a negative evaluation of the broker's advice followed by an account; and using epistemic downgrades to establish an alternative interpretation.

However, unlike studies where the peer broker actively mitigated the face-threatening act (FTA) of advice-giving in the first instance (Park, 2014; Tsai & Kinginger, 2015; Waring, 2007), my analysis found that the broker more often demonstrated mitigation of FTAs in cases of epistemic re-assertion, that is, *after* the seeker demonstrated resistance. In mitigating the FTAs of epistemic re-assertions, the broker used accounts, epistemic downgrades, and/or acknowledged the seeker's sentiment, and thus reduced the force of rejecting the seeker's position of competence. However, rebuttals from the broker were countered by further resistance from the seeker, who re-asserted her position of competence; in doing so, she also sought to redress the broker's positive face by soliciting emotional reciprocity and promoting a self-deprecating stance.

On occasion, the seeker solicited emotional reciprocity through the display of troubles-talk, such as using negative affective markers in the form of emoji (e.g.,😭), which additionally projected a self-deprecating stance. A self-deprecating stance was also projected by Kim, in particular, by her treating her own epistemic assertions as non-serious through the use of laughter particles (i.e., 哈哈 / haha). Both acts of soliciting emotional reciprocity and treating one's epistemic assertions as non-serious further promoted expressive action since they aimed at restoring social solidarity, albeit in deference to the broker's position as the resource-richer party.

Thus, resistance in advice sequences demonstrates the seeker's agency within relational or *guanxi* dynamics. While the seeker's resistance was rebutted by the broker, the rebuttal was mitigated through positive politeness and thus reduced the force of rejecting the seeker's position of competence. On the other hand, the seeker re-negotiated epistemic asymmetry by positioning herself as competent, but also from a position of deference towards the broker through the use of expressive action. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.9.3), acts of mitigation and positive politeness are not merely culturally expected norms, but serve to maintain the broker's positive face and reputation as expected in the relational or *guanxi* dynamics of peer brokering interactions.

While my analysis of information and advice sequences demonstrated how seekers sought to strike a balance between instrumental and expressive action, affinity sequences were concerned primarily with expressive action. The analysis of affinity sequences revealed emotional reciprocity and shared perspectives between seeker and broker, that is, elements of expressive action pertaining to the mutual acknowledgement of parties' claims to sentiments and resources. Interestingly, the sentiment in affinity sequences was mostly negative, commonly expressed by emoji with tears such as the bitter smile (😂) and loudly crying face (😭) emoji. The exchange of negative sentiments about one's state of academic-related affairs further suggests the cultural influence of Chinese politeness in affinity sequences in peer relations. That is, expressive action appears to be based on humility and self-effacement in the sense of avoiding giving the impression of one-upmanship (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994).

From a *guanxi* perspective, affinity sequences can be additionally interpreted as an investment in the social relationship for future instrumental gain (Lin, 2001a; Smart, 1999). This is not to deny that parties in a peer brokering relationship benefit from mutual and genuine emotional satisfaction, but a *guanxi* perspective highlights the ambiguity of such peer brokering relations (Smart, 1999). That is, affinity sequences facilitate the seeker's agency by building social capital for future instrumental gain, while at the same time providing academic support at an affective level. In the environment of messaging applications, the use of non-linguistic items like emoji also enhances expressive action, not only in affinity sequences, but also in information and advice sequences, thus further suggesting the unique benefit of engaging in private messaging for peer brokering interactions.

8.3.2 Non-Peer Brokering Interactions

While agency in peer brokering interactions was enacted through a relational-oriented balance between instrumental and expression actions, agency in non-peer brokering interactions was generally limited, given the hierarchical relationship between seeker as subordinate and broker as superordinate (Pan, 2000), as seen in acceptance, resistance, and rejection sequences. Acceptance sequences not only demonstrated the maintenance of the epistemic asymmetry between seeker and broker but also featured forceful epistemic assertions from the broker at the expense of the seeker's positive face. As explained in Chapter 7, the broker's epistemic authority was reinforced through multi-unit turns, that is, turns containing stepwise structures of advice-related moves such as activating the problem (Vehvilainen, 2001), evaluating the problem, presenting a solution, and giving accounts of the solution (Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). In contrast, the seekers' responses to brokers' dense turns were typically brief acknowledgement tokens.

While this epistemic imbalance may be expected in a teacher-student type of relationship in educational settings (Vehvilainen, 2001), my analysis revealed that the epistemic asymmetry was further reinforced through modal constructions and complaints. While modal constructions projected a strong degree of rightness in terms of the advice given, for example, through the use of imperatives (你应该 / you should) and interrogatives preferring agreement (e.g., 是吧？ / isn't it?), complaints contained explicitly negative judgments of the seeker's actions or attitudes (Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005). Through modal assertions and complaints, the broker thus positioned himself as the superordinate with the moral capacity to impose judgments on the subordinate (damaging her negative face), and in doing so, positioned the seeker as incompetent (damaging her positive face).

The seeker's attempts at establishing her position as a competent student were displayed through her reference to prior knowledge, negative evaluations of the broker's advice, and alternative epistemic assertions, as seen in resistance sequences. Such moves were FTAs but were performed baldly, that is, without any form of mitigation. The blatant rejection of the broker's epistemic authority, however, was countered by the broker's epistemic re-assertions with characteristic forcefulness as highlighted in acceptance sequences, ultimately leading to the seeker's relinquishing of her positioning as competent. In contrast, the seeker's epistemic assertions, as seen in rejection sequences, appeared to be successful. However, such positionings of competence were not directly attributed to the seeker herself in instances where she accounted for her alternative epistemic assertions based on information from another institutional authority such as a lecturer. In instances where the seeker's epistemic assertions were accounted through personal reasoning, her positioning of competence was undermined by the broker's reformulation of the seeker's account as his own epistemic assertion. Thus, the seeker's enactment of agency was far more limited in this particular case of non-peer brokering interactions, compared to peer brokering interactions as discussed earlier.

The highly asymmetrical dynamics in this case of non-peer brokering interactions may be explained by several factors. As mentioned in Chapter 7, the direct display of FTAs and assertions of the broker's epistemic authority, as seen in the analysis, stand in sharp contrast to advice-giving in institutional contexts in the US where advisors actively sought to mitigate FTAs when offering advice (Park, 2014; Waring, 2007). The difference may be due to the fact that the US-based advisors were considered to be the advice seekers' peers in terms of age and social status, whereas the broker, Tim, in my findings was a non-peer. Another reason could be the differences in the pedagogical aims of the writing consultations. As highlighted by Waring (2007), pro-actively managing advice-giving allows advisors to indirectly encourage students to orient positively towards accepting their advice. On the other hand, Tim may have viewed directives as a preferred pedagogical style.

