Encountering the “Asian learner”: Teaching and learning experiences of postgraduate Asian learners and their lecturers in Australia and Vietnam

Toni Dobinson
BA (English and History), MA (Applied Linguistics)

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of: my daughter, Ella Mae, who would have been 20 this year and whose memory has never left my side; my mother Lilian, who was my best friend and who would have been so proud of me now; my father Donald who was grossly misunderstood and who passed away before I got a chance to really know him; my friend Frankie who departed too early and whose smile carries me through each day and the late Dr Do Huy Thinh for being so optimistic about the future of intercultural communication.
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Abstract

Research conducted into approaches to education in Asia, has depicted Asians and their teaching and learning styles as the Other. In seeking to counter this notion, this study aimed to generate theory about how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters.

Two sites were selected for the single case community; a Vietnamese educational training centre and a partner Australian university. Participants at Site One were Vietnamese English language teachers enrolled in an MA Applied Linguistics course offshore and their local Vietnamese lecturers. Participants at Site Two were Asian English language teachers also taking the MA course and their onshore lecturers. The study took an interpretivist, interactionist theoretical approach. A case study design was used to collect data via semi-structured interviews, related documents and primary texts. Data were analysed using a thematic approach.

Five propositions were generated from the findings of the study: firstly, Asian postgraduates’ perceptions and experiences, beyond the classroom, are both shared and disparate. Disparity is local context specific; secondly, there is positive appreciation of Western and Eastern educational discourses for teaching and learning in Asia by Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers; thirdly, despite positive appreciation of the value of Western and Eastern educational discourses, feelings of deficit and difference underlie much of the meaning that many Asian postgraduate students make from their encounters within, and beyond, the classroom in Asia and Australia. Fear and scepticism pervade these encounters; fourthly, irrespective of change in the Asia-Pacific region, there remains only partial movement towards the Third Space on two main fronts: Western Orientalist paradigms and approaches to teaching and learning; and fifthly, there is differential movement towards the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region by Western lecturers, Asian lecturers and Asian postgraduates. All of them are close to occupying a position of Thirdness, both within the classroom and beyond, but Asian lecturers and Western lecturers are closer than their Asian postgraduates, and Asian lecturers are closer than their Western counterparts.

Findings of the study suggest the need for increased attention to the development of metacultural sensitivity and awareness in educators in the Asia-Pacific region, more
examination of notions of Self and Other, greater awareness and critique of Western and Eastern social, theoretical and educational discourses and more formalised opportunities for cross border dialogue.
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This thesis reports on the meaning that Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam. It is premised on the belief that meaning is made through shared understandings about teaching and learning and that meaning is socially constructed. It also takes as a given that, in this instance, the meaning that is made is filtered through the prism of Western social, theoretical and educational discourses and Eastern constructions of “the Asian”. This perspective views both teachers and learners as having prescribed roles. They participate in a particular community of practice which is mediated by the other social roles that they may have. The study, therefore considers the contexts of work, family, study (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005) and every day life when describing the meaning that participants make from their teaching and learning encounters. It draws conclusions about the position of participants with regard to their transition towards, what Bhabha (1994) has called, the “Third Space”. This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature, the research aims, the background and context of the study, the significance of the study and the methods used in the study.

1.1 Overview of the literature

The word “Asian” has widespread currency. It needs to be treated with vigilance, as it can presume a homogeneity and commonality of people with very diverse national, racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and class backgrounds (Matthews, 2002). Asianness has historical and cultural meaning as well as geographical meaning. It has been significant in social and theoretical discourses in the West and formed the central image of Orientalist writings (Abdel-Malak, 1963; Gabrieli, 1965; Said, 1978, 1993). Orientalism refers to the way that European culture ‘was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post enlightenment period’ (Said, 1978, p. 3). The term “Oriental” is used widely to refer to people from East and South East Asia and also denotes people from what is now known as the Middle East. Many have criticised Said’s thesis of the misrepresentation of the Orient by the West (Al Azm, 1981;
Hourani, 1994; Keddie, 1994; Lewis, 2000; Makiya, 1993; Richardson, 2000; Varisco, 2007; Warraq, 2007; Wickens, 1985). His ideas, none the less, have infused current Western discourses on Asia.

Essentialism is tied to Orientalism and Occidentalism. It is based on the idea that everything has a true, fixed essence which is universal and unchanging regardless of context (Fuss, 1989; Simberloff, 1980). Narratives of Asian and Middle Eastern historiography have tended to be essentialised by Western historians as well as Asian and Middle Eastern historians. Postcolonial writings, in particular, have described this essentialism as an ‘aftermath’ of Colonialism (1992, p. 8). Postcolonial literature reports tangible differences between Europeans and Asiatics and the division of the world into a white superior world and a black inferior one (Horne, 1964).

A Postcolonial discourse surrounds the short history of White Australia. As many of Australia’s politicians will attest, Australia’s relationship with Asia has been a limited one (Downer, 2005). The first attempts at British decolonisation in Asia after World War II met with discomfort on the part of Australian leaders such as Menzies (Bongiorno, 2005). The dismantling of the White Australia Policy did not take place until 1973. This was 18 years after the first Asian participants in the Colombo Plan educational aid programme had entered the country. Australia’s closest neighbour was shrouded in a discourse of myths. These myths described Australia’s closeness with Europe and its distance from Asia. Broinowski called this ‘Australia’s Far East fallacy’, a ‘neo-Orientalist framework for Asia’ (Broinowski, 1992, p. 15).

Added to these discourses are religious, educational and cultural discourses. Many studies have focused on individualism/collectivism in Asian cultures (Hofstede, 2011; Park, 2000; Ralston, Thang & Napier, 1999; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Schimmack, Oishi & Diener, 2002; Triandis, 1995; Wintergerst, De Capua &Verna, 2003). They have discussed the implications of these cultural dimensions for education (Tang, 1996; Volet, 1999; Volet & Kees, 1993; Wright, 2012). Some, such as Hofstede (1991, 2007, 2011), have looked at approach/avoidance and power/distance. Others have focused on the influence of Confucianism on Asian approaches to learning (Cheng, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Manikutty, Anuradha & Hansen, 2007; Wong, 2004).
Some studies have sought to describe, explain and compare educational practices and beliefs in Asian countries with those encountered in the West (Biggs, 1997; Chuah, 2010; Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD), 2009).

Mechanistic theories of learning, that focus on the acquisition of skills, techniques and information, and are associated with Behaviourism, have largely been discredited in Western educational discourses in the last 40 years. Instead, researchers and practitioners have viewed learning as “organismic” (Pepper, 1942). They have redefined learning as meaning making activity in which individuals construct, interpret and use knowledge (Askew & Carnell, 1998; Daniels, Lauder & Porter, 2012; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Acceptance of this view has meant an emphasis on learning as a process rather than a product, a shift in attitudes towards the value of experience over training (Allen, 2009; Eraut, 2004; Reese & Overton, 1970) and a leaning towards Social Constructivism in teaching and learning (Mayer, 2004; Prawat & Floden, 1994). There has also been a move towards “contextualism” and the idea that there is no single reality. Realities are dependent upon the social, economic, cultural and historical situation (Daniels et al., 2012).

In the area of adult education, the importance of the development of Self in the 1970s (Maslow, 1970) encouraged a move towards humanistic teaching. Earlier, there had been a shift towards analysis and evaluation in teaching and learning (Bloom, 1956). Freire added to this with his ideas about the importance of problem-solving (Freire, 1970). Similarly, learning was conceptualised less formally. It could take place at any time or in any place (Hutchins, 1970). It was significant to changing societies (Smith, 2001). Later on, Mezirow’s ideas on Transformational Learning (1991, 1994) suggested an intersection between the individual and society (Tennant, 1993). Other researchers talked about communicative learning focused on meaning, values, intentions and feelings (Cunningham, 1998; Daloz, 1986, 1999; Mezirow, 1994, 1996, 2003). They devalued instrumental, pre-planned learning that perpetuated the social realities of teachers and programme designers. Another wave of researchers and theorists claimed that learning contained deep emotional and spiritual dimensions (Boyd, 1989, 1991; Boyd and Myers, 1988; Merriam and Caffarella, 1999). They examined the role of learner intent, noticing and intervention (Boud & Walker, 1990). Some shifted away
from classroom learning towards workplace learning. The focus moved to intuitive practice and tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2004). More recently, Johnsson & Boud (2010, p. 239) have described learning as an informal opportunity arising from ‘contextualised interactional understandings’. These foundational theories and perspectives have formed the basis of adult education in the West (Bastable, 2008; Cooks, Hackney, Jackson, Stevens & Zumwalt, 2002; Schunk, 2004).

A focus on the learner’s individual characteristics has meant a promotion of “ideal” learner qualities and teacher strategies across teaching and learning environments. This mode of thinking has created hegemonies of social, cultural and ideological practices (Nozaki, 2009). In the 1960s and 1970s, researchers and practitioners (Hamachek, 1969; Rubin, 1975) listed the specific characteristics of the “good teacher” and the “good language learner”. Such prescriptive lists were scrutinised in later years (Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004) and replaced with notions of holistic process (Korthagen, 2004) and “essence”. Researchers also drew attention to the need to be aware of dominant discourses in teacher education (Moore, 2004). They alerted teachers to the Othering of practices and styles not in tune with dominant Western beliefs.

Despite much research showing that Asian students frequently memorise and understand at the same time (Kember, 2000; Kember & Gow, 1991; Pratt, Kelly & Wong, 1999; Starr, 2012; Volet, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 1997), however, Western education systems have tended to trivialise a “surface” approach to learning (Marton & Saljo, 1976). ‘Active engagement with the content’ and ‘personal understanding’ are favoured above rote learning (Entwistle, 2001, p. 595). Furthermore, learners are encouraged to construct their own learning and negotiate meaning (Fosnot, 1989, 2005; Gray, 1997; Hussein, 2012; Von Glaserfield, 1995). They formulate and test ‘tentative interpretations of experience’ rather than intaking and storing information (Perkins, 1992, p. 49).

Haggis (2003) has referred to the theoretical underpinnings of these methodologies as educational ‘grand theories’. They represent the goals and values of elite academic culture but not the majority of students in a mass system (Haggis, 2003, p. 89). Critical theorists have also been disappointed with the absence of critical examination of the
‘taken-for-granted of power and privilege… manifest in educational practice’ (Giroux, 1981, p. 66). Foucault (1972) maintained that educators need to acknowledge that all “truth” about teaching and learning is a product of its time. Despite some critique, however, promotion of these “new” directions in teaching and learning continues across learning environments.

Australian academics have accorded respect to Asian students for their ‘superior motivation’, their ‘docility,’ and their ‘industriousness’ (Vernon, 1982, cited in Schneider & Lee, 1990, pp. 359-360). They have the ability to do as well, if not better, than their Australian colleagues in their courses (Banks & Olsen, 2008). Other university literature, however, has presented Asian students as limited in their approaches to academic life. Academics attribute Asian students with ‘conserving’ attitudes to learning, reproductive approaches and habits of study which are no longer appropriate (Ballard, 1989, p. 90). Although these stances have been modified over the years (Ballard and Clanchy, 1997), such observations have generated a plethora of empirical studies which have investigated Asian approaches to learning. Learner styles and strategies have been measured and compared. Researchers have drawn links between these and prior education and cultural backgrounds.

Recent literature on the internationalisation of education in Australia has evaluated policies on international students critically. Sanderson (2003, p. 150) drew attention to the rhetoric which promoted Western knowledge as the ‘apex of civilisation’ and non-Western knowledge as the Other. He emphasised the need for change in universities in terms of inclusivity and cultural adaptation (Sanderson, 2003). Bowser, Danaher & Somasundaram (2007, p. 678) endorsed the notion of respect for ‘difference’, while others (Grace & Gravestock, 2009, p. 20), encouraged lecturers to ‘pause for thought’ about their experiences of interacting with people from other ethnicities. Currently there is a standardisation debate which polarises two main issues in transnational education: whether transnational courses should consider the new cultures in which they are being offered (Hicks & Jarratt, 2008; Leask, 2008; Wang, 2008; Ziguras, 2008) or whether difference should in fact be de-emphasised (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008).
Increasing globalisation has implications for education. Success in a globalised context requires knowledge and awareness of diversity (Milner, 2010). It demands heightened metacultural sensitivity (Louie, 2005) if ‘pedagogic action’ is not to reflect the interests of the dominant players (Bourdieu & Passeron (1977, p. 9). In order to be enfranchised (Freire, 1970), educators need to enter what has been called the “Third Space” by Bhabha, (1994) and a “Third Stance” by Kramsch (2009). This is a position of “hybridity”, ‘an ambivalent space in which third perspectives can grow in the margins of dominant ways of seeing’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 237). Thirdness exists outside of, and in opposition to, Postcolonial, essentialist and Orientalist discourses but is demarcated and influenced by them. It is a place where teaching, learning and research are not conceptualised through the traditional dichotomies (Kramsch, 2009). Instead they are socially constructed and produced in various ways. The first way is through social interaction and discussion (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al., 2004). Then there is collaboration, innovation (Bhabha, 1994), shared understandings and practices (Gutiérrez, 2008). The Third Space encapsulates intercultural competence but is not limited to it (Moje et al., 2004). Some people see the Third Space as totally separate to the first or second space (home culture and second or new culture). Others imagine it as existing and anchored as a subset of these spaces. In short, lecturers of Asian students, and Asian students themselves, influenced by Western and Eastern social, theoretical and educational discourses, can enter the Third Space. They can become interculturally competent or they can leave these discourses unquestioned (Widin, 2010). The literature forming the backdrop to this present study is reviewed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.2 Research aims

The present study aimed to generate theory about how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers on an MA Applied Linguistics course make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam. The study sought to explore how participants live, work and make subjective meanings of their experiences and how these affect their teaching and learning experiences. An underlying theoretical premise of the study was that experiences and encounters in any teaching and learning context are the result of shared understandings between participants in these contexts. Teachers and learners do not merely take part in experiences and encounters but actively create
them. The reality that is made is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and, as in this case, constructed from participants’ contact with certain social and theoretical discourses as well as ‘the reality of everyday life shared with others’ (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 43). Face to face interaction with others can cause ‘the Other’ to be more real to the Self than the Self itself but personal subjectivity can be made accessible to us via close reflection on Self (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Figure 1 below offers a pictorial representation of the conceptual framework of the study, highlighting links between social and theoretical discourses in both the East and the West, constructions of the notion of an “Asian learner” and educational discourses. As discussed in 3.1 the terms “West”, “Western”, “non-Western” and “Eastern” are used in this study to allow a clear argument to be made. For some, this East/West binary is inescapable and even helpful in helping mutual ontological interpretation of unfamiliar cultures (Eoyang, 1994). The researcher has little choice but to use these commonly understood metageographical terms but is aware, however, of their problematic and challenged nature and the simplistic way in which these complex labels are manipulated.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of theoretical and discursive constructions of Asians and Asian approaches to learning.