The differences, however, are more likely to be influenced by the Chinese context of hierarchical order and social relations as articulated by Pan (2000). Writing consultation sessions can be viewed as transactions where the task takes precedence over interpersonal relations. Furthermore, Tim, being older and male, is also in a much higher position (i.e., superordinate) relative to Jane, the younger and female student (i.e., subordinate). Thus, the more powerful superordinate is in a position to choose whether to display authority or claim solidarity while the less powerful subordinate is expected to show deference to the superordinate.

While these hierarchical power relations were reflected in Tim's epistemic assertions and rebuttals, they were not apparent in Jane's conversational turns as she did *not* always mitigate her resistance-related moves. While Jane's disregard for her advisor's positive face appeared to contradict the traditional dominance–obedience hierarchy of teacher–student relationships, it concurred with Wang's (2013) findings that students in contemporary Chinese culture are less in favour of adhering to the traditional hierarchical structure. Nonetheless, in this particular set of non-peer relations, any threats to dismantling hierarchical relations were quelled by the broker himself, not surprisingly, since patriarchy and seniority are the foundations of Chinese society (Pan, 2000). Thus, while a common language and culture enabled Jane and Tim to engage in various aspects of literacy brokering, the social hierarchical norms placed limits on student agency.

8.4 Strengths and Limitations of Research

My research findings are not obviously generalisable as the research was conducted using focused ethnography in respect of a relatively small sample of 10 international EAL students, most of whom were ethnic Chinese. Among the sample of participants, four did not appear to seek brokering assistance, and among the six who did, only three had relatively frequent brokering interactions and were thus able to provide records of brokering interactions in addition to interview responses. While the dominant ethnicity of the sample may place limits on generalisability in regard to international EAL students of other backgrounds, international EAL students shared the common context of being in a linguistically and/or culturally unfamiliar educational environment.

The small size of the sample was related to the inherent nature of the research topic of informal learning. The implicit, unstructured and opportunistic nature of informal learning meant that it was challenging for participants to consciously be aware of every possible learning interaction. It was also challenging for me as researcher to systematically inquire into each participant's potential, academically-related social interactions without being overly intrusive. Engaging regularly with participants beyond the scheduled interviews within their increasingly busy academic semester was also not feasible for a solo researcher. In addition, the personal spaces of informal interactions further meant that enquiring about relationships and observing interactions would have been an invasion of privacy. As I have reflected in Chapter 3, the process of obtaining relevant data within the time limits of the academic semester (after which academic learning becomes less relevant and likely) was relationally intensive as I was mindful of building rapport with my participants so as to encourage open sharing, while at the same time respecting their rights to privacy. Thus, I was dependent on the participants' conscious orientation towards my research goals, as well as their goodwill, to report to me their brokering interactions. In other words, the amount of data I collected was a result of how well I managed the researcher–participant relationships.

Instead of viewing the small sample as a limitation of the research, it may be more appropriate to view the small sample as necessitated by the nature of the research topic. The use of a multi-methodological approach thus countered the potential limitations of the small sample as it afforded both breadth and depth of analysis. Focused ethnography gave me the flexibility to use a range of methods to collect data made available by participants, the most novel data being the records of brokering interactions that took place via participants' messaging applications on their mobile phones. The data corpus was analysed thematically, while case studies of key informants' data sets were examined using a micro-analytical framework of conversation analysis (CA). The interactional data were especially valuable in providing rich and robust evidence for agency in terms of the negotiation of the seekers' positions in brokering, as well as in terms of understanding instrumental and expressive actions. Thus, my research has demonstrated how credibility can be enhanced when using a small sample by employing multiple data collection methods and methods of analysis.

Apart from addressing the methodological challenges of examining a small sample of participants, my research has also made more visible the source language of my participants. Admittedly, interviews in Mandarin were translated and transcribed into English for reasons of expediency, and therefore the nuances of the participants' responses may have been lost, notwithstanding member-checking of my English translations. However, I made explicit attempts to make visible the source language of the data by using native terms from the participants themselves, such as 学长 (senior) and 套路 (strategy) in the findings, as well as placing the Chinese text of the interactional data alongside the English translation in the case study chapters. In addition, the analysis of the interactional turns was based on my intuitive knowledge of Chinese grammar usage, but also supported by formal references (Shei, 2014). By weaving 'acts of translation' into my writing, I assumed the roles of "an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator" (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 171). By integrating the participants' non-English/non-Western linguistic and cultural resources into the presentation of the research to an English-speaking audience, I hope to have weakened the hegemony of a monolingual perspective of international EAL students and to reduce cross-cultural ignorance in international education (Singh, 2009).

8.5 Implications for Practitioners

While getting international education practitioners to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity requires a long-term agenda (Hudzik, 2011; Leask, 2009; Otten, 2003), there are a number of noteworthy, practical implications of the findings of this research. Educators working with international EAL students should consider providing more explicit guidance with respect to various academic texts and practices. As seen from the findings on resource brokering, copies of lecture materials (e.g., presentation slides, lectures) should not only be made available to students for future reference, but lecturers should also communicate where and how they can be accessed. In terms of literacy brokering, understanding assignment expectations appeared to be a primary concern. In terms of designing assignment topics and instructions, lecturers and tutors may want to consider setting aside class time for students to clarify their doubts or questions, preferably in small peer groups so as to mitigate EAL students' potential self-consciousness of using English in a more public setting. While such suggestions are made with international students in mind, it may be that all students who are new to the academic norms of higher education would benefit from similar support. Thus, educators whose student cohorts include international students ought to consider how they may better align their teaching practice with the needs of *all students*, as a recent New Zealand report on teaching and learning in tertiary settings demonstrates (Anderson et al., 2017).

Although students may still prefer informal peer support to formally arranged interventions, arranging in-class peer groups, at the very least, provides students with potential peer brokers to call on outside of class. At a broader level of supporting peer brokering relationships, faculty staff could consider inviting seniors or relatively more experienced students to mentor first-year international EAL students, taking into account potential matches in terms of language and cultural backgrounds. With the ability to communicate in EAL students' native language, these peer brokers would be potentially able to provide academic support in a socially and culturally familiar context.