What is not depicted in Figure 1, but is a further conceptual framework of this thesis, is the notion of a Third Space (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 2009) and the expertise and knowledge that those occupying this intercultural space bring to teaching and learning. This is explored in section 3.6 in Chapter 3.
1.2.2 Research questions

The study was located in the broad field of experiences of teaching and learning. It drew on the perspectives of Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers onshore in Australia, and Vietnamese postgraduates and their Vietnamese lecturers offshore in Vietnam. Vietnam was chosen as a case study site for several reasons. Firstly, Vietnam is a growing source of overseas students for universities globally. Secondly, there are large numbers of Vietnamese students studying at Australian universities, both onshore and offshore and this ranks Vietnam fourth or fifth after Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China as a source country for Australia (Banks, Kevat, Ziguras, Ciccarelli & Clayton, 2010). Thirdly, it is imperative to know more about the perspectives and encounters of such students. Fourthly, the sample of participants was easily accessible to the researcher at both the onshore and offshore sites of the programme delivery.

The study was driven by the main research question:

How do lecturers and their postgraduate Asian students in Australia and Vietnam make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters?

Guiding questions were:

1. What influence has the Western construction of “the Asian” and the related social and theoretical discourses had on postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?
2. How have Asian background and culture contributed to Asian postgraduate students’ and their Asian lecturers’ perceptions of themselves as Asians?
3. How have theories of teaching and learning, established mostly in the West, influenced postgraduate Asian students’ and their lecturers’ views on teaching and learning, and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?
4. How have postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers responded to theories about “the Asian learner”?
1.3 The international context: History, policies and practice

The OECD has defined international education in terms of students who have crossed borders expressly with the intention to study (OECD, 2008b). Increasing numbers of students are studying in countries other than their own. In 2009, there were around 3.7 million tertiary students enrolled outside their country of origin (OECD, 2011, p. 318). In 2010, there were 4.1 million (Australian Education International (AEI), 2012). The top five receiving countries are the US (16.6%), the UK (13.0%), Australia (6.6%), Germany (6.4%) and France (6.3%). The share of students for the US dropped from 22.9% in 2000 to 16.6% in 2010. The share for Australia increased from 5.1% to 6.6% during the same period (AEI, 2012).

As Illich (1970) foreshadowed, schooling has become the New World Religion. To participate in society every person needs to be schooled. It is a means by which those in need of education can enter the secular world. In 2010, China boasted the largest number of students studying abroad (17% or 698,379). This was followed by India (5.9% or 243,658), the Republic of Korea (3.7% or 151,900), Germany (3.0% or 124,409) and France (1.6% or 65,663). The total constituted 31.2% of all students studying abroad (AEI, 2012).

Students from Asia form the largest group of international students studying abroad and enrolled in countries which report to the OECD. The OECD (2011, p. 327) reported 52% bound for destinations abroad in 2009. China (not including Hong Kong), India, Malaysia and Vietnam were the top four originating countries for Asian higher education students headed for tertiary courses abroad. Large numbers of Asian students also came from Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore and Thailand (OECD, 2011, p. 327).

The above figures illustrate the importance of international education to many countries in which access to tertiary education is competitive. They also highlight the magnitude of international education as an export industry throughout the world (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005, 2012; Davis & Macintosh, 2011). Increasingly, however, international education is taking place in the country of origin or a country nearby, usually via an overseas provider. This is termed “transnational education” (TNE) or “offshore
education”. International branches of universities or in-country partner arrangements such as franchising, twinning or validating of degree programs to overseas teaching institutions, provide these courses (Clark, 2012). Figures are less reliable than those for in-country provision but figures that are available for the UK and Australia point to a growing market in TNE. Most students originate from Singapore, China, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Vietnam (Clark, 2012). Detailed background information, history, educational practices and policies for Vietnam (as one of the two sites considered in the study) are outlined in Chapter 2.

Globalisation of education has implications for institutions offering courses of study. Receiving institutions need to be aware of the experiences, skills and competencies that students bring with them.

1.4 The Australian context: History, policies and practices

The history of international students in Australia really began with changes to foreign policy in the developed world after World War II. These changes were a response to many factors, namely the end of colonialism, the growth of more independent developing nations, the escalation in world trade and a need for better international relations (Liddicoat, 2003).

International education has undergone different phases in Australia, from ‘educational aid’ (the Colombo Plan which is described in Chapter 2) in the post war period to “educational trade” in the 1970s and 1980s to “internationalisation” from the early 1990s (Trevaskes, Eisenchlas & Liddicoat, 2003). Within these phases, two issues endured: firstly the recruitment of students from overseas and accompanying policies and services and, secondly, the internationalisation of educational outcomes, including international education abroad and at home (Knight, 2004).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, overseas student numbers increased beyond expectations. This brought difficulties in terms of student quality of experience. The English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sector suffered greatly. The government introduced tighter regulation of institutional practices after overseas students suffered incompetent management in a number of different provider
institutions across Australia (Shinn, Welch & Bagnell, 1999). The National ELICOS Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), a body charged with accrediting English language institutions, monitored quality of student experience. The Jackson Report (Jackson, 1984) and the Goldring Report (Goldring, 1984a) took different views on the role of international education. The former envisaged a market-based approach and the latter a more aid-oriented approach in line with the Colombo Plan (Chesterman, 2009). In supporting the Jackson philosophy, Australia promoted the “enterprise university” (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

International education brings indirect benefits such as: knowledge expertise, a diversity of social and cultural world views, language skills and overseas networks (Group of Eight (Go8), 2012). Governments are continually discussing and reviewing these topics.

Australian commitment to international education is reflected in figures taken from the AEI website. In the monthly report for August 2012 the AEI reported 461,477 enrolments from full-fee paying students in Australia on student visas (AEI, 2012). Although greater than previous figures, this is a 7% decline in growth from the same period the year before and a contrast with the average 6.4% year-to-date growth rates experienced since 2002. However, Australia remains a major provider of education for international students.

The AEI (2012) monthly summary ranked the Australian Higher Education sector as the major contributor to international education in Australia by volume of enrolments and commencements. The biggest markets were China and Malaysia. The summary ranked the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector second, followed by the ELICOS sector, the school sector and the foundation and exchange programmes.

In 2011, the OECD (2011, p. 327) reported more than 75% of international students in Australia to be Asian. This is not just a recent phenomenon. The top five countries for enrolment into English language courses in Australia in 2007 and 2008 were China, India, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia, in that order. Average growth in numbers was 20.7%. In 2011 and 2012, the top five countries of origin changed slightly.
Malaysia moved Thailand out of fourth place, Vietnam moved into fifth place and the average growth rate dropped to minus 7.6% (OECD, 2011).

Despite the recent fall in numbers, the above figures show the importance of overseas education for many Asian students. This is largely due to factors such as: increasing populations; political factors linked to government policies on the learning of English (for example, places like Malaysia); the number of university places made available to minority groups in originating countries; the perceived status of overseas institutions and their qualifications; and the huge emphasis placed on education in the countries of origin.

Figures for transnational tertiary programmes, in which universities take their programmes offshore, have also increased over the last seven years with a slight decrease of a few percent more recently (AEI, 2012). The AEI (2012) reports that out of 332,577 international students enrolled in Australian university courses in 2011, 80,458 (24.2%) were enrolled offshore. This underscores the importance of transnational programmes for Australian universities. Setting up and running these courses raises issues which mirror those being debated amongst the education fraternity, namely questions of standardisation, equivalence and compatibility. As far back as 1999, these concerns led to a greater focus by university senior management, academics, school principals and directors of private language schools on educational values and quality (Shinn et al, 1999, p. 85).

Codes of practice, and guidelines outlining best practice for providers have been developed for Australian universities (Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC), 2002, 2005). Many universities have also developed in-house policy and procedure documents, largely in response to auditing bodies such as the former Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) which operated from 2000-2011. The agency mandated inclusion of cross-cultural content in learning activities, respect for diversity and the inclusion of a variety of learning styles in courses.

There needs to be awareness of the background and context of international students studying outside their countries of origin or on programmes imported from outside their
Chapter 1 Introduction

country. Policies and practices resulting from this contact are presented in the next chapters. The meaning that postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers make from their teaching and learning experiences onshore in Australia or offshore in Vietnam can only be understood in context. Globalisation and global education trends, Australia’s relations with Asia over the years and the current booming Australian education export industry in Asia are outlined in Chapter 2.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study has significance on two main levels: the first being the significance of the research design and the second being its contribution to teaching and learning. It is original in four main ways as summarised at the end of this section.

1.5.1 Research design

Close examination of the learning styles of Asian students goes back as far as 1970 (Noesjirwan, 1970) with researchers suggesting that Asian students have a markedly different attitude to learning than their Western counterparts. Researchers have collected data from Asian students using either home grown questionnaires or standardised survey instruments such as Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1984). They have researched these instruments vigorously and used them widely in high status educational institutions. Opponents of these instruments have questioned their validity and reliability, however (Allinson & Hayes, 1988; Ferrell, 1983; Newstead, 1992; Sims, Veres, Watson & Buckner, 1986). They have criticised them for blindness to local contexts or conceptions of effective teaching across cultures (Pratt, Kelly & Wong, 1999). They have also accused positivistic instruments of decontextualising learning and pedagogy from the complexities of their social context (Reynolds (1997). Such approaches can reinforce difference (Reynolds, 1997), leading to the labeling of Self and Other. Furthermore, politics and human issues may appear to be ‘value free’ and ‘technical in nature’, with total reliance on such instruments (Popkewitz, 1988b, p. 91).

Earlier studies of Asian approaches were predominantly quantitative in methodological paradigm. More recent studies have been qualitative in nature. For example, Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt (1999) compiled a collection of case studies in their book Supervising
Postgraduates from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. Using the voices of the students, they explored aspects of the overseas student experience at a descriptive level. Unlike this present study, however, the book does not focus specifically on Asian students.

Much research has investigated issues arising on transnational tertiary programmes. Apart from a handful of studies which take a qualitative case study approach (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005; Pyvis & Chapman, 2004), however, ‘the literature is silent’ when it comes to hearing from participants themselves (Debowski, 2003, p. 1). The same can be said of research that describes Asian student experiences in Australia. Moreover, little research has reported student and lecturer responses to Western educational, social and theoretical discourses or their experiences of moving towards the Third Space.

This study set out to break this silence by conducting an interpretivist interactionist study of learner views (Drew, 2001) using qualitative methods. Such an approach drew on phenomenological methodology and symbolic interactionism to provide deep insights into the learning encounters of Asian postgraduate students studying at a major Australian university and their counterparts studying at a partner institution in Vietnam. It also documented insights into the teaching encounters of lecturers supervising or teaching Asian postgraduate students at both sites.

1.5.2 Teaching and learning

Findings from this study should help create momentum towards fostering increased metacultural awareness and sensitivity (Louie, 2005, p. 17) in teacher education courses in the Asia-Pacific region. It has gathered first hand, in-depth reports from participants about what it is to be Asian. It documents approaches to teaching and learning. There is extensive discussion and critique of Western social, theoretical and educational discourses, as well as historical review of Australia’s relationship with Asia. This should inform the preparation of teacher education courses and encourage formalised reflection on Self and Other. The study may be instrumental in providing what Sanderson has called ‘transformative encounters’ for educators (Sanderson, 2003, p. 145). Drawing attention to discourses which have shaped world views may facilitate movement beyond ‘sedimented representations’ of Self and Other (Kramsch, 2009, p.
246). It may facilitate understandings of the world and knowledge presented to students. The study may also encourage the incorporation of units which deal with intercultural communication, Western and Eastern social and theoretical discourses, and dominant ideologies, into courses university-wide.

Hearing from Vietnamese lecturers and Asian postgraduate students may instil greater confidence in transnational programme providers to indulge in more collaboration on course design and two-way learning. This is in line with recommendations put forward by the latest White Paper: *Australia in the Asian century* (Australian Government, 2012). The paper calls for reflection upon Australia’s relationship with Asia (see Chapter 8 for more detail).

Overall, a lot of research has documented Asian approaches to learning. Many studies have considered Asian students as a homogenous rather than heterogenous group, however. Few studies have elicited Asian students’ and lecturers’ perspectives on educational theories and literature emanating from the West. There needs to be greater understanding and consideration of these perspectives, as well as the perspectives of those involved in the education of Asian students, if any kind of meaningful dialogue is to take place. As Sered (1996) proposed, the voices of those who have until now been known as “Orientals” must be heard.

1.5.3 Summary of originality

The study is original in four main respects. Firstly, the researcher collected data from a little studied site, namely Vietnam. Secondly, the Asian postgraduates in the case study, at both sites of Vietnam and Australia, were teachers and learners simultaneously. They provided a dual insight into teaching and learning experiences. Thirdly, relatively few of the studies conducted in this area to date have been qualitative in approach. Finally, studies of this nature have rarely been interdisciplinary in scope. The present study draws from a broad range of complementary fields of knowledge including cultural studies, sociology, history and education. This syndetic or link-making approach (Pavlic, 1996) strives to augment current bodies of knowledge in the sociology of education.
1.6 Overview of the methods

The study was located at the nexus of several research paradigms. Firstly it adhered to an interpretivist theoretical paradigm. It reflected the views of Bruner (1990) and Magoon (1977) that human behaviour is purposive not mechanistic, neobehaviourist or associationist. Congruent with constructivist epistemological views, interpretivists see meaning as created, modified, negotiated and sustained in different contexts. The study was predicated on the belief that the ontology assumed by the empiricist is not sufficient to describe human behavior, and that intersubjectivity and the production of common meaning form the basis of any communication (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Secondly, the study drew on a symbolic interactionist view in the tradition of Blumer (1969) and Mead (Blumer, 1980). Blumer stated that the individual was constructed as confronting ‘a world that he [sic] must interpret in order to act instead of an environment to which he responds because of his organization’ (Blumer, 1969, p. 15). This ideological view point required the researcher to ‘enter the world of those being studied in order to see the situation as they would see it, noting what they took into account and how they interpreted what was taken into account’ (p. 56).

Thirdly, the researcher brought together symbolic interactionist thought and critical forms of interpretative inquiry to form a more postmodern interpretivist interactionist study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This approach is part of a bigger reform movement that started in the 1970s (Schwandt, 2000) and builds on the work of C. Wright Mills (1963), who believed that it is only possible to study how people represent their lived experiences to themselves and others. Between the human consciousness and material existence there are filters such as narrative texts, and the media, which prevent direct access to reality. The key tenet of interpretative interactionism is an ‘emphasis on experience and its meanings’ (Denzin, 2001, p. 2).

The researcher deployed a multiple site case study strategy focused on Asian students and their lecturers at two sites of a single, Australian university. The first site was the home campus of a university in Australia that delivers MA Applied Linguistics programmes for Asian postgraduate students. The second site, an offshore partner of the Australian university, was an educational training centre in Vietnam that offers the same
programmes for Vietnamese English language teachers. Chapters 2 and 4 provide more detail on the sites but institutions in the study were de-identified. Any information which might indicate the identity of the institutions has been withheld.

The researcher collected qualitative data from participants using semi-structured interviews and student generated documents. These were analysed using a thematic approach modeled by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, data display, drawing and verifying conclusions. Data collected from interviews and documents were brought together to provide a complex, nuanced picture of meaning making in teaching and learning. Further details about methods of data collection and analysis are provided in Chapter 4.

In summary, the study took an interpretivist interactionist perspective. It utilised qualitative data collected via semi-structured interviews, documents related to the MA Applied linguistics course, and related primary texts, to investigate how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the thesis. It outlined the conceptual and empirical literature in the area and the research aims. It presented an overview of the international and Australian background to the study. It contextualised the design and significance of the investigation and outlined the research method. The following chapters detail and expand these fields, as follows: Chapter 2 describes the background and context to the study: It reviews the international and Australian contexts for international education and transnational programmes from a historical, as well as a contemporary, stand point. Chapter 3 reviews literature relevant to the study. It summarises Western discourses, in the form of Orientalism, essentialism and Postcolonialism and explains their connections with teaching and learning. It explores notions of the Third Space. It presents and critiques Western educational discourses and critically surveys empirical research in the area. Chapter 4 describes the research methods of the present study. It presents the qualitative framework and interpretivist interactionist paradigm of the study and describes and justifies the case study approach. It also describes the profile of
participants and their sites, the methods of data collection and analysis and issues of trustworthiness. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings in relation to the Asian postgraduate students and the lecturers of Asian postgraduate students respectively. Chapter 7 discusses themes that emerged from the findings and ties them in with the literature. It presents five propositions that were generated from the themes and builds theory about how Asian postgraduate learners and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis, making recommendations based on the findings and discussion.

The study can be a vehicle for the voices of lecturers (both Asian and Australian) and Asian postgraduates to be heard. Greater understanding of the issues and discourses impacting upon the way that these students and lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning experiences may ultimately be of benefit not only for future postgraduate students and their lecturers, but for any teachers and learners involved in cross cultural contexts.
CHAPTER 2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter sets the background for the present study. It begins by focusing on the history, policies and practices of international education in an international context and defines terms such as international education, internationalisation, internationalisation of education, and globalisation. Section 2.2 then moves to the Australian context and the history, policies and practices associated with internationalisation through the different phases of aid to trade to internationalisation. This section discusses the ramifications of repositioning for Australia in terms of university student recruitment, teaching and learning, curriculum, transnational programmes, marketisation, global positioning, and branding. The remaining two sections describe the educational contexts of the two sites involved in the present study, Australia and Vietnam, in as much detail as is possible with de-identified sites.

2.1 The international context: History, policies and practices

This section begins with an examination of the various terms commonly used in the field. It then turns to a discussion of internationalisation of higher education providers in the home country and internationalisation abroad. The final focus sees a narrowing down of the discussion to global higher education internationalisation policies and initiatives.

2.1.1 International education, globalisation and internationalisation of education

Internationalisation is frequently merged with the idea of globalisation (Altbach, 2004). Knight & de Wit (1997, p. 6) described globalisation as the ‘flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, [and] ideas...across borders [affecting] each country in a different way due to the nation’s individual history, traditions, culture and priorities’. Alternatively, Altbach & Knight (2007) refer to globalisation as economic, political, and societal powers that are steering 21st century higher education in the direction of increased international connection. They also equate it with the rise of a “knowledge society” and service sector and suggest that knowledge, highly educated personnel and economic growth are interdependent (Altbach & Knight, 2007).
Globalisation has been described as unchangeable and fixed. Internationalisation, on the other hand, involves choices (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalisation is more of a ‘two-way street’ between the developed and the developing world; a ‘variety of policies and programs that universities and governments implement to respond to globalization’ (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009, p. 7).

As long ago as 1999, Knight called globalisation ‘the catalyst’, and internationalisation ‘the response’ (p. 13). She claimed that internationalisation was changing the world of higher education, and globalisation was altering the world of internationalisation (Knight, 2008). Scott (as cited in De Wit, 2010), however, was reluctant to simplify and separate the two phenomena. Moreover, Teichler (2004, pp. 22-23) noted that in the present higher education environment, globalisation and internationalisation have become interchangeable in the public higher education debate, without any acknowledgement of a shift in meaning.

There have always been many different terms used in connection with internationalisation (De Wit, 2002; Knight, 2008). It has meant different things to different people (Knight, 2004) and they have attached meanings that best suit the purpose (De Wit, 2002, p. 14). At its most neutral, semantic level, the word ‘international’ denotes ‘a relationship between and among different nations’ (Knight, 2004, p. 8). It is closely connected with the notion of “transnational”, which is usually used to mean delivered ‘across nations or across borders’ (without necessarily suggesting the notion of relationships as the word international does). Occurring in the same discourse is the term “global”. This term refers to more than just programmes across borders as it is ‘worldwide in scope and substance’, according to Knight (2004, p. 8).

At one time, international education was seen as synonymous with internationalisation of education but the term “globalisation” is now more frequently used, according to De Wit (2010). International education differs from internationalisation in several ways, however. Firstly, it is a sub-set of internationalisation and/or a specific rationale (De Wit, 2010). Terms connected with international education, such as international studies and intercultural education, relate to curriculum. Some, such as education abroad or
academic mobility, connect with movement. More recently terms such as education across borders, borderless education, global education and offshore education have emerged (De Wit, 2010).

Secondly, as De Wit (2010) has stated, the terms internationalisation and internationalisation of education are more recent terms than international education. All terms, however, have remained somewhat elusive. Even before the terms “internationalisation” or “internationalisation of education” were commonly in use, researchers grappled with the much less complex term of “international education”. Smart, as early as 1971, likened international education to the notion of ‘loving’. People practised it more often than they defined it. Like love, the meaning depends upon how it is used. International education has a dual nature, according to Smart. It is hostile and munificent; scheming and obliging; involving seclusion or exchange; and a tool of annihilation or support (Smart, 1971, p. 442). The OECD has not been as metaphorical in its interpretations of the term, referring to it simply as students who have crossed borders expressly with the intention to study (OECD, 2008b).

Thirdly, international education connects to the export of education. De Wit and Knight have referred to this as an activity approach to internationalisation (De Wit, 2010; Knight, 1999). The activity approach focuses on mobility and the development of curriculum to export overseas. It promotes student/faculty exchanges, recruitment of international students into educational institutions and the export of technical assistance. Other approaches include the rationale approach. This approach defines internationalisation according to its purposes and intended outcomes. A third approach is the competency approach. This approach prioritises the development of new skills, attitudes and knowledge in students, faculty and staff. A fourth approach is the process approach. This approach aims to integrate an international dimension into functions of the institution. Recent initiatives, such as those of The American Council on Education, have tried to re-centre the emphasis of internationalisation to activity approaches, competency approaches and process approaches (De Wit, 2010).

Knight (2008, p. 3) has emphasised the need for perpetual review of what is meant by internationalisation or internationalisation of higher education. The international
dimension of higher education ‘has steadily increased in importance, scope, and complexity’, she claims. However, many have regarded the terms as ‘slippery’ (Trevaskes et al., 2003, p. 1). Reduced government funding for education, for example, can mean that international education is moved centre stage as educational institutions rely on income from overseas students to fund their activities. Although the situation has changed in the last 10 years, internationalisation of education still carries ‘heavy ideological weight’; the public often sees tertiary education as a ‘service’ and brand universities as entrepreneurs (Trevaskes et al, 2003, p. 2).

2.1.2 Internationalisation of higher education at home and abroad

Internationalisation has always had both implicit and explicit goals. Explicit goals are what are immediately obvious. They include trade and education. Implicit goals are many. They include the introduction of new ideas, reviews of value systems, development of a global culture, mutual understanding and cooperation, provision of the knowledge necessary to live in a global context, inculcation of a positive and creative attitude toward human diversity and development of a national and political power (Smart, 1971). Trevaskes et al considered cultural pluralism and inclusivity to be potential offshoots of internationalisation (Trevaskes et al, 2003, p. 2).

Internationalisation of education can take place at home or abroad (Knight, 2004). At home, many people working in the area of internationalisation of education do not move out of their own context. Governments and universities draw up policies and promote the culture of internationalisation alongside the creation of international research projects and links. Home internationalisation involves curriculum revision and adaptation of teaching to incorporate an international and intercultural dimension. Education providers work to ensure a mixture of local and international staff, international student services and greater links with the international members of the immediate community (Back, Davis & Olsen, 1996; Knight, 2004).

Internationalisation of education abroad involves setting up student programmes in which international students travel to campuses outside their own countries in post-graduate, graduate or pathway programs. Students may be involved in transnational education in which courses are delivered by overseas providers in their own countries.
through partner institutions or international study experiences. Increasingly, the tertiary sector is involved in setting up projects or delivering customised training for commercial purposes across national borders. Internationalisation abroad has preoccupied universities recently with escalating numbers of students involved in academic global mobility.

The last figures to be reported by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics (2011), on global mobility of students, showed an increase from 2.1 million students in 2002, to 3.4 million students in 2009. At that time, the US, UK, Australia, and Canada were the four leading destination countries with sizable growth from 2002 to 2009. Canada had the largest gains. Enrolments increased by 67% (from 52,650 in 2002 to 87,798 in 2009), followed by the UK and Australia with 62% (from 227,273 to 368,968) and 43% (from 179,619 to 257,637) respectively. U.S. enrolments increased at a slower rate of 13% (from 582,996 to 660,581 students). Despite this, the US remained the leading destination country in absolute terms. In 2010, AEI (2012) reported 4.1 million foreign tertiary students outside their country of origin. Their report showed a different top five receiving countries. They observed 16.6% of all international students going to the US, 13.0% going to the UK, 6.6% going to Australia, 6.4% going to Germany and 6.3% going to France. These five countries accounted for 31.2% (1.3 million) of all international students enrolled abroad in 2010.

Around one fifth of all mobile students worldwide in 2009 were enrolled in courses provided by the US. The most recent data from the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2011 cited in Choudaha & Chang, 2012) showed an increase of 4.7% (from 690,923 to 723,277) in international student enrolments in the 2010-11 academic year compared to the previous year. Although the US continues to experience steady growth in numbers of overseas students, the share of globally mobile students has actually been dropping over the last decade due to greater competition and the opening up of new markets. Nonetheless, the US retains its leadership position due to the size of its higher education systems and institutional capacity. The proportion of international students in higher education in the US (3%), however, is much lower than percentages in higher education in the UK (15%), Australia (21%) and Canada (8%). This may be due to the
nature of immigration and visa policies in those countries. Canada has the most immigration-friendly policies and has made sizeable gains in international student numbers in recent years (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

According to figures released in January 2012 (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), cited in Clark, 2012), the number of students studying entirely overseas for a UK higher education qualification increased by more than 95,000 in 2011 to 503,795. This is 75,000 more than those enrolled at UK institutions onshore (428,225) and roughly one sixth of all students competing for UK awards. Of these students, 113,060 were enrolled in distance education, 291,745 in collaborative programmes with partner organisations, 86,670 in “other” arrangements including collaborative provision, and just 12,315 on overseas branch campuses.