In addition to providing more explicit guidance in the classroom, and encouraging opportunities for peer brokering, educators should also consider the role of non-peer brokers in the institution, specifically learning advisors. The findings on the literacy brokering of linguistic knowledge highlighted a disjuncture between EAL students' writing efforts, and expert knowledge of English language and academic writing, thus signalling a failure to integrate linguistic knowledge within students' courses of study. More worrisome, however, is the ethical ambiguity of having learning advisors remove students' English language errors so that students can present a polished version of their assignment for better marks. While the brokering practice of proofreading was not explicitly examined within the scope of this research, studies such as those of Harwood, Austin, and Macaulay (2012) and Turner (2011, 2012) have highlighted proofreading as a complex and contentious issue. Turner (2012), for example, argued that proofreading constitutes "a problematic pedagogical and ethical space" that connects with institutional academic practices such as assumptions around learning and writing, the ethics of writing and assessment, and the role of academic support (p. 20). Thus, it is imperative that both teaching faculty and learning advisor staff engage each other in constructive debate about how literacy brokering can serve the longer-term interests of both the institution and EAL students.

While academic staff have an important role in facilitating brokering practices that meet the needs of international EAL students, the importance of peer brokers in this research also warrants the attention of those who are involved in non-academic domains, such as international student support staff and student groups. My findings have shown that co-national or ethno-lingual peer interactions enable first-year students to utilise their linguistic and communicative repertoires with greater confidence (compared to English), and hence promote their agency. In preparing programmes and activities aimed at commencing international students, international student support staff could consider enlisting current international students for the purposes of informal brokering assistance. Those who have personally experienced making the transition from one country to another are well placed to offer assistance to newcomers. Likewise, student groups could be more intentional in introducing new international students to current students from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but not necessarily international students, so as to provide a hospitable environment for social interactions and conversation.

It is important to note that my suggestions for facilitating culturally-compatible brokering interactions are not in conflict with calls for greater intercultural engagement on campus (Leask, 2009; Otten, 2003; Trice, 2007). In fact, brokering interactions themselves are about bridging gaps in cultural understanding, and potentially prepare international students for engaging in cross-cultural experiences and relationships, challenging as such engagement may be. However, as discussed previously, the hegemonic force of the English language does not result in storylines that promote intercultural engagement. Otten (2003) highlights that it is the host institution, rooted in the dominant language and culture of the country, that is typically resistant to “differences in interaction because all unknown and unexpected differences are disturbing elements to the institutional procedures” (p. 16).

Considering the asymmetrical power relations between education providers and international students, it is the responsibility of the host institution to initiate more equitable and reciprocal storylines (Liyanage et al., 2018; Otten, 2003), an aspiration that will require a commitment to institution-wide and continuous training in intercultural competence (Hudzik, 2011; Leask, 2009; Otten, 2003). The cultural nuances of brokering interactions highlighted in section 8.3 provide an example of non-Western communicative practices that the host institution can learn from. By becoming more sensitive to how instrumental and expressive needs are negotiated by international students, it is hoped that domestic staff, as well as students, can develop an “openness to the value and legitimacy of other knowledge systems and alternative epistemological assumptions” (Liyanage et al., 2018, p. 13).

8.6 Directions for Future Research

Brokering is not a novel concept in as much as it is an everyday phenomenon that occurs in cross-cultural settings, but is nonetheless a complex relational and interactional accomplishment from perspectives of sociology and pragmatics. As articulated in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5), my concept of brokering is informed by an understanding of brokering as motivated by a desire to obtain valued resources that are not easily accessible because of knowledge and cultural gaps (Stovel et al., 2011), and achieved by utilising social capital (Lin, 2001b) and *guanxi* relations (Lin, 2001a; Smart, 1999).

My research has found that brokers with valued resources have varying positions in a hierarchical social structure relative to the position of the seeker. In accessing brokers, seekers may take on a predominantly transactional or relational approach, depending on the similarity of social and/or cultural traits (e.g., age, ethno-lingual background) and status they share with prospective brokers (e.g., peers vs. non-peers). A relational or *guanxi* perspective of peer brokering relationships, in particular, has highlighted the dynamic balancing act of instrumental and expressive actions. While it was not surprising that *guanxi* was manifested in data relating to my Chinese participants, the relational importance in peer brokering is nonetheless potentially salient for understanding brokering relations more generally. As pointed out by Lin (2001a), the practice of *guanxi* exists in both so-called Eastern and Western societies past and present. Thus, considering the relational principles of social exchange, as opposed to considering only transactional principles, affords a more holistic view of brokering and other help-seeking interactions.

Although my research was situated in the context of international EAL students at a Western university, the concept of brokering can be applied more generally to other informal learning contexts, where migrant newcomers are attempting to make sense of an unfamiliar cultural environment and its various forms of texts and practices. One possible direction for future research within educational settings is to investigate the extent of peer brokering interactions in other groups of international students (e.g., high-school, vocational, postgraduate) so as to better understand the particular dynamics of brokering practices in different settings. In my own experience as an international doctoral student at a New Zealand university, I can attest to the importance of peer brokers as sources of information and advice in the context of a highly unstructured doctoral programme (Lee, 2017a). Another area of research to consider is examining brokering relationships in professional learning contexts where skilled migrant workers and professionals adjust to a new workplace culture and develop their career paths.

My micro-analytical framework based on epistemic asymmetry and complementary concepts from conversation analysis and pragmatics can also be applied in future research investigating how participants' agency is enacted in learning interactions, whether in face-to-face or virtual settings. The concept of epistemic asymmetry is particularly salient in examining how learners project and negotiate their epistemic or knowledge stances. Applying such a concept in research examining minority or marginalised groups of learners will provide robust evidence of how agency is promoted or constrained.

In carrying out research related to brokering or learning in multicultural settings, yet another consideration is the role of the researcher who interacts with potentially more than one cultural group. As I have reflected on my role as a bilingual or diasporic researcher in Chapter 3, I have drawn on my own linguistic and cultural resources to make sense of my participants and their data, thus providing greater transparency in this research process. Likewise, cross-cultural researchers can reflexively consider how their own personal biographies influence their research.

8.7 Concluding Thoughts

My doctoral research was motivated by a desire to challenge the deficit perspective of international students from non-Western backgrounds and who use languages other than English. Unsurprisingly, some of my research findings were mirrored in my own experiences as a non-Western international student in an Anglophone institution. Just as my participants sought both instrumental and expressive actions in their brokering relationships, so did I as I looked for brokers to reveal the unspoken rules of the doctoral journey, and paying it forward by being brokers to others. Through brokering, I have come to appreciate my own capacity for knowledge sharing and the importance of reciprocal relationships.