In 2009/2010 the leading five countries for transnational education provision of UK qualifications were Malaysia (48,255), Singapore (42,715), Hong Kong (24,135), Pakistan (23,570), and Nigeria (16,930). China, the top provider of international students to the United Kingdom, ranked sixth for transnational education (TNE ) (14,785). India was the second biggest source of international students and ranked 16th with 7,350 TNE students (Clark, 2012).

Figures for source countries in 2010 have already been reported in Chapter 1. To reiterate, China reported the largest number of students studying abroad (17% or 698,379), followed by India (5.9% or 243,658), the Republic of Korea (3.7% or 151,900), Germany (3.0% or 124,409) and France (1.6% or 65,663). These constituted 31.2% of all students enrolled in education abroad (AEI, 2012).

The two leading countries recently, in terms of source country outbound international student mobility, are China and India. One in five of the world’s international students are from either China or India, according to World Education News and Reviews (2012). More than 700,000 Chinese and Indian tertiary-level students are enrolled in a higher education system outside their home country. In the US. alone, China and India contributed 84% of all increases in international student enrolment between 2000-01 and 2010-11 (IIE, 2011, cited in Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Student numbers from
these countries are moving in opposite directions, however. Statistics from the US. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USICE) (cited in Choudaha & Chang, 2012) showed a 28% increase in Chinese students in the US at the end of 2011. This can be compared with a noticeable decline in Indian numbers (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Asian students from countries which belong to the OECD or UNESCO comprised the largest group of international tertiary students in 2009 (OECD, 2009). Percentages are outlined in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country which reports to the OECD (members plus non-members)</th>
<th>Tertiary students abroad as % of all students in country of origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China (not including Hong Kong which is 1.3%)</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Percentage of students in the Asian student population studying abroad by country of origin (OECD, 2009)

Such large numbers of students involved in education across borders necessitates global attention to policy, practices and initiatives designed to regulate quality control and transparency. These policies and initiatives are outlined in the next sub-section.

2.1.3 Internationalisation of higher education: Policies and initiatives

As outlined in Chapter 1, the OECD reported 3.7 million students enrolled in education outside of their countries in 2009 (OECD, 2011). The AEI reported 4.1 million in 2010 (AEI, 2012). The increasing demand for education across borders has given rise to many initiatives including the introduction of tools and instruments for the measurement of internationalisation. The OECD was one of the first to commission an Internationalisation Quality Review Process. They based the review on a book of guidelines written by Knight and De Wit (1997). Benchmarking exercises since then have included the European Benchmarking Initiative in Higher Education (De Wit, 2005; European Centre for Strategic Management (ESMU), 2010), a list of indicators developed by the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE) (Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007) and the Project for Measuring and Profiling Internationalisation (IMPI) (Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), 2012).
The most significant of all initiatives in Europe was The Bologna Process (Reinalda & Kulesza, 2005). Developed in 1999 as the Bologna Declaration, 29 European governments committed to making higher education reforms and a unified European higher education sector. Foremost was the idea of making university qualifications from the various European countries more comparable. They were to achieve this in several ways. One way was the introduction of the Three Cycle degree structure and the use of study credits that could be accumulated by students as they moved between European institutions and countries. Another way was the implementation of a joint approach to quality assurance of European higher education, both within institutions and externally, and the development of the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) in 2003 (Keeling, 2006).

An initiative to develop guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education was jointly taken up by the OECD and UNESCO. The process recognised that regulation had hitherto been focused exclusively on domestic delivery by domestic institutions. The OECD-UNESCO guidelines proposed that external quality assurance agencies include foreign and for-profit institutions/providers, as well as non-traditional modes of educational delivery, in their provision of services. This had implications for national legislation and administrative procedures (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2005).

Since 1999, ministers responsible for higher education in Europe have met at least every two years to measure progress and set priorities for the future. Meetings have been held in: Prague (2001); Berlin (2003); London (2007); Belgium (2009); Vienna and Budapest (2010); and Bucharest (2012). A key aim was the achievement of an ‘integrated European higher education area’ by 2010. The process now involves 46 European countries (AEI, 2011).

Outside Europe, one of the earliest initiatives was taken by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) with its ACU University Management Benchmarking programme (1998) (ACU, 2006). This was followed by the American Council on Education’s user guide known as ‘Internationalizing the Campus’ (ACE, 2003), projects and reports by the Association of International Educators (NAFSA)
(2003), the Forum on Education Abroad (Bolen, 2007) and discussions on the internationalisation of Japanese universities (Furushiro, 2006). There have also been codes of practice developed worldwide. These include: The Code of Practice for Educational Institutions and Overseas Students (UK Council for Overseas Student Affairs (UKCOSA)); the Code of Ethical Practice in International Education (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 1996); Principles for Transnational Education (Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE), 1997); and the Code of Ethical Practice in the Provision of Education to International Students (Australian Universities of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC), 1998, 2002). The latter is discussed in more detail in sub-section 2.4.1.

Global higher education is now positioned in, what Marginson (2006, p. 1) has called, ‘an open information environment’. Borders are regularly crossed and identities frequently created through cross-cultural encounters. The status, reputation or, what was first referred to as, ‘positional good’ (Hirsch, 1976) of the university is more likely to attract international students than the university’s ability to provide environments for identity formation and cross-cultural experiences. Status is more important than teaching or programme quality, according to many researchers (James, Baldwin & McInnes, 1999; Marginson, 2006; Moogan, Baron & Harris, 1999). Below the top tier, institutional “brand” is less of a marketing tool than national “brand” (Marginson, 2006).

Flows of students can be two-way or uni-directional. The US influences global trends but is little influenced by global trends itself. Universities in developing countries experience a “brain drain” of employees and ideas, colonisation by foreign research agendas and a high visibility of foreign institutions (Marginson, 2006, p. 2). In the last ten years, however, according to Marginson, those concerned with internationalisation at home have seen mobility become only one of many aspects of internationalisation. More focus has been placed on the internationalisation of curriculum and teaching and learning processes. Recent initiatives, taken by bodies such as the American Council on Education, have attempted to close the gap between internationalisation and multicultural education (De Wit, 2010). In addition, there have been increasingly diverse providers focusing on teaching/training; media (Pearson, UK; Thomas, Canada);
multinational operations (Apollo, USA; Informatics, Singapore; Slyvan, USA; Aptech, India); corporate activities in universities; and networking (Knight, 2004). Moreover, internationalisation is operating at a national sector level involving different government organisations such as departments of education, foreign affairs, science and technology, culture, employment and immigration or non-government organisations (NGOs).

2.2 The Australian context: History, policies and practices

There are four identifiable dimensions to the internationalisation of higher education in Australia. Firstly, there is overseas student recruitment. This has many accompanying policies and services. Some refer to it as international education or an activity approach to internationalisation (De Wit, 2010; Knight, 1999). Secondly, there is internationalisation of educational outcomes. This involves internationalising the student body via recruitment of overseas students, internationalising the curriculum (and teaching and learning) at the home university, and internationalising students’ educational experiences through overseas exchanges (Liddicoat, 2003). Thirdly, there is transnational education (TNE) or international education offered outside the home country by the home university. Fourthly, there is marketing, global positioning and branding. The following sections examine each of these dimensions in terms of history and policy.

2.2.1 Overseas student recruitment

Australia’s involvement in international education can be divided into three main stages: aid, trade and internationalisation (The Australian International Education Foundation (AIEF), 1997, p.12). These stages reflect the amount of involvement that the Australian government has had in the development of the sector.

2.2.1.1. International education as aid

Australian universities have always involved themselves in international developments (Rizvi, 2004). Liddicoat (2003, p. 14) has stated that, ‘Before the Second World War there was essentially no concept of internationalisation underlying Australian university recruitment. Instead the international dimension was primarily an outward flow of
higher degree students to Europe and North America’. The first significant glimpses of internationalisation came out of changes to foreign policy in the developed world after World War II. These changes were a reaction to the end of colonialism, the rise of more independent developing nations, the growth in world trade and a need for more improved international aid relations to help the development of emergent nations socially and economically. Rizvi gives a contrasting view. He suggests that as long ago as the 19th century, Australian universities served the needs of the colonisers arriving from Britain and advanced the interests of the British Empire.

Most in the field see the beginning of international education as the launch of the Colombo Plan in July, 1951. They do not all agree on the rationale for the plan, however. The *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, in an article called “Colombo Plan’ (1955), described the plan in fairly neutral tones as ‘designed to give encouragement and support to countries of South and Southeast Asia’. The article explained how the Colombo Plan helped to ‘raise living standards’ (‘Colombo Plan,’ 1955). The authors also admit that, despite ‘improved agricultural and industrial production’, ‘self-support [was] still unattainable’. More recent historical commentators (Adeleke, 2008; Jupp, 1995; Oakman, 2004) characterise the main impetus for the plan as fear of the rise of communism in the region.

American policy makers especially feared the rise of a communist Asia (Adeleke, 2008). The US needed to form a bulwark against Soviet imperialism and communism by forming a union between Asian nations, Australia and New Zealand (Oakman, 2004). The Colombo Plan was this bulwark (Oakman, 2004). Low living standards were known to be fertile ground for the spread of communism. They incited communist agitators. As the *Eastern World* journal declared in 1953, ‘Hungry people are dangerous people’ (Australia and SE Asia, 1953, p. 22). Publications of the time affirmed the importance of the Colombo Plan as follows:

Continued economic support, whether through the Colombo Plan or through a new Asian “Marshall Plan” is now believed to be the best assurance against the spread of communism in Asia… In London, *The Times* has put it this way: “Only the provision and organization of adequate assistance by the West will give any assurance that the Asian peoples will not gradually succumb to the blandishments of communism. The most important single agency
The Colombo Plan was seen as a turning point in Australian history and a broadening of the collective mind. As Oakman (2004, p. 1) puts it, prior to this and for most of their history, Australians had viewed themselves as a ‘beleaguered white outpost of the British Empire, perched precariously between the hordes of Asia and the edge of the world’. What was the ‘Far East’ for Britain (the ‘far’ making it a peripheral consideration in terms threats to the nation) was the ‘Near North’ for Australia (Oakman, 2004, p. 1). As a result, Australia’s response to Asia, in light of the events of World War II, communism in the region and decolonisation, was a very different one from that of Europe.

Preceding the formation of the Colombo Plan, reports recommended that political and economic discussions take place between Asia and its non-communist neighbours (all except Korea and what was then Formosa and is now Taiwan). In particular, US policy makers sought to draw India, Australia and New Zealand, ‘into more direct responsibility for the welfare and stability of the area as a whole’ (Oakman, 2004, p. 27). Economic integration of Japan into the plan was promoted as a strategy for building greater strength against the rise of the People’s Republic of China (a move not greeted warmly by countries which had been enemies of Japan during the war). Concurrently, policy makers in the United Kingdom were also poised to form an aid agreement between Australia, New Zealand and Asian countries in the region. After much negotiation between the United States and the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth finally took over the main role in coordinating policies and the first meeting of the Colombo Plan committee was held in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). The new name was an attempt to highlight the shift in perceptions of the location of the centre of world affairs. For the first time, representatives from the newly formed Pakistan, India and Ceylon were invited to speak and give their views on issues in the region (Oakman, 2004, p. 33).

Australia played a key role in the inception of the Colombo Plan. It was, however, a Commonwealth initiative. It was formed with bi-partisan support. This was not easily
achieved in post war Australia, according to Oakman (2004). He points out that the Colombo Plan brought together the ‘humanitarian internationalist’ and the modernist economic theorist (Oakman, 2003, p. 3). Both were intent on closing the gap between the developed and developing world. There was also ‘the Australian nationalist’ who was driven by a conviction, born out of fear, that education and friendship were the key to preventing invasions from those residing near to their borders. This was accompanied by the realization, by many Australians, that viewing their Asian neighbours with ‘wonder, fear and ignorance’ was no longer viable. Perceived threats from Asia were best dealt with by Australia rethinking its role in the region (Oakman, 2004, p. 1).

Financial and technical help to the Asian region was a key component of the Asian policy of Australian Prime Minister Menzies. Menzies himself has been accused of having a very narrow view of Australian/Asian relationships. He was fairly uninvolved in decisions about major landmarks in foreign and defence policy (Bongiorno, 2005). According to Goldsworthy, a historian in the field (2002), Menzies was never in agreement with Australia’s relations with India and was less than magnanimous towards the prime minister of the time, Jawaharlal Nehru. Indian elites saw Menzies as a colonialist. Menzies’ lack of interest is confirmed by many in his cabinet such as Foreign Minister, Richard Casey. Casey argued for wider engagement with India and Asia. He was joined in this predilection by Walter Crocker, his High Commissioner in India in the 1950s, contemporary academics and historians such as Alan Watt and Gordon Greenwood. Percy Spender, a minister in the Menzies government, was eventually credited with being the ‘architect’ of Australia’s ‘engagement’ with Asia and the Colombo Plan. Australian international relations scholars, like John Burton, and the Australian media, also criticised Australia’s absence from the Asian-African Bandung Conference in 1955 (Weigold, 2010). Such disconnection contrasted with Australian Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin’s, greater affinity with Asia, especially India (Bongiorno, 2005).

The Colombo Plan touched on many aspects of Australia’s foreign policy. These included strategic planning, diplomatic relations, cultural exchange and economic agreements. Initially, projects supported agricultural and food production. For example, Pakistani farmers were supplied with tractors and live sheep (Oakman, 2004, p. 156). A
large proportion of aid money was spent on chemical imports such as fertilisers and pesticides. Irrigation systems for crops were funded and chemical plants for the production of ammonium sulfate and sulfuric acid were set up in places like Pakistan (‘Colombo Plan’, 1955). The United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, The United States and Japan all assisted with aid money. The bulk of the capital assistance came from the United States, and the United Kingdom. Most of the technical assistance also came from the United States, with Australia and the United Kingdom contributing equally in second place.

As the plan matured, however, the Colombo Plan allocated increasing attention to the role of education in aid. In 1953, the first Indonesian Colombo Plan scholars arrived in Sydney. This became the most noticed aspect of Australia’s foreign policy and international aid efforts, despite numbers of privately funded students being greater. The Plan became well known in the public domain for its scholarship scheme, an image that remains until this day (Oakman, 2004). The then Liberal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, said about the Colombo Plan:

> The Colombo Plan occupies a prominent place in the history of Australia’s relations with Asia. It is best remembered here for sponsoring thousands of Asian students to study or train in Australia’s tertiary institutions. It is difficult to imagine today that most Australians up until the 1950s rarely encountered people from Asia nations and near neighbours in their daily lives in Australia….But the Colombo Plan helped to change this state of affairs by introducing students from many parts of the region into our society (Downer, 2005).

The Colombo Plan laid the foundations for a powerful Asian elite who promoted Australia’s reputation as an educational destination to a new generation of full fee paying Asian students (Rizvi, 2004, p. 35). The ‘new generation’ formed the basis for the move towards education as trade.

### 2.2.1.2. International education as trade

In the 1960s and 70s, Australian universities began to host increasing numbers of sponsored and private overseas students. The privately funded students entered universities on the same fee structure and conditions as local students and met the same entry requirements. The quantum of overseas students was controlled by various
immigration policies. These were reviewed and amended on a regular basis. In 1979, the Australian Government proposed a change to previous policies and requirements. It mandated a ‘visa fee’ for overseas students. This was later to be called the Overseas Student Charge (OSC). It represented roughly 10% of the notional full price of an Australian university place. This fee increased steadily from 1982 until it achieved a peak of 55% of the cost of a university place in 1988. Overseas students paid half of the full cost of a place in an Australian university and, therefore, were considered to be part of Australia’s aid programme (Back, Davis and Olsen, 1996).

Two reports in 1984 instigated the next policy change. The first report was compiled by a committee led by Sir Gordon Jackson, an Australian businessman who had been appointed a Knight of the Order of Australia in 1983 for service to industry and to the community. His report was commissioned to review the Australian Overseas Aid Programme. He recommended several courses of action (Jackson, 1984): the continuation of aid with a goal of up to 7% of national income set aside as aid money; the systematic implementation and monitoring of aid projects; more feedback during evaluation of projects to be incorporated into future planning and delivery; and the tying of aid, for countries like Papua/ New Guinea, to the budget, with a gradual reduction to commence in 1986 by 5% per year. Such a reduction would encourage more self-reliance in developing countries. The review also recommended The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank take a greater leadership role in the analysis of aid provision and delivery. This included: continued support for women in the developing world; a focus on curriculum development; teacher training in developing countries; more technical assistance; and more related research (Morris, 2010). The report argued that support for increasing numbers of international students in Australia would have ‘high returns in terms of future relations with developing countries’ (Jackson, 1984, p. 10). Furthermore, implementing barriers to prevent these students from coming to Australia would damage Australia’s foreign relations, cultural contacts and export earnings (Jackson, 1984).

The Jackson Report promoted education as an export industry. It argued that education should be taken out of an aid setting (Liddicoat, 2003). This market-based approach was vigorous in its proposal to introduce fees for overseas students (Chesterman, 2009). It
aimed to open the doors for unlimited numbers of international students to enrol in Australian universities outside the existing quota, providing they met the entry requirements (Williams, 1989).

The second report (Goldring, 1984a) took a different view. The Committee of Review of Private Overseas Student Policy, chaired by Jack Goldring, Dean and Professor of Macquarie University Law School from 1981 to 1987, rejected the market-based approach to international education advocated by Jackson. It suggested, instead, a more staggered and moderate introduction of fees for overseas students. The report also suggested that overseas students be supported by public scholarships. Goldring’s vision was one of Australia as an education centre. It was tempered by apprehension about Australia’s image as politically strident. He warned that Australia’s interests could be affected by its overseas student policies. The wording of these policies was ‘unduly inward-looking and no longer appropriate’ (Goldring, 1984a, p. 4). The committee recommended three policy positions: that the Australian government bear more of the financial burden of the developing world and contribute socially and economically to countries in the Asia-Pacific region; that efforts to ensure greater cross cultural exchange and quality of Australian education and training be increased; and that greater international understanding of, and communication with, Australia be encouraged. Most significant was the recommendation that the overseas student programme be part of Australian education policy (Goldring, 1984a, pp. 4-5).

The Australian government supported the Jackson recommendations. In 1985, a new Overseas Student Policy was initiated. It stated that unlimited numbers of overseas students, not included in quota for subsidised students, could be enrolled in tertiary institutions as long as they met the receiving institution’s entry requirements and paid the full cost of their course. The Policy on the Export of Education Services was introduced shortly afterwards. This made it easier to recruit full fee paying students from overseas. Conditions were attached to the policies. No full fee paying student was able to take the place of an Australian student (Back, Davis & Olsen, 1996).

The shift from aid to trade had begun. Embedded subsidies for private overseas students from wealthy backgrounds replaced targeted scholarships in a full fee paying context
(Back, Davis & Olsen, 1996). The shift took place in a number of stages (Harman, 2004). It was the Hawke Labor Government’s market practices that positioned Australian higher education as ‘an export industry’, however. Universities were encouraged to be competitive for students and the fees that accompanied them (Rizvi, 2004). There was a shift in terminology from “international education” to “internationalisation”.

### 2.2.1.3 International education as part of internationalisation

In 1988, John Dawkins, then Minister for Employment, Education and Training in the Labor government, institutionalised the Enterprise University. He proposed rigorous policy reforms for university education in his Green Paper entitled *Higher education: A policy discussion paper* (1987). He confirmed them in his White Paper, otherwise known as *Higher education: a policy statement* (1988). The reforms addressed the efficiency and improved international competitiveness of Australian universities. They addressed what was seen as “the brain drain” or the loss of those with technical skills and knowledge in the field from Australia to other countries. Introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) for local Australian students was proposed. Universities were also authorised to charge international students ‘full cost recovery tuition fees’ (Rizvi, 2004, p. 35). While the former was contested by universities, the latter was welcomed as support for entrepreneurialism. Another Dawkins initiative transformed Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) into universities and encouraged mergers between universities and CAEs. Under the new reforms, universities were required to be more transparent. They had to have detailed plans, profiles and statistics.

International education became more market focused as a result of the Dawkins reforms. A further change to government policy in 1989 also altered intake of subsidised students from 1990 onwards (Liddicoat, 2003). The influx of full fee paying students from overseas, most of whom spoke English as a second or foreign language, raised concerns about Australian standards in education and levels of support. As a result, the Australian government introduced the Commonwealth’s Education Services for Overseas Students (Registration of Providers and Financial Regulation) Act 1991, otherwise known as the ESOS Act. This was followed by the Code of Practice in the

Continued growth in international student numbers in the 1990s led to government awareness that the objectives of international education needed to be broadened. At the same time there was a need for regulations and policy to be tightened. The Australian government decided to implement more safeguards for students in terms of financial security especially in the private education sector. They developed The Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 to ensure the protection of overseas students in the event of an institution going bankrupt or students becoming the victims of acts of fraud. The government of the time sought to strengthen and monitor state and federal accreditation processes. The Act also gave the Federal government the power to proceed unilaterally in cases of fraud where the state government was negligent. Alongside the reviewed ESOS Act, a National Code of Practice for registration authorities and providers was established to improve accountability and to monitor student completion times. The ESOS Act required all providers of education and training for international students studying in Australia on student visas to register on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for International Students (CRICOS). They had to comply with quality assurance standards, meet tuition and financial assurance requisites, observe the obligations of registered providers, and report students who flaunted student visa conditions (Barrett, 2008).

The construction of the student as “customer” (both domestic and international) was underway. At the same time closer links were formed between immigration policy and international education. With that came issues of language proficiency and international graduate employability. These were foregrounded in much of the media coverage of the topic (Rodan, 2009). In 2006, Director of Monash University’s Centre of Population and Urban Research, Bob Birrell, examined the impact of the Government’s decision to allow international graduates to seek permanent residency without returning home and reapplying for immigration after course completion (Birrell Report, 2006). This ruling had originally targeted reduction of skills shortages in the Australian labour market, especially information technology and accounting. Birrell castigated the exercise as
misguided. He felt it produced no tangible increases in accounting graduates and few improvements in employment of international graduates. Furthermore, he highlighted the inadequacy of language skills when high quality communication was needed. He linked poor language skills with international graduate unemployability (Birrell, 2006; Birrell & Healy, 2008a).

The Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales, 2008) called for more focus on the quality of experience for international students, both on campus and off. It solicited greater help for student employment seekers such as study-related work opportunities and placements, equity of pay and conditions and permission for students with good academic performance to exceed the twenty hours per week of work allowed. The report also suggested: diversifying source markets and types of courses in which international students enrol; attracting more Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students with scholarships; coordinating across government policies of regulation and quality assurance; facilitating skilled migration; and greater focus on collaboration in international research (Bradley et al, 2008).

In 2009, Julia Gillard, the Labor Government’s then Minister for Education and Deputy Prime Minister, commissioned another report. This report was in response to notification from Bruce Baird, a former member of parliament who had worked in business, tourism and welfare since his retirement, that there was, ‘an urgent need to develop, implement and enforce relevant and robust solutions to issues of international student safety, accommodation, employment, transport and health’ (Baird cited by Bishop, 2011, p. 2). Gillard requested Baird to review The Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000. The focus was to be on the need to enhance the ESOS legislative framework. Four key areas were outlined in the terms of reference: student support; quality of Australian education; regulation; and sustainability of the international education sector (Australian Government, 2010). These terms of reference allowed: examination of the reputation of Australia’s education providers; their attention to regulation and reporting; ethics; dissemination of information to students; quality control; student services; and, in particular, student safety. The first phase of the government’s response was legislation demanding the re-registration of all education providers on, what was called, a CRICOS code. This had to be done once they had
demonstrated both their intention to provide education, and their capacity to deliver it to the required standard. At the same time there was a Legislation Amendment Bill which:

- made more rigorous the registration requirements of education providers delivering education services to overseas students and had a specific focus on business sustainability;
- presented a consistent risk management approach to the regulation of international education;
- put parameters on the period of registration allowed by a provider and conditions on a provider’s registration according to the perceived risk;
- broadened the range of non-compliant behaviour that could receive financial penalties;
- reported regularly on all regulatory activities and published targets;
- gave Commonwealth Ombudsman a greater role in facilitating student access to an independent expert complaints-handling mechanism.

(AEI, 2010)

Phase two of the response to the Baird Review commenced on 7th December 2010 with the release of the discussion paper, Reforming ESOS: Consultations to build a stronger, simpler, smarter framework for international education in Australia. The paper sought feedback on:

- the approach to risk assessment, management, and monitoring of education providers to overseas students;
- the strengthening of the tuition protection framework;
- the recommendations for making ESOS stronger, simpler and smarter;
- the strengthening of the National Code;
- the effects of their regulation and recommendations.

(AEI, 2010)

The Australian government used submissions on this, together with data gained from the International Student Survey (ISS) 2010 (AEI, 2010), to inform the next phase of their response to the review outlined in the International Students Strategy for Australia
The stead growth in the numbers of international students coming to Australia, and greater involvement by Australian educational institutions in international engagement, led to more awareness of international education by practitioners. The mere presence of international students on campus, however, was found to be insufficient to promote true internationalisation. As recently as 2002, one Australian university stated on its website, ‘The presence of international students on campus enhances the University’s cultural life and adds depth to the academic experience’. Despite some universities managing to provide curricula with a more international character (OECD_CERI, 1994, p. 20), the presence of international students on campus and the internationalised curricula often remained separate. International and local students were not working together across cultural groups in the university community (Volet & Ang, 1998). It appeared that students perceived more drawbacks in terms of energy and commitment than benefits.
The universities needed to take more of an active role in supporting language support, study skills groups and cultural orientation for overseas students.

At the classroom or lecture theatre level, international education spanned three main areas: the students themselves; the curriculum; and chances for intercultural exchange. In 1995, The International Development Program of Australian Universities and Colleges Ltd (IDP) conducted an analysis of all Australian university curriculum internationalisation initiatives. In 1996, Van der Wende’s typology of internationalisation for the OECD was turned into a check list. It stated that universities needed to develop curricula which:

- prepared students for defined international professions;
- led to internationally recognised professional qualifications;
- led to joint or double degrees;
- offered compulsory parts of the course at universities abroad, staffed by local lecturers;
- contained an international subject;
- encouraged interdisciplinary programs covering more than one country;
- took an internationally comparative approach;
- included foreign languages or linguistics and took up cross-linguistic and communication issues while providing training in inter-cultural skills; and
- catered for foreign students.

(Van der Wende, 1996)

In the same year, Luong, Crockett, Lundberg and Scarino (1996) argued for an international curriculum which valued empathy as well as intellectual curiosity and global knowledge. Aulakh, Brady, Dunwoodie, Perry, Roff and Stewart (1997, p. 15) went on to reinforce Van der Wende’s proposals, stating that:

Internationalisation includes teachers and students learning from each other, meeting the needs of overseas students, viewing our professional practice from diverse perspectives, using culturally inclusive teaching practices, accessing teaching and learning resources which reflect diversity and offering high quality courses which are internationally relevant. Internationalisation is not merely a matter of recruiting international students, though the
presence of international students is an enormous resource for the university. The aim of internationalisation is to produce graduates capable of solving problems in a variety of locations with cultural and environmental sensitivity (Aulakh et al, 1997, p. 15).