My research findings on and personal experiences with brokering could perhaps offer a response to the intercultural aspirations of international education. As several scholars have argued, international education requires a much needed emphasis on reciprocity in knowledge sharing if international education is to be a means for genuine intercultural dialogue and global citizenship (Liyanage et al., 2018; Ryan & Viete, 2009; Singh, 2005). As intimated earlier, institutions have a critical role to play in spearheading this mission. Nonetheless, emerging scholars from the non-Western world, such as myself and my peers, can play a part by initiating more equitable relationships in our Anglophone communities. Could we not position ourselves more persuasively as valued resources of intellectual and cultural insight in our research and to our Western audiences? In other words, could we not be brokers who bridge the current gaps in international education? *And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?*[11]

[11] Esther 4:14, New International Version

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Appendices

Appendix A: Approval Documents

Dean's Office
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Te Kura Toi Tangata
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Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4500
www.waikato.ac.nz

THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Cheng Sherrie Lee**
cc:	Professor Brian Findsen Associate Professor Belinda Wheaton
From:	**Professor John Williams** Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee
Date:	8 October 2015
Subject:	Supervised Postgraduate Research – Application for Ethical Approval (EDU080/15)

Thank you for submitting the revisions to your application for ethical approval for the research project:

Brokering practices among international students at a New Zealand university

I am pleased to advise that your application has received approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

J Williams

Professor John Williams
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Cheng Sherrie Lee**
cc:	Professor Brian Findsen
From:	**Dr Carl Mika** Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee
Date:	7 April 2016
Subject:	**Request for Extension to Research Ethics Approval – Student (EDU080/15)**

Thank you for your request for an extension to ethics approval for the project:

Brokering practices among international students at a New Zealand university

It is noted that you wish to use a Mandarin translator to transcribe and translate interview recordings. Thank you for providing the confidentiality agreement for the translator to sign.

I am pleased to advise that your application has received approval.

Please note that researchers are asked to consult with the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee in the first instance if any further changes to the approved research design are proposed.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Carl Mika

Dr Carl Mika
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Call for International Students to be Research Participants

My name is Sherrie Lee and I'm a PhD student at the Faculty of Education at Waikato University. I'm conducting research on students' informal learning experiences and I'm looking for first year international students with English as an additional language.

The title of my research is: "Brokering practices among International Students at a New Zealand University". I am interested in how international students seek help to understand the content of their papers and to complete tasks like assignments. I believe that you will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your learning in the New Zealand setting via the interviewing process. This research study has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz and I'll be happy to give you more information.

Appendix C: Information Letter to Primary Participant

PhD Research Study: Brokering Practices among International Students at a New Zealand University

Dear ________

My name is Sherrie Lee and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. I am conducting research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree. The title of my research is: "Brokering practices among International Students at a New Zealand University". The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee.

I am interested in how international students get help from others to understand the content of their papers and to complete tasks like assignments. The research study will be carried out over one academic semester. Participants will be involved in the following:

1) Semi-structured interviews

i. I will interview you approximately 8 times at regular intervals throughout the semester. I will arrange to meet you at a time and place that suits you. A few days before each interview, I will provide you a set of prompts to help you recall the times you asked others for help, what kind of help you asked for, and who you interacted with. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

ii. During the first interview, I will also ask you questions about your educational background and previous learning experience. The first interview will take approximately 45 minutes

iii. I will audio-record and take notes during the interviews. After I transcribe the interview, you can check the transcript.

2) Observations

i. About mid-way through the semester, I will ask you if I can observe you and your peers interacting together. During those times, I will take notes, and audio-record what you and your peers say. I will ask you and your peers for permission to do so before I conduct the observation. After I transcribe the observation, you and your peers can check the transcript.

ii. If your interactions take place online (e.g. over email, on social media networking sites), I will ask for permission from you and your peers to give me copies of your online interactions (e.g. email exchanges, web grabs of social media commentaries).

iii. I would like to do this 4 times in the semester.

iv. To clarify my understanding about the observations and/or online interactions, I will arrange to interview you at a mutually convenient time and place. The interview will take no more than 30 minutes. I will audio-record and take notes during the interviews. After I transcribe the interview, you can check the transcript.

v. When reporting on my research, I will not reveal your identity and I will take all steps necessary to keep the data confidential.

3) Informal communication

I will communicate with you regularly. Our conversations and/or email about brokering may also be used as part of my research data.

Things you need to know:

- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any time without providing any reason. You can also withdraw data that I have not analysed at any point.
- I will make every effort to maintain anonymity. Your real name will not be used in my research. Your lecturers will not know who is in the study.
- I will make every effort to maintain confidentiality. I will not share the information I have collected with anyone apart from my supervisors. I will also ensure that the data that I collect is stored securely.
- The information gained from this research will be used mainly for producing my PhD thesis. When this is finished, it will be published on the University of Waikato's Research Commons.
- Parts of the research may be used in writing articles and presentations at conferences.
- All data will be kept for five years after the thesis is completed, and after that it will be destroyed.

If you would like to have further information, or have questions, please contact me at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz.
You may also contact my supervisors, Professor Brian Findsen at bfindsen@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Terry Locke at locketj@waikato.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely

Sherrie Lee
PhD candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Waikato

Appendix D: Primary Research Participant Consent Form

PhD Research Study: Brokering Practices among International Students at a New Zealand University

I, ……………………………………………………… (your full name) have been given and read an explanation of the research to be conducted by the researcher, Sherrie Lee. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I agree to:

- ❑ Participate in audio-recorded interviews which will be transcribed.
- ❑ Allow the researcher to observe me and my peers interacting together.
- ❑ Have my conversations with my peers audio-recorded and transcribed.
- ❑ Give the researcher copies of online interactions with my peers.
- ❑ Allow conversations and emails between me and the researcher to be used as research data.

I understand that:

- ❑ My participation in this study is voluntary.
- ❑ I can withdraw from the research at any point without providing any reason.
- ❑ I can withdraw data that the researcher has not analysed at any point.
- ❑ I can refuse to be observed, respond to interview questions, or respond to other requests made by the researcher, without giving any reasons.
- ❑ I can change, take out, or add anything to/from the transcripts.

……………………………………………………… ……………………

Name Date

……………………………………………………… ……………………

Signature Email / Phone

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher (Sherrie Lee) at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz or the researcher's supervisors, Professor Brian Findsen at bfindsen@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Terry Locke at locketj@waikato.ac.nz.

Appendix E: Information Letter to Secondary Participant

PhD Research Study: Brokering Practices among International Students at a New Zealand University

Dear ________

My name is Sherrie Lee and I am a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. I am conducting research as a requirement of my Doctoral Degree. The title of my research is: "Brokering practices among International Students at a New Zealand University". The research has been given ethical approval by the Faculty of Education Human Research Ethics Committee.