Some years later, researchers (Liddicoat, 2003; Wright & Lander, 2003) continued to identify a gap between the rhetoric, the university strategic plan talk and the actuality. Wright and Lander (2003, p. 250) claimed, ‘universities are deluding themselves if they believe that the presence of international students on campus contributes to the internationalisation of higher education’. Liddicoat (2003) argued that the precise meaning of “international” still remained unclear. Universities focused on the outcome rather than the process involved in education, he claimed. Thus he proposed two aspects of internationalisation of the curricula: ‘culture-general’ components and ‘culture-specific’ components. Programme designers of the former needed to arrive at a definition and understanding of culture itself; an awareness of the social construction of meaning and the variability in that construction; the role of identity; and the nature of intercultural communication (Liddicoat, 2003). Those designing intercultural communication courses needed to focus on practices, values, beliefs, artifacts and institutions. Culture-specific components were closely tied to knowledge of language. This could only be achieved by encounters with another culture, not as the transfer of factual knowledge (Liddicoat, 2002b). They entailed an acknowledgment of the dynamic nature of culture and transformation of Self.

Knight (2004) responded to the internationalisation of education in universities. She evaluated approaches to internationalisation of higher education at both the national or sector level and institutional level. At a national level, she observed approaches focused on programmes, rationales and policy. These could be strategic or simply ad hoc. Programmes translated into international activities such as research, linkages and mobility. Rationales considered the importance of internationalisation. They included human resources development, strategic alliances, nation building and socio-cultural development. Focus on policy saw institutions examining educational or foreign affairs policy. At an institutional level, approaches were focused on rationale as well as activity. These included study abroad, curriculum development, projects and networking. Other approaches focused on outcomes or competencies achievable through
international agreements, increased institutional profiles and strategies for integration of an international dimension into teaching and learning. As already mentioned in section 2.1.2, these responses could be home-based, with internationalisation used to create a climate of intercultural exchange, or abroad-based, with the cross-border delivery of university courses (Knight, 2004).

Australian universities needed to re-examine what internationalisation meant for the Australian tertiary sector and develop strategies to enable transition from ‘ad hoc’ to systematic responses (Knight, 2004). A year later, DeVita (2005) despaired of any progress on the internationalisation front as it was envisaged by Aulakh et al (1997) or Knight (2004) stating:

> It is becoming increasingly clear that, despite paying lip service to various aspects of internationalisation, many higher education institutions, keen to increase recruitment of international students and expand financial bases, are failing to make the most of the opportunities that student diversity provides: promoting genuine internationalisation and fostering intercultural learning (De Vita, 2005, p. 75).

He characterised student outcomes of curriculum internationalisation as:

> to be knowledgeable about and open to views that differ from their own… to interpret local problems within a wider and more global framework and to judge the importance of global phenomena for their own lives and work.

From these student outcomes curriculum values were deduced:

> Internationalisation of the curriculum therefore incorporates a range of values, including openness, tolerance and culturally inclusive behavior, which are necessary to ensure that cultural differences are heard and explored (Webb, 2005, p. 110).

Webb’s conclusions, from a synthesis of his strategies for internationalisation, were that universities should develop:

- a clear written conceptualisation and rationale for internationalisation;
- a clear definition of internationalisation and internationalisation of the curriculum;
• identification of internationalisation of the curriculum in university plans i.e. strategic plans;
• a process involving internationalisation to be addressed for each new unit or subject;
• ways of monitoring for internationalisation by students and peers;
• identifying internationalisation in graduate attributes;
• a staff profile that reflects diversity;
• an institutional plan for ensuring diversity of the student cohort;
• ways of incorporating internationalisation into performance appraisal of teaching staff;
• ways of recognising achievements in the internationalisation of the curriculum;
• ways of identifying achievements in internationalisation of curriculum in recruitment and induction processes;
• organisational and staff development plans which reflect internationalisation i.e. workshops; and
• dissemination of good practice examples in terms of internationalisation.

(Webb, 2005)

This blueprint addressed implementation of internationalisation at a micro level in educational institutions wishing to operate effectively in a globalised world.

2.2.3 Transnational educational programmes (TNE)

Transnational education (TNE) has been defined as:

Any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country (the host country) to that in which the institution providing the education is based (the home country). This situation requires that national boundaries be crossed by information about the education, and by staff and/or educational materials (whether the information and the materials travel by mail, computer network, radio or television broadcast or other means) (GATE, 1997, p. 1).

Adams (1998) described the different types of transnational programmes as: twinning; distance learning; franchised; moderated; offshore campuses; joint award programmes and delivery in cyberspace. In twinning arrangements, a university or college offers a
qualification with its “twin”, usually a private provider, a professional or industry association, university or college in the host country. The host is responsible for the local administration, marketing, recruitment, facilities, resources and employment of local teaching staff. The home university is responsible for providing the award, materials, fly in /fly out teachers, course and assessment quality control. All of the latter remain the intellectual property of the home institution. Courses can be split between the host country and the home country or offered completely in the host country. The percentages of teaching done by home teachers or host teachers can vary. Twinning programmes are usually offered in narrow discipline areas with a demand in the host country.

Cunningham et al have defined distance learning as ‘the provision of programs of study which provide both content and support services to students who rarely, if ever, attend face-to-face teaching’ (Cunningham, Tapsall, Ryan, Stedman, Bagdon & Flew, 1998, p. 23). Within this, there are varying levels of facilitation, from very little or no facilitation, to facilitation where local support is provided. The home institution usually charges a fee for materials, centrally controlled assessments, enrolments and staff provided for any seminars or activities (Cunningham et al, 1998, p. 23).

According to Adams (1998), franchised programmes are more like twinning programmes but usually involve home institution control over the quality of the programme. Franchised programmes are run by a management team based in the home institution and avoid the potential problems of operating in a number of locations at one time.

Moderated programmes recognise the learning of students offshore. Moderation is conducted by the home institution. This can include annual checking of standards and onsite audits as well as moderation of a percentage of assessments. Sometimes offshore programmes run by the offshore organisation are designed by the home institution. This gives students automatic entry into home university units and programmes needed for completion.
Offshore campuses usually involve direct investment and part ownership of the host campus by the home campus. This arrangement can facilitate the funding of research, student accommodation and community service by the home institution. An “offshore” programme is slightly different. It is usually a programme that the home university is conducting in a foreign (host) country away from the home country campus. The implication is of a one way relationship between home and host with the home country university exerting most of the control over educational and related activities.

Joint award programmes involve home and host jointly delivering aspects of a single degree, diploma or jointly badged programme. There is a more equal and complementary academic relationship between home and host.

Delivery of programmes in cyberspace involves reliance on a broadband network or interactive multimedia applications and services. For example, universities, colleges or governments offer programmes or programme support through organisations such as Informatics Holdings.

Universities, in their efforts to have a profile in the international market, have increasingly searched for ways to partner across borders or transnationally (Amey, 2010). AEI Figures for 2011 show that there were 332,577 international students studying in Australian institutions of higher education in 2011. Of these 80,458 were enrolled offshore in campuses outside of Australia. This represented 24.2% of the total number of international students (AEI, 2012). The top five countries for offshore activity in higher education in 2011 were Singapore, China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Hong Kong. Onshore enrolments comprised China, Malaysia, India, Vietnam and Hong Kong. Students were mostly enrolled in Bachelor’s degrees (70%) or coursework Master’s degrees (20%). Fields of study included management and commerce (57%), information technology (8%), society and culture (7%), engineering and related technologies (7%) and studies in health (6%). Offshore students had more varied patterns of attendance in 2011 with 71% studying full-time and 29% studying part-time. The majority of onshore students studied full-time in 2011 (89%). Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales had the highest numbers of offshore international higher
education students. Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales reported the highest numbers of onshore international students (AEI, 2012).

TNE programmes have also increased in number. The move towards greater reliance on these programmes is not entirely profit driven. Overseas or cross-border education incurs personal and financial costs to international students. Personal costs include culture shock and lack of adequate linguistic capacity. Transnational models of education can overcome these factors (McKeith, 2009). Financial costs involved in leaving home, family and employment (especially for mature-aged students), can be reduced in transnational educational modes.

Early transnational education consisted mostly of twinning programmes. More recent trends favour: distance education (collaboratively delivered or even collaboratively developed); joint award programmes; moderated programmes; and offshore campuses (Rizvi, 2004). Instructing international students in transnational mode requires some modification of approach. Offshore students are not part of the onshore community or intellectual life. Their only exposure to the second culture (and language) may be limited to contact with fly-in/ fly-out lecturers if they are provided with any face to face contact at all. The role of interculturality and diversity, standardisation and adaptation become opaque in such situations. University campuses face a tension between “non-portable programmes” that meet the requirements of a particular country and its single dominant culture (whether that be the country of origin of the course or the destination country), and the requirements of a globalised world in which programmes need to be offered to ‘multiple culture cohorts’ (Morris, 2003, p. 65). Effective strategies for internationalising university programmes may need to be ‘polycentric and flexible’, according to Morris (2003, p. 65). They may even need to be ‘two track’ with one track serving international students from specific countries and the other focusing on ‘planetary portable education’ (Morris, 2003, p. 65).

An example of an offshore transnational secondary school programme which fits the latter criteria is one set up by The Presbyterian Ladies Colleges (PLC), in Hanoi, Vietnam. It is designed to provide secondary education for Vietnamese students (McKeith, 2009). The offshore provider was responsible for the facilities, the land, the
students, the Vietnamese curriculum and the Vietnamese teachers. PLC provided an English language, subject based curriculum and teachers from Australia to teach that curriculum "using program delivery techniques common to an Australian context and supported and controlled by PLC’ as well as access to professional development in ‘contemporary teaching methodologies and technologies’ ((McKeith, 2009, pp. 49-50). This model is common but the truly international nature of such a programme is debatable.

Overall, the discourse of internationalisation, in terms of teaching, learning and the curriculum, was not (and still is not) standard across all universities. Within the discourse, some ideas and practices have been more dominant than others, namely market activities and related practices. Governments have focused much more on policy regulating student services than on the development of teaching standards or international curriculum to date. In the state education sector, as recently as 2008, the Bradley Review stated that:

Our educational institutions and, in particular, our universities have built Australia’s third-largest export industry – in education services – in the last two decades. A quarter of our higher education students are from other countries and they make an enormous contribution to our economy, our relationships with the region and our demand for graduates. However, their concentration in a relatively narrow range of subject fields, in levels of study and by country of origin poses significant challenges both to institutions and to the long-term viability of the industry. As well, we are not making the most of all the opportunities they present to be ambassadors for Australia and to be part of the solution to some of our more intractable problems in renewal of the academic and research workforce (Bradley et al., 2008).

Despite the unsystematic responses to internationalization, and the somewhat unsystematic incorporation of internationalisation into curriculum and pedagogy, it is true that most universities have found it necessary to develop at least rudimentary policies on aspects of internationalisation. These have mostly focused on catering for cultural diversity (Rizvi, 2004). Some have developed courses specifically tailored to international students. Campuses have witnessed new demographics leading to new policies which address the needs of students from overseas (corporate agendas usually
drive these moves) (Rizvi, 2004). This brings us to the next consideration when looking at internationalisation: marketisation of international education.

2.2.4 Marketisation, global positioning and branding

Marketing of educational courses globally, whether they be English language courses offered in private institutions or diplomas and degrees offered in tertiary settings, has been taken for granted since the inception of full fee paying education for overseas students. In 2004, Rizvi stated:

A new administrative technology of global marketing of education has emerged…It involves the creation of highly specialised structures and functions responsible for global operations, for example, well developed advertising and marketing programs conducted not only through the media but also through educational expos and market-oriented conferences at which education is sold. Extensive use is made of recruitment agents, who are often the first point of contact between the potential student and the university (Rizvi, 2004, p. 36).

Prior to that, in 1999, Marginson suggested that for many places in the world, tertiary education had evolved to fit the ethos of the neo-liberal era. The dividing line of state and market, public and private was partly eroded. With the move towards more freedom in universities, institutions were taking on forms of corporate behavior and operating in a new economic market space. The formation of so-called “education markets” was already fairly advanced in the 1990s in places like Australia, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. There was growing competition between institutions. There was formalisation of marketing strategies, increased importance attached to business plans and pressure to vary products across countries and between institutions within the same country (Marginson, 1999). Alongside activities, universities combined educational services with for-profit education, entertainment and finance (Cunningham, Tapsall, Ryan, Stedman, Bagdon & Flew, 1998). Rationales behind internationalisation of education clustered into four categories: social/cultural; political; academic; and economic (De Wit, 1995; Knight and de Wit, 1997). The extent of this move towards marketisation was, however, somewhat inconsistent with limited and irregular moves towards markets. Sectors varied considerably, and economic spin offs were not always demarcated (Marginson, 1999).
More recently, however, there have been changes within these categories and, some would argue, the emergence of a new category concerned with ‘branding’ or the development of a strong international reputation (Knight, 2004, p. 21). Institutions have always been competitive in the area of academic standards and profile but Knight (2004, p. 21) talked about a ‘not-so-subtle shift’ towards an international reputation in the tertiary sector. Institutions and businesses were vying for a share in the market of fee-paying students, for-profit education, language testing and accreditation of courses in an effort to develop an international standing and brand name for their institution as well as global networks and advantage in the field.

Growth in the international education industry in Australia has been rapid. In her speech to the media in May 2009, Julia Gillard, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, reported that international education had grown to be the third largest source of overseas earnings in Australia. It brought in 15.5 billion dollars in 2008 and helped to support 125,000 jobs. Almost half a million international students arrived in Australia in 2008. It was the leading sector in export income for Victoria and NSW that year (Gillard, 2009).

In the period 2010-2011, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recorded an annual export figure for educational activity of $16.3 billion. This figure was 12% down on the financial year 2009-10 figure of $18.6 billion (AEI, 2011). Of the total export income brought in by education services, it was estimated that $15.8 billion was from spending on fees, goods and services by onshore students. A further $595 million was secured through offshore and other educational activities. Educational services in Australia were the largest services export industry. They were ahead of personal travel services ($11.9 billion) and technical, trade-related and other business services ($3.7 billion). For the same period of 2010-2011, the higher education sector grossed $9.4 billion in export income (59.7% of total on-shore earnings). VET brought in less than half of this with $4.1 billion in earnings (25.8%). Export income from ELICOS was $802 million (5.1%); schools, $663 million (4.2%); and non-award, $570 million (3.6%).

These kinds of figures are not without their critics, however. Researchers have questioned the methodology used to obtain them (Birrell & Smith, 2010; Rodan, 2009).
Critics estimate that only a little more than half of this is income once earnings of students, living expenses and fee income have been adjusted to the actual rather than the predicted (Birrell & Smith, 2010).

According to the AEI (2013), there were 402,388 international students studying on a student visa in Australia in 2012. This was a fall of 5.5 per cent in international student numbers in all sectors from 2011 figures (AEI, 2013). Tables 2.2 and 2.3 show changes in income over the four years 2008-2011, the top ten contributing countries and international student enrolments from 2008-2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education related travel</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>% share of 2010-11</th>
<th>% change 2009-10 to 2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A$ million</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>16725</td>
<td>17995</td>
<td>15753</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
<td>-12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2855</td>
<td>3066</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>-34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep Korea</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>-16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>-8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>-14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>-4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>-25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>-17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>-4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>4,986</td>
<td>5146</td>
<td>4792</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Australia’s export of education services 2008-2011 (AEI, 2011)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>174,577</td>
<td>182,770</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>225,477</td>
<td>216,392</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>119,836</td>
<td>175,461</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>118,609</td>
<td>103,677</td>
<td>-12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELICOS</td>
<td>101,856</td>
<td>125,727</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>79,911</td>
<td>78,839</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>26,884</td>
<td>28,798</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>20,611</td>
<td>18,496</td>
<td>-10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non award</td>
<td>27,406</td>
<td>31,142</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>27,716</td>
<td>25,520</td>
<td>-7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in Australia</td>
<td>450,559</td>
<td>543,898</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>425,601</td>
<td>402,388</td>
<td>-5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3: Time series of international student enrolments in Australia 2008-2012 (AEI, 2012, 2013)

More recent figures, issued by the OECD (OECD, 2011) for the period 2011-2012, put Malaysia in fourth position and Vietnam in fifth position. They claim an average growth rate dropping to 7.6%. Latest data available from the AEI (AEI, 2012) positions Australia as the third largest destination for international tertiary students (6.6%). Ahead of Australia are the US (16.6%) and UK (13.0%). Germany (6.4%) and France (6.3%) are just behind.

Australia has led the way amongst higher education providers around the world. For example, managers of the Bologna Process (Bologna Process, 2004) cited Australia as a major competitor with Europe for Asian students. Meanwhile, countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and New Zealand have tried to learn from the Australian example (Rizvi, 2004, p. 33).

Australia’s success in its recruitment of international students, however, is not due solely to its marketing strategy. Other factors involved have been: low living expenses and tuition fees (compared with providers in other countries); shorter completion times; support for entrepreneurial activities and beginner businesses by the Australian government; and promotion of international education through diplomatic means. These have all meant that Australia has managed to keep ahead of its competitors. The Australian government has also been instrumental in leading negotiations over a General Agreement in Trade of Services (GATS) at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The latter was created out of a perceived need to relax many of the regulatory constraints in the global education market and link higher education to immigration policies (Rizvi, 2004, pp. 36-37). More recently, the “strong” Australian dollar has
threatened this buoyant economic environment, however. A substantially higher cost of living has also impacted, along with the Great Financial Crisis and the possibility of a double-dip international recession.

2.3 The Vietnamese context: History, policies and practices

Background information about the history, policies and practices of Vietnam is crucial to an understanding of Vietnamese students’ responses in this study. The following two sub-sections outline, firstly, relevant information about the geography, history, economy and foreign policies of Vietnam and, secondly, education systems, philosophies, focuses and practices in that country.

2.3.1 Background information and history

Vietnam is situated on the Indochinese Peninsula in Southeast Asia. It has the South China Sea along its entire coast. China is to the north and Laos and Cambodia to the west. It is a Communist state and has been since 1975, after the North Vietnamese defeated the South Vietnamese and their allies in a civil war.

Vietnamese people are originally descendants from nomadic Mongolians and migrants from Indonesia. They moved from North Vietnam to where South Vietnam is now, dislocating Cambodians already living there (London, 2011). Histories of Vietnam written in English are not easy to come by. Anything that can be found tends to be written from the perspective of the United States of America. A succinct account of ‘colonisation, occupation and dominance’ in Vietnam is provided by Makino and Tsang (2011, p. 548) at the beginning of their article, however. They describe how, in 111 B.C. to the early tenth Century, Vietnam was under the direct rule of successive Chinese dynasties. In the seventeenth century these relations changed, however, with the arrival of the French missionaries. Good feeling towards these missionaries was short-lived as many of the French teachings went against local traditions and customs. As a result, French troops were sent to Vietnam in 1847 to protect the local Catholic community. In 1868 The Vietnamese Emperor signed a peace treaty with France which led to further conflict with China because of French troops positioned on China’s border. After China
was defeated in the Franco-Chinese War (1884–1885), France took control over the entire territory of Vietnam (Makino & Tsang, 2011).

As late as World War II, there were signs of internal disparities between the north and the south of Vietnam (London, 2011), however. The French were eventually dislodged by Imperial Japan during World War II and the latter occupied Vietnam but allowed colonial French administration to continue. It was not until 1954 that the Geneva Conference ended the French colonial presence and partitioned Vietnam into two states: North (Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)) and South (Republic of Vietnam (RVN)). This was only ever meant to be temporary, but promised elections were never held (Makino & Tsang, 2011).

In the new South, Ngo Dinh Diem, Prime Minister under the monarch Bao Dai (who had stepped down as Emperor and instead called himself Head of State) (Jacobs, 2006), took power. The Americans called him ‘the kind of Asian we can live with’ (Jacobs, 2006, p. 33) and with the help of US forces (the CIA and State Department) he made himself president, a move not popular with the North but contrived by the US to prevent the spread of Communism to the South (Chapman, 2013). Ngo’s ‘indifference to the needs and problems of his people’ (Jacobs, 2006, p. 2) was the final contributing factor to the Vietnam War that lasted from 1963 until 1975 when South Vietnam surrendered to Ho Chi Minh.

Vietnam has endured, what Hirschman, Preston and Loi (2002, p. 783) called, ‘the tragedies of the twentieth century’, on a greater scale than most countries. Foremost of these tragedies is war. Hy Van Luong’s history of life in a village in the Red River Delta attests to the level of upset to which Vietnamese people have been subjected. Every generation of villagers reported intervention from foreign armies over a one hundred year period (Luong, 1992).

During World War II poor harvests of rice, and the export of rice to Japan, resulted in widespread famine. This claimed between 400,000 to 2,000,000 lives in the Red River Delta between 1944-45 (Woodside cited in Hirschman, Preston and Loi, 2002). The war for independence from the French also resulted in large numbers of military and civilian casualties. Estimates are half a million dead and one million wounded (Harrison, 1989).
Chapter 2 Background and context

The most recent loss of life on a great scale was witnessed when military forces from the United States and its allies occupied Vietnam between 1965 and 1973. Casualties numbered half a million, with aerial bombing on a very large scale (Harrison, 1993).

The dominant American version of the Vietnam War does not take account of the Vietnamese version of the “American War” which takes a broader perspective and describes the war as the final stage of the modern Vietnamese national revolution (Kolko, 1985). The revolution in Vietnam had its roots in resistance to the French colonisation of Indo-China in the 1860s-1880s. The struggle against foreign domination continued from the 1880s to World War II, and further wars against the French and the US were waged from 1946-1954 (facts not acknowledged in texts seen through the lens of the American cold war policy) (Hirschman, Preston and Loi, 2002).

In 1976, supported by the Soviet Union, the DRV and the RVN were officially unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Vietnam was made a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) in 1978. This strengthened its political and economic ties with other socialist countries. Post the “American War”, which US figures tally as 1.3 million Vietnamese lives lost (US Department of State background note, 2007) but which other sources suggest was more like 4 million (Associated Press, 1995; Thayer, 1985; Turley, 1986), Vietnamese – Chinese relations deteriorated (Amer, 1994). This was over a number of issues: Vietnam’s increasing relations with the Soviet Union; territorial claims in the South China Sea; China’s cuts in economic assistance to Vietnam and Vietnam’s alleged poor treatment of “Chinese residents” and increased instances of their “expulsion” from Vietnam The main breaking point was Vietnam’s incursion into Chinese-friendly Cambodia, however (Amer, 1994, p. 360). A border war broke out in 1979 in the north of Vietnam with at least 20,000 Chinese soldiers and around 10,000 Vietnamese soldiers killed. Both Hanoi and Beijing claimed victory but, in actuality, years of guerrilla warfare and the latest Soviet military equipment gave Vietnam the upper hand over the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) (Time Magazine, 2014). Diplomatic relations were suspended for the next ten years (Makino & Tsang, 2011).

Vietnam did not emerge from international isolation until it withdrew its troops from Cambodia in 1989. Three years earlier, in 1986, The Communist Party of Vietnam
(CPV) had introduced “doi moi”. This translated to mean “make a change” or “economic renovation”. This occurred around the same time as “perestroika” in the Soviet Union (Dung Hue Doan, 2005). In the 1990s, after the US lifted the ban on multilateral loans, Vietnam joined the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. The 1991 Paris Agreements secured Vietnam’s right to diplomatic and economic relations with ASEAN as well as most of the countries of Western Europe and Northeast Asia. China renewed full diplomatic ties with Vietnam in 1991 once China and Vietnam agreed on a settlement over the Cambodia issue (Bert, 1993).

Following withdrawal from Cambodia, US-Vietnamese relations became more cordial. A new state constitution was approved in 1992. There was still a central role for the Communist Party but some government reorganisation was proposed alongside greater economic freedom. Normalisation was possible after the two countries signed a bilateral trade agreement in 2000 (Nguyen Manh Hung, 2014). In 2005, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai was the first Vietnamese minister to visit the US since the Vietnam War. He undertook to improve religious freedom in Vietnam and send military officers to the US for language and medical training and in return he was given assurance that President Bush would back Vietnam’s application to be part of the World Trade Organisation (Nguyen Manh Hung, 2010). After waiting for over 12 years, Vietnam succeeded in becoming the 150th member of the World trade organisation in 2007 (World Trade Organisation, 2014).

Recent coverage of Vietnam-American relations describes their union as a ‘comprehensive partnership’ (Hoang Anh Tuan, 2013, p. 1). President Truong Tan Sang’s visit to Washington this year was only the second visit by a Vietnamese head of state since 1995, when normal relations were resumed, but President Obama has met frequently with either President Truong or Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung on the margins of regional forums or summits. Moreover, the United States is currently Vietnam’s seventh-largest investor with more than $10 billion tied up in over 600 projects. Over 17,000 Vietnamese students were enrolled in educational courses in the US in 2014 which is 8,000 more than in 2008/9 and the US and Vietnam are involved in ‘dialogue frameworks’ which focus on economics, security, defense, democracy, human
rights, religious freedom and many other topics once considered out of bounds (Hoang Anh Tuan, 2013, p. 2).

In summary, Vietnam has been politically influenced by China, France and the US as well as socialist countries in the region. In particular, Vietnam’s long relationship with China, despite the Sino-Vietnamese War and the breaking off of diplomatic relations until 1991, has meant that many Chinese characteristics and norms have been implanted in Vietnamese culture and traditions, making it part of the ‘Chinese cultural sphere’ (Makino & Tsang, 2011, p. 549).

France has also invested heavily in the mining of tin, coal and zinc in Vietnam (N Nørlund, 1991). Vietnam received manufactured goods from France in return for these raw materials. French was spoken by many Vietnamese who grew up with colonial rule and many Vietnamese people have been educated in France over the years (Hiebert, Thayer & Chanda, 1993). Ideological and political guidance and trade have been provided by the Soviet Union while support for the South Vietnam cause during the war and suspension of relations with socialist Vietnam after the war, have been afforded by the US (Makino & Tsang, 2011). Vietnam has been in the hands of many and influenced by many, making it the complex society that it is today.

2.3.2 Education

The examination of education systems, philosophies, focuses and practices in Vietnam, provides insights into responses offered by the Vietnamese participants in the study. According to London (2011, p. 1), the ‘historical lineages of education in Vietnam stretch back over a thousand years’ with an organised education system being in place for over 500 years. Major influences on Vietnamese education have been: Confucian institutions; colonialism and movements against colonialism; the formation of state in postcolonial times; the Vietnamese wars of the twentieth century; the growth and decline of state–socialist institutions; and the development of a state–dominated market economy in the style of a Leninist political model (London (2011). London also notes that education does not stand alone in Vietnam but works interdependently with other institutions and the social life of the country. Respect for education is fundamental to
Vietnamese character and identified as a “national priority” by Vietnamese leaders. A complex discussion has centred on what is happening in education in Vietnam, why it is happening and what can be done about it.

According to Dung Hue Doan (2005, p. 452), the Vietnamese educational system has been through six main stages in line with Vietnam’s history. He states that between 939 and 1858 Vietnamese education reflected Chinese civilisation. A millennium of Chinese supremacy, prior to that, meant that Vietnamese views of education reflected Confucian thought. Confucianism, however, did not have the monopoly. Taoism and Buddhism had influenced the local philosophies before Confucianism. The latter had continued to flourish because it complemented local philosophies and culture easily, according to Phan Le Ha (2008). Traditional education espoused the thoughts and principles of ‘self-cultivation of virtues, unity of man and heaven, relevance of social order and political harmony’ (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, p. 452). Most importantly, traditional education linked organised education and the study of the classics to ‘governance and authority relations’ (London, 2011, p. 5). Confucianism, Chinese influence and the organised study of Confucian classics became the centerpiece of competitive exams and formed the basis of dynastic states (London, 2005).