I am interested in how international students get help from others to understand the content of their papers and to complete tasks like assignments. In particular, I am interested in my research participants' interactions with others outside the classroom, and you may be involved in those interactions. My research participants are primary participants and you may be involved as a secondary participant. The research study will be carried out over one academic semester. Secondary participants will be involved in the following:

1) Observations

i. I will ask you if I can observe you and my primary participants interacting together. During those times, I will take notes, and audio-record what you and your peers say. I will ask you and your peers for permission to do so before I conduct the observation. After I transcribe the observation, you and your peers can check the transcript.

ii. If your interactions take place online (e.g. over email, on social media networking sites), I will ask for permission from you and your peers to give me copies of your online interactions (e.g. email exchanges, web grabs of social media commentaries).

iii. To clarify my understanding about the observations and/or online interactions, I will arrange to interview you at a mutually convenient time and place. The interview will take no more than 30 minutes. I will audio-record and take notes during interviews. After I transcribe the interview, you will be able to check the transcript for accuracy.

iv. When reporting on my research, I will not reveal your identity and I will take all steps necessary to keep the data confidential.

Things you need to know:

- Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any time without providing any reason. You can also withdraw data that I have not analysed at any point.
- I will make every effort to maintain anonymity. Your real name will not be used in my research. Your lecturers will not know who is in the study.
- I will make every effort to maintain confidentiality. I will not share the information I have collected with anyone apart from my supervisors. I will also ensure that the data that I collect is stored securely.
- The information gained from this research will be used mainly for producing my PhD thesis. When this is finished, it will be published on the University of Waikato's Research Commons.
- Parts of the research may be used in writing articles and presentations at conferences.
- All data will be kept for five years after the thesis is completed, and after that it will be destroyed.

If you would like to have further information, or have questions, please contact me at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz.

You may also contact my supervisors, Professor Brian Findsen at bfindsen@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Terry Locke at locketj@waikato.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely

Sherrie Lee
PhD candidate
Faculty of Education
University of Waikato

Appendix F: Secondary Research Participant Consent Form

PhD Research Study: Brokering Practices among International Students at a New Zealand University

I, ………………………………………………………. (your full name) have been given and read an explanation of the research to be conducted by the researcher, Sherrie Lee. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.

I agree to:

- ❑ Allow the researcher to observe me and my peers interacting together.
- ❑ Have my conversations with my peers audio-recorded and transcribed.
- ❑ Give the researcher copies of online interactions with my peers.
- ❑ Participate in audio-recorded interviews which will be transcribed.

I understand that:

- ❑ My participation in this study is voluntary.
- ❑ I can withdraw from the research at any point without providing any reason.
- ❑ I can withdraw data that the researcher has not analysed at any point.
- ❑ I can refuse to be observed, respond to interview questions, or respond to other requests made by the researcher, without giving any reasons.
- ❑ I can change, take out, or add anything to/from the transcripts.

……………………………………………………… ……………………….

Name Date

……………………………………………………… ……………………

Signature Email / Phone

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher (Sherrie Lee) at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz or the researcher's supervisors, Professor Brian Findsen at bfindsen@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Terry Locke at locketj@waikato.ac.nz.

Appendix G: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Date of interview: Time started: Time ended:

Venue:

People present:

- …
- …

Prompts for interview

1. Can you tell me about your educational background and previous learning experiences? (for first interview only)
2. Can you tell me about the times you got help for your academic work?
3. Where did it take place? (e.g. outside the lecture theatre, library, where you live, etc.)
4. What did you need help with and why? (e.g. assignment, readings, lecture notes, writing, reading, etc.)
5. Who helped you? Did you specifically ask this person for help or did he/she volunteer to help you?
6. Did you refer to books and/or other materials?
7. Can you explain how easy or difficult was it to get the help you needed? E.g. How easy was it to obtain materials that could help you? How easy was it to approach others for help?
8. How did you feel about the help you received?

Prompts for follow-up interviews to brokering interactions

Questions for seeker (i.e,. student seeking help):

Why did you seek help from this particular person?

Can you explain how easy or difficult was it to get the help you needed?
How did you feel about the help you received?

Questions for broker (i.e., person offering help)
Why did you help this particular person?
How did you feel about providing help to this person?

Appendix H: Observation Guide

Date of observation: Time started: Time ended:

Venue:

People present:

- …
- …
- …
- …

<u>Prompts for notes on observation</u>

What aspects of academic literacy are brokered?

Who are the participants in the brokering interactions?

What are the dynamics of brokering interactions?
Who initiated the brokering? How was help accepted?
What do participants do or say to indicate that they are the ones providing information or knowledge about academic work or life?
What was the tone of the conversation between participants? What were the facial expressions and body language of the participants?

Appendix I: Overview of Data Collected

Table 1. Amount and Type of Data Collected According to Participant

Participant / Data Type	Interviews with Primary Participants	Interview with Brokers	Observations	Digital Records	Artefacts
Jane*	Semester A 7 interviews Total: 3:53:29 / Average:: 33:21 Semester B 5 interviews Total: 4:09:02 / Average: 49:48	–	Semester A 2 observations First observation: 37:53 Second observation: 46:03 Semester B 2 observations First observation: 12:07 Second observation: 16:26	–	Semester A 6 annotated essays Semester B 6 annotated essays
Linda*	Semester A 5 interviews Total: 3:22:58 / Average: 40:35 Semester B 5 interviews Total: 4:01:02 / Average: 48:12	Semester A Interview with Grace: 33:46 Interview with Emily: 16:53	–	Semester A 8 episodes of message exchanges with Grace 12 episodes of message exchanges with Emily	Semester A 2 annotated essays Semester B 2 annotated essays
Kim*	5 interviews Total: 4:01:10 / Average: 48:14	Embedded in interviews with Josh	–	12 episodes of message exchanges with Josh	2 annotated essays

Participant / Data Type	Interviews with Primary Participants	Interview with Brokers	Observations	Digital Records	Artefacts
Josh	5 interviews Total: 2:53:41 / Average: 34:44	–	–		
Cindy	5 interviews Total: 2:44:50 / Average: 32:58	–	–		
Sarah	4 interviews Total: 2:30:41 / Average: 37:40	–	–		
Annie	5 interviews Total: 2:27:34 / Average: 29:30	–	–		
Henry	5 interviews Total: 2:13:42 / Average: 26:44	–	–		
Simon	3 interviews Total: 54:11 / Average: 18:03	–	–		
Kevin	2 interviews Total: 52:20 / Average: 26:10	–	–		
Total amount	46 interviews	3 brokers interviewed	4 observations	32 episodes of message exchanges	18 annotated essays

Note. * indicates key informant. Duration of interviews of observations are expressed as either hh:mm:ss or mm:ss.

Appendix J: Confidentiality Agreement for Translator

☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to verify and/or transcribe is confidential.

☐ I understand that the contents of the recordings can only be discussed with the researcher.

☐ I will not keep any copies of the recordings and transcripts (beyond the period needed to work with these materials), nor allow third parties access to them.

....
Name

....
Email

....
Contact number

....
Signature Date

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher (Sherrie Lee) at csl15@students.waikato.ac.nz or the researcher’s supervisors, Professor Brian Findsen at bfindsen@waikato.ac.nz or Professor Terry Locke at locketj@waikato.ac.nz.

Appendix K: Notes and Examples of Translation and Transcription

K1. Translation/Transcription of Interviews

The translation/transcription of interviews were done broadly (as opposed to narrowly to include precise timings of pauses and positions of overlap) as the focus of the analysis was on the content of the participants' responses (Lapadat, 2000). Interviews in conducted in English were transcribed verbatim (Extracts 1 and 2), while interviews in Mandarin were simultaneously translated and transcribed into English (Extracts 3 and 4).

Extract 1

But some question you can't find it in Wikipedia. And sometimes I'm shy to ask teacher. For example, I could ask the AB101 teachers cos they had a lot of Chinese students before and I'm not really worrying about my poor speaking language. As for the Economics, we have the lecture at LC01 and it's a very huge classroom. And most of them are local and so I feel uncomfortable cos I feel, it's very embarrass[ing]. (Sarah, Interview, 14 March 2016)

Extract 2

But for me, I'm not that fast to process everything immediately ((pause)) but by that time I just stop thinking about that. If everything is in Chinese then I can do quite well. And that is something that makes me feel ((pause)) I want to go back to Taiwan ((laughs)). (Kim, Interview, 5 April 2016)

Extract 3

We will not use WeChat to discuss our assignment. There's no way to discuss it. My %idea%, your %idea%, when we talk about them together, there's a great possibility that our ideas start to become similar, and by the time it reaches the teacher, it becomes %copy%. (Translated from Mandarin; Annie, Interview, 6 May 2016)

Extract 4

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. (Translated from Mandarin; Henry, Interview, 6 April 2016)

K2. Translation/Transcription of Audio-Recorded Observations

The audio recordings in Mandarin were transcribed into Chinese, and subsequently translated into English, both processes done by a professional translator. During the analysis stage, I revised some of the translations to bear closer resemblance to the syntax in Chinese. I used a two-line transcription where the English translation is placed directly below the Chinese transcription, and each pair of lines is sequentially numbered for reference (see Extract 5).

Extract 5

1	Tim:	然后你想说特别是这个水的资源,
		Then what you intend to say is that water as a natural resource,
2		不能被忽略, 是吧?

		should not be ignored, isn't it?
3	Jane:	嗯。
		Yeah.
4	Tim:	不是 %has become not be ignored%,
		Not %has become not be ignored%,
5		你这语法有问题啊。(3)
		Your grammar has a problem. (3)
6		就简单来说这个 %cannot be ignored%,
		It should simply be %cannot be ignored%,
7		不是什么%has become not%。
		instead of %has become not%.
8		((写, 读)) (13)
		((reads, writes)) (13)

K3. Re-production and Translation of Mobile Phone Message Exchanges

The digital records of exchanges on messaging applications were provided in the form of images, that is, screenshots of what appeared on the participants' mobile phones or computers. As the images were a fixed size and had varying degrees of colour resolution, they were not appropriate to be presented in their original form for purposes of analysis within the thesis as seen in Figures 1–3. For legibility and formatting purposes, I re-produced the messages as callout-shaped text boxes containing text and images (e.g., emoji). The callout-shaped text boxes were chosen to preserve the 'look and feel' of these messaging interactions, as well as to differentiate the message exchange data from interview and observation transcripts. The primary participant or seeker's messages are in grey boxes, while the broker's messages are in plain textboxes (see Extracts 6–8).

I completed the translation of the message exchanges on my own, and where needed, sought clarification about the meaning of text or images from the participants who provided me the messages. Note that written form of the Chinese language has different orthographic representations depending on where the language user is from. Thus, as Mainland Chinese, Linda and Emily used Simplified Chinese, while Kim, being Taiwanese Chinese, used Traditional Chinese (see the Introduction chapter of Shei, 2014 for the historical explanation of the differences). Josh, a Malaysian Chinese, used Simplified Chinese as it was officially taught in schools. Kim and Josh retained their preferred orthography in their message exchanges.

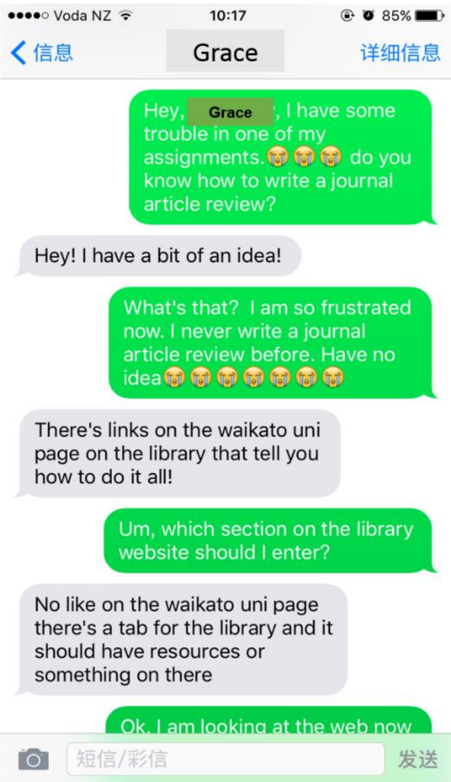

Figure 1. Sample of text message exchange between Linda and Grace

Figure 2. Sample of *WeChat* message exchange between Linda and Emily

Figure 3. Sample of *Facebook Messenger* message exchange between Kim and Josh

Extract 6

Re-production of Figure 1: Text message exchange between Linda and Grace (Linda: Grey box, Grace: White box)

Turn #	Text message
	17 March 2016 18:24
1	Hey, Grace, I have some trouble in one of my assignments. 😭😭😭 do you know how to write a journal article review?
2	Hey! I have a bit of an idea!
3	What's that? I am so frustrated now. I never write a journal article review before. Have no idea 😭😭😭😭😭😭😭
4	There's links on the uni page on the library that tell you how to do it all!
5	Um, which section on the library website should I enter?
6	No like on the uni page there's a tab for the library and it should have resources or something on there
7	Ok, I am looking at the web now but find nothing about journal article review……

Extract 7

Re-production of Figure 2: *WeChat* message exchange between Linda and Emily (Linda: Grey box, Emily: White box)

Turn #	WeChat message
1	好像只能这么理解 Seems like that's the only way to understand it.
2	嗯......要不不知道他想说舍 Uhm …… otherwise won't have any idea what she's trying to say
3	莫名其妙 谁让她举例子😂 Makes no sense who needs her to give an example 😂
4	可不是，我看了好久都不明白......突然就想到， 他不会是举了个例子吧...... Yeah isn't it, I couldn't understand it for the longest time …… suddenly I thought of something, could she just be giving an example ……
5	😂

Extract 8

Re-production of Figure 3: F*acebook Messenger* message exchange between Kim and Josh (Kim: Grey box, Josh: White box)

Turn #	Facebook message
1	赶快把 highlight 的字句改掉，然后再重交 Hurry and re-write the %highlight% sentences, then re-submit
2	好喔 謝謝你 Alright thank you
3	你如果要帮忙和我说哦，我可以帮你看看🙂 Tell me if you need my help eh, I could have a look at it 🙂
4	你人也太好了... 我需要你的幫忙.. You're just too kind … I need your help..

K4. Transcription Key

The following transcription key is adapted from Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974). Instead of indicating the precise length of pauses, I use an approximation rounded to the nearest second. Conventional punctuation marks are used such as the question mark to indicate rising intonation, a full stop to indicate falling intonation, and the comma to indicate natural pauses in speech. Text within a pair of percentage signs (%text%) indicate code-switching as used in Wu (2004).

Item	Meaning
[	The beginning of an overlap
]	The end of an overlap
=	The equals sign at the end of one utterance and the beginning of the next utterance marks the latching of speech between the speakers. When used in-between words it marks the latching of the words spoken in an utterance with no break.
(2)	The number within the brackets represents a pause of approximately one second.
::	Lengthening of the prior sound. More or less colons are used to represent the longer or shorter lengthening.
?	A rising intonation in speech
. (full stop in English) 。(full stop in Chinese)	A falling intonation in speech
,	Commas indicate natural pauses in speech.
–	Abrupt break from speech
underscore	Marks an emphasis placed on the underscored sound
bold	Underscored words in bold indicate heavy emphasis or shouting
°degree sign°	Either side of a word indicates that it is spoken in a quiet, soft tone
(?) or (word?)	Utterance could not be deciphered. Transcriber’s guess of the word is followed by a questions mark
((brackets))	Words within double brackets indicate unspoken actions. E.g., ((laughs)), ((smiles)), ((writes))
>arrows<	Utterance spoken quickly
<arrows>	Utterance lengthened
$dollar$	Dollar signs indicate the talk was produced in a smiling or laughing voice

%percentage%	Indicates code-switching from Chinese/Mandarin to English. A pair of percentage signs indicates that the talk or text between them is produced in English.
[square brackets]	Text within square brackets indicates additional information or text to aid understanding. (Only used in interview transcripts and re-productions of message exchanges.)

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Appendix L: Examples of Data Analysis

L1. Approaches to Thematic Analysis

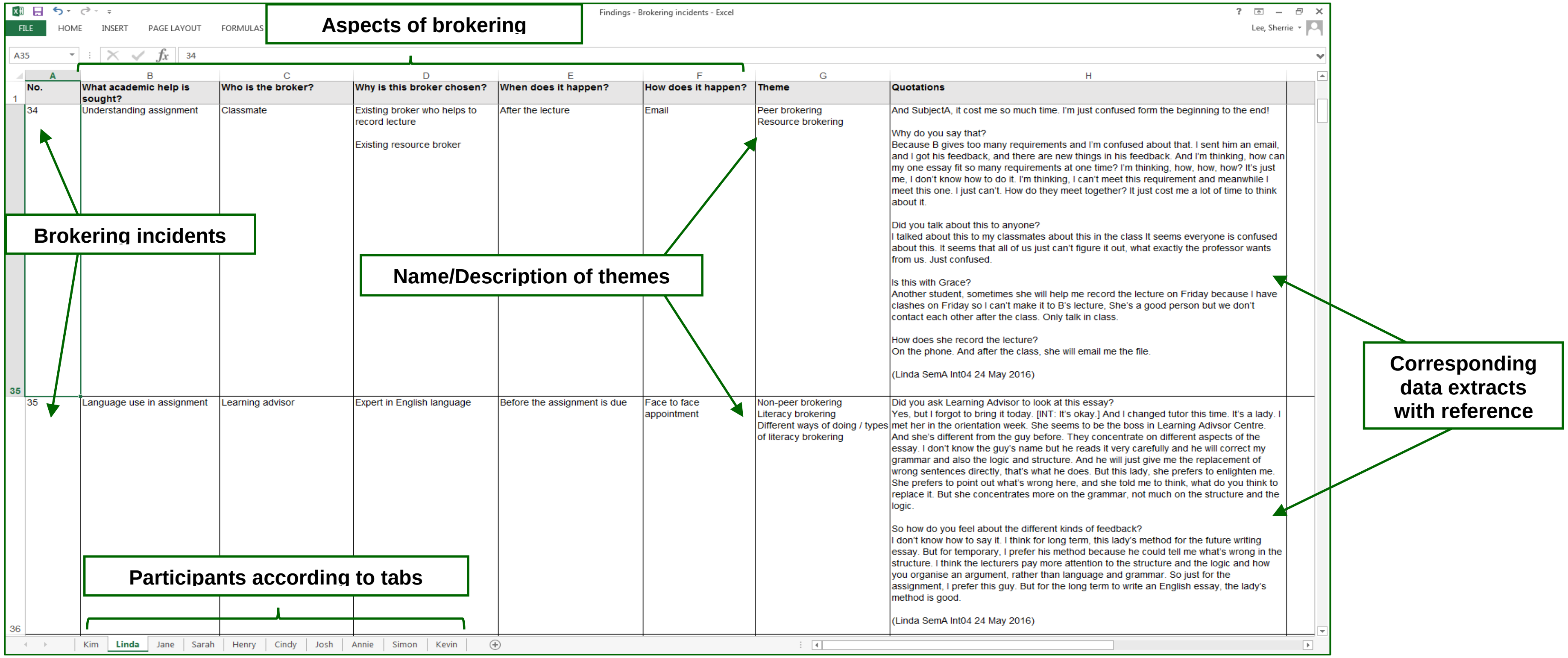

Figure 1. Thematic analysis: Annotated screenshot of Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

Table 1. Writing as Analysis: How Different Types of Writing Contributed to Thematic Analysis

Type of writing	Sample
Informal journal entries	With regards to the phenomenon of brokering, Sarah seemed to be seeking opportunities to make friends with others, but also conscious of those who would be able to help in her work. (Researcher Journal, 16 March 2016)
	Like the previous interview, Henry mentioned that he read things on his own. He mentioned that he would have a test sometime later in the month, and that he might ask his senior for help. Otherwise, he doesn't anticipate asking others for help. (Researcher Journal, 4 May 2016)
Ongoing analytical writing	… And then there are the cultural affiliates who are also knowledge brokers for very specific issues: Henry asking his senior about the tests, Sarah asking her almost senior (just a semester ahead of her) about changing course and also about acing the tests (Researcher Journal, 16 August 2016)
Formally presented writing	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 who was one semester ahead of her, because he had previously taken the subject and did very well in it. … Similarly, Henry found that he benefitted from having a senior student who was in her third year explain to him how to prepare for a test. (Journal article submission, 23 January 2017)

L2. Data Analysis using an adapted Conversation Analytic Approach

Sample 1: Analysis of WeChat message exchange between Linda (Grey box) and Emily (White box)

Turn #	WeChat message	Researcher's comments
10	你要不放心也可以写一个 If you're worried you can write your name	Broker offers advice about including name in assignment
11	反正这个无所谓的 Anyway it doesn't matter	Broker provides an account of advice
12	写了也不扣分 🤭 Writing it won't get your marks deducted 🤭	Broker provides information that including the name in assignment will not incur a penalty, followed by an emoji of supressed laughter. Projects K+ stance.
13	昂，好的，主要是在国内写习惯了......不写自己名字没有安全感...... Yeah, ok, the main thing is that I'm used to writing it back in China ……. Not writing my name doesn't give me peace of mind ……	Seeker responds with acknowledgement tokens ('yeah, ok), followed by an account ('the main thing is ...) and a self-deprecating response ('not writing my name doesn't give me peace of mind ……"
14	哈哈哈 Hahaha	Broker response with laughter particles (hahaha), thus treating the previous turn as non-serious.

Sample 2: Analysis of *Facebook Messenger* message exchange between Kim (: Grey box) and Josh (White box)

Turn #	Facebook message	Researcher's comments
5	这里写你 plagiarise 太多 Here it says you %plagiarise% too much	Broker reads the information on the image and indicates the problem area.
6	刚刚 jenny 有说要少过 15% %jenny% just said it needs to be less than 15%	Gives account of why the assignment was not accepted – teacher said that the rate of plagiarism needs to be less than 15%
7	赶快把 highlight 的字句改掉，然后再重交 Hurry and re-write the %highlight% sentences, then re-submit	Provides advice on what to do next Sense of urgency in the use of 'hurry'
8	好喔 謝謝你 Alright thank you	Acknowledgement tokens
9	你如果要帮忙和我说哦，我可以帮你看看 🙂 Tell me if you need my help eh, I could have a look at it 🙂	Offers additional help (initiates follow-up brokering) Establishes K+ stance
10	你人也太好了... 我需要你的幫忙.. You're just too kind … I need your help..	Accepts brokering offer Affective stance: attitude of gratitude Reiterates K- position of needing help

Sample 3: Analysis of Interaction between Kim and Tim

Turn #	Transcription	Researcher's comments
1	Tim: (9) 然后你想说特别是<这个> 水的资源, 不能被忽略, 是吧？ (9) Then what you intend to say is that water as a natural resource should not be ignored, right?	Displays K+ stance Interprets Jane's intended meaning using the tag question 是吧 (right) to express the speaker's certainty about his proposition "and only requires a minimum of confirmation from the listener" (Shei, 2014, p. 222). The appearance of a sense of uncertainty is a display of tact or politeness.
2	Kim: 嗯。 Yeah.	Acceptance
3	Tim: 不是 %has become not be ignored%。你这语法有问题啊。（3） 就简单来说这个 %cannot be ignored%, 不是什么%has become not%. ((write)) (13) 这里逗号啊， 就，这句话应该是作为，你阐述你观点的一个前半句。 But it is incorrect saying %has become not be ignored%. It is a grammatical error. (3) It should be %cannot be ignored%, instead of %has become not%. ((writes)) (13) A comma should be put here, then, this phrase should become the first half of the sentence where you elaborate on your point.	Displays K+ stance Issues strong form of advice with the use of the modal verb of obligation, 应该 (should) "这句话应该是作为，你阐述你观点的一个前半句" (This phrase should become the first half of the sentence where you elaborate on your point)
4	Kim: 嗯。 Yeah.	Acceptance
5	Tim: 就是说这个水资源是新西兰， 就是自然资源里面最值钱的一个， 最重要的一个对吧？	Displays K+ stance Interprets Jane's intended meaning using the tag question 对吧 (right) to express the speaker's certainty about his

Turn #	Transcription		Researcher's comments
		It means water is the most valuable resource in New Zealand, right?	proposition "and only requires a minimum of confirmation from the listener" (Shei, 2014, p. 222). The appearance of a sense of uncertainty is a display of tact or politeness.
6	Kim:	嗯。 Yeah.	Acceptance
7	Tim:	然后你就%maintains% 因为什么呢？ 因为它包， 包含了这些这些这些。 所以这个话应该这么说吧。你首先告诉他， 新鲜水， 就是%fresh water% 是很重要的。 为什么它重要？ 所以这里应该逗号。 ((写)) (10) 这个什么 (1)，((读)) %save drinking water for persons% , 你想说是给人提供水是吧？ Then you use %maintains%. Why? The reason is that it includes this, this and this. So, the sentence should be like this. First you tell him that %fresh water% is important. Why is it important? A comma should be put here ((writes)) (10) Here (1), ((reads)) %save drinking water for persons%. You intend to say the water supply is for people, right?	Displays K+ stance Issues strong form of advice with the use of the modal verb of obligation, 应该 (should) "所以这个话应该这么说吧" (So, the sentence should be like this) Last phrase uses the tag question 是吧 (right) to express the speaker's certainty about his proposition "and only requires a minimum of confirmation from the listener" (Shei, 2014, p. 222). The appearance of a sense of uncertainty is a display of tact or politeness.
8	Kim:	°对°。 °Yes°	Acceptance