From 1858-1945, education in Vietnam was quite different. It reflected French colonial assimilation policy. According to London (2011, p. 8), French policies ‘destabilised, destroyed and transformed’ Vietnamese institutions, including educational institutions. French policies restructured the Vietnamese system to serve colonial objectives more efficiently. During the French period, present day Vietnamese language (Quoc Ngu), written in Roman script, was created by Western missionaries. It was designed to help disseminate Catholic practices around Vietnam. From 1945-1954 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) controlled the country. Education was set against a backdrop of struggle for independence against Japan and France. Vietnam was split into two opposing states, north and south (DRV and RVN) during the period 1954-1975 and as a result, had two very different education systems. A Soviet example was followed in the north and an American/French combination model in the south. The two education systems reflected the nationalist, class-based, organisational perspectives of the political elites from each of the states (Vasavakul, 1994).
From 1975 to 1986 education was centralised in a unified nation governed by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). The late 1980s, however, saw Vietnam’s economy fall away and the education system struggle to function (London, 2011). Serious economic conditions, and diminished state school quality, gave rise to the introduction of school fees. This affected many young Vietnamese people and their decision to leave school. By the early 1990s, Vietnam’s education system was under siege. Schools did not have enough operating funds, enrolments were down, and the money for teachers’ salaries not forthcoming. This trend reversed significantly, however, as government budgets, the economy and personal incomes recovered later in the 1990s. The final period or contemporary period has been characterised by huge educational reform in the wake of “doi moi”. A market-oriented economy has emerged (Dung Hue Doan, 2005).

The national education system of today’s Vietnam comprises five levels. They are preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary and postgraduate. There are four categories of school: public schools funded by the government; semi-public schools provided with basic sites by the government; “people founded schools” which receive no government funding and are controlled by social organisations; and private schools or universities that are full fee paying. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) compiles all education policy. It is responsible for primary, secondary and tertiary curriculum. It enforces common practices and standards across the whole system in conjunction with the CPV (Dung Hue Doan, 2005).

Despite commitment to increasing school attendance rates and educational quality, there are still issues with student retention at secondary level. This is particularly true in the remote and disadvantaged areas of Vietnam, as well as high ethnic regions (Phelps & Graham, 2010). Around 41% of Vietnam’s population are under 18 years old (Childfund in Vietnam, 2007).

Education in Vietnam and large parts of Asia tends to be text-book oriented with an emphasis on rote memorisation, print based knowledge, competition rather than collaboration and theoretical subject matter (Hamano, 2008; Peyser, Gerard & Roegiers, 2006; Roxas, 2004). In particular, the teacher is seen as a moral guide for students both
inside and outside the classroom (Constitution of Vietnam, n.d.; Duong Thieu Thong, 2002; Education Law of Vietnam, n.d.). As Phan Le Ha (2008, p. 6) puts it:

The personal of the teacher is often shaped by and acts according to the professional. On the surface, the professional and the personal seem to infuse one another, and the former seems to dominate.

In 1998, the government of Vietnam drew up an Education Law which formalised the role of the teacher as moral educator. It incorporated moral education into the Vietnamese curriculum. In 2005, subjects like Cultivation of Virtues and Building Personality were made core to the primary syllabus. The curriculum operates in three stages. The first stage focuses on character education (primary), the second stage on citizenship education (secondary) and the third stage on political education (tertiary) (Dung Hue Doan, 2005).

Primary education consists of the formal timetabling of focuses and topics. These include the ‘cultivation of virtues’, a strand going right through from Grade 1 to Grade 5 (age 6 to age 10). In this strand, tidiness, obedience, friendliness, politeness, punctuality, respect for elders and teachers, development of ‘cultural awareness and friendliness/kindness towards people from other countries’ are encouraged. Other topics to be introduced and assessed are ‘appreciation of soldiers and national defenders’, ‘cooperative spirit’ and sincerity. There is also a topic called ‘building personality’ in which students are taught how to develop self esteem, be honest, be hard-working and be self-disciplined (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, p. 456). A further component is citizenship education. This is where students learn about the Constitution of Vietnam, rights and duties, social policy and the laws of the country. At high school level, philosophy and the principles of Marxism and Leninism are covered. The students are taught how to become social citizens; ‘patriots who love manual labour and know how to live and work for the harmony and benefits of the community’ (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, p. 455). Duong Thieu Thong (2002, p. 66) maintains that Vietnamese education in the past was based on the idea of ‘realistic humanism’, an approach in evidence in the subjects outlined above.
Le, Howard, Nguyen & Lilleleht (2005, p. 4) describe the ‘care orientation’ that is present in the culture of Vietnam. They argue that human relationships are at the very centre of this care orientation. A focus on human relationships has been interwoven with educational principles, both in the past and currently (Phan Le Ha, 2008). The Education Law (cited in Phan Le Ha, 2008, p. 8) states explicitly in Articles 14, 61 and 63 that the teacher:

- must constantly learn and train in order to set a good example for the learners
- discharge[s] their task, preserve[s] and develop[s] the tradition of respecting the teacher and glorifying the job
- must have good moral qualities, ethics and ideology

Since Vietnam opened its doors to the world in the last twenty years, competency in English language has been prioritised. English language teaching and learning in Vietnam has become a major commitment for the Vietnamese government in the form of The National Foreign Languages 2020 project. This project has implications for Vietnamese learners and teachers of English because it dictates that all school leavers shall have a minimum level of English (B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference) by 2020 including subject teachers (who need level B2). As a result, ambitious education reforms are underway (Parks, 2011).

Vietnam is unusual in that, unlike some of its neighbours, China, Korea, Japan and Thailand, most of its English language teaching is carried out by local Vietnamese teachers. This means that local teachers in public schools rarely have to confront the native-speaker versus non-native speaker scenario in their daily work. This ensures more confidence and better self-image as teachers of English (Phan Le Ha, 2008). Being an English teacher is a desirable vocation and connected with wealth and opportunities in the eyes of the Vietnamese public. Vietnamese English teachers are seen as more “Westernised” and influenced by English culture and values.

Many Vietnamese English language teachers travel abroad for further professional training. This is often in the form of postgraduate qualifications. Several key English language speaking countries have received these students. One of the main contenders
has been Australia (Phan Le Ha, 2008). The extent of Australia’s involvement with the training and education of Vietnamese English language teachers has caused it to be referred to as ‘the second former Soviet Union’ by Phan Le Ha (2008, p. 3). The Australian and Vietnamese institutions involved in the delivery of such programmes, in this present study, are described in the next section.

2.4 The case study institutional contexts

It is difficult to provide detail of the immediate contexts of the participants included in the study without breaching assurances that were given to retain anonymity. However, some generic detail about the institutions involved is outlined below.

2.4.1 Site One: An Australian institution (UoA)

The Australian institution, from which onshore participants were invited, will be referred to as the University of Australia (UoA). This university has been a tertiary institution for over 30 years. A large proportion of the students enrolled at UoA are international students studying either onshore in Australia or offshore with partner institutions or offshore campuses.

In terms of curriculum, students studying offshore take the same subjects and use the same materials as students undertaking the courses on campus in Australia. Offshore international students are assessed in the same way as onshore students. It seems that there are no university curriculum principles designed specifically for offshore programmes. In most cases, staff from the onshore campus fly-in and fly-out, conducting intensive lectures or workshops. Local tutors are employed to take tutorial sessions and mark assignments.

Like many universities in Australia, internationalisation at UoA began some years ago. Government policy allowed for the enrolment of full fee-paying international students. Since then the university has developed policies to regulate offshore programs, including tight financial reports and reviews of international operations offshore and onshore.
The university committed to the AVCC Code of Practice and Guidelines for the provision of education to international students along with all other Australian universities. These guidelines were revised in 1994 and 2001. In 2002 the AVCC Code of Practice and Guidelines published: *Universities and their students: Principles for the provision of education by Australian universities*. This document read:

> The learning environment should take account of the different characteristics of students and their varying cultural and educational backgrounds including those of Indigenous Australian students (p.3).

The code allows universities to ‘regulate their own activities with regard to international students against agreed sector wide benchmarks within the framework of their legislation–based autonomy’ (AVCC, 2005, p. iii). All universities are bound by the code and must commit to ‘adopt and maintain consistent and caring procedures in relation to the recruitment, reception, education and welfare of their international students’ (AVCC, 2005, p. iii). UoA is also compliant with the ESOS Act 2000 (Australian Government, 2000).

The UoA has had many internationalisation plans. It has deployed these plans to better align planning, monitoring, quality improvement activities and to check implementation of strategic priorities. These plans were scrutinised by AUQA (2000-2011), an independent body put together by Commonwealth and State governments and managed by a board of representatives including Vice–Chancellors (mentioned earlier in Chapter 1). UoA describes its internationalisation approach as putting a particular focus on the development of students and staff as citizens of the world. It emphasises an international outlook [and] cultural diversity. The plans report on UoA’s progress in implementing, amongst other things, internationalisation of the curriculum and campus culture.

The most recent plan explores definitions of cultural, linguistic diversity, racism and racial harassment and includes procedures for dealing with cultural diversity in the classroom. It includes guidelines for inclusive language, mandates on the diversity of representation on university committees and employment of indigenous Australians.
Staff members are encouraged to attend workshops and involve themselves in self-paced, on-line professional development courses which focus on internationalisation and cross-cultural understanding. This is mandatory for staff teaching offshore.

Graduate attributes, similarly, emphasise the necessity for students to be able to develop international perspectives and exhibit cultural awareness and understanding. Plans include strategies for increasing international student numbers, internationalising the curriculum and the development of an international culture amongst UoA staff.

The MA Applied Linguistics programme at UoA takes the following form:

**Onshore site: Australia**

- University academics lecture on the one year, eight unit, coursework MA Applied Linguistics programme in face to face mode.
- Postgraduate Asian students study alongside local students and live in Australia temporarily on student visas.

**Offshore site: Vietnam**

- University fly-in/fly-out academics based in Australia, and Vietnamese lecturers based in Vietnam, teach the eighteen month, eight unit, MA Applied Linguistics in distance mode. Lecturers from the home campus fly in for one week to deliver input face to face. They mark assessments which are sent to the home university. Vietnamese lecturers on-site deliver face to face and assess three of the units, then send marks to the home campus for moderation.
- Vietnamese postgraduate students study in a mostly homogenous group.

**2.4.2 Site Two: A Vietnamese institution (VCoT)**

The second institution, from which participants were invited, is a well-respected regional training centre located in Vietnam. It will be referred to by its pseudonym Vietnam Centre of Training (VCoT). The centre has been established for many years. It is connected with other centres in the Asia-Pacific region. VCoT’s chief role, as an
offshore partner for UoA, is to offer the MA Applied Linguistics for Vietnamese English language teachers. Potential candidates apply to do the course with the offshore university partner and are accepted by the home university according to their TESOL teaching background and their satisfaction of the minimum English language entry requirements of IELTS 6.5. The centre usually runs two intakes per year. Numbers of candidates range from around 28 to 50 on each intake. There are eight units in the course. Students attend an intensive week of lectures for two MA units every three months and then submit assignments over the next three months. Moderation takes two forms: the course coordinator flies in to do a moderation visit once each intake; assessment tasks are cross-marked by onshore lecturers throughout the course.

VCoT has a strategic plan which includes:

- becoming the regional information and technology hub for training, research and development
- cooperating with accredited degree-granting foreign universities to become a fully authorized international undergraduate/graduate school in the fields of educational leadership and management, language teaching and learning and ICT
- implementing a fully functioning overseas study and exchange agency for educators, teachers, and students
- becoming an accrediting organisation for Vietnam’s higher education and vocational secondary training

The centre has achieved success in these areas over the years despite financial constraints and a shortage of qualified experts, according to the organisation’s latest annual report and anecdotal evidence offered by management at the centre. The staff also pride themselves on being able to offer English language courses and teacher education courses which are ‘interactive, informal, based on experience sharing and practical learning, innovative, learner-centred, flexible, cost-effective and encouraging of critical thinking and problem solving’ (VCoT home page). Other core business for the VCoT is general English language teaching to children and adults outside of school and work hours. Administrative staff and management at the centre are Vietnamese.
English language teaching staff includes expatriate teachers as well as Vietnamese teachers. The annual report for VCoT also outlines community involvement. This includes donation to relief efforts for flood victims in Vietnam, blood donation, sponsorships of Vietnamese students for study tours and environmental awareness programmes.

2.5 Conclusion

In summary, the present study is located at the nexus between two major considerations for teaching and learning encounters in the Asia-Pacific region. The first consideration is globalised trends in international education and responses to these in the higher education sector. The second consideration is the way in which Asians, their learning styles and their education systems, have been, and are, viewed and the relationship between longstanding colonial discourses and the Third Space. This chapter has dealt with the first consideration. Chapter Three reviews literature pertaining to the second consideration: colonial discourses, ways of viewing the Other, educational responses and movement towards the Third Space.
CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction.

Teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region has not taken place in a social, historical, political and educational void. To illustrate the dynamics of the situation, this chapter reviews literature in five main sections. The first section provides a critical analysis of what is understood by the word “Asian”. The second section addresses historical perspectives on Asia and the ontological and epistemological dimensions of Postcolonial, Orientalist/Occidentalist and essentialist discourses. The third section considers these discourses in an Australian context, both historically and currently. The fourth section moves to the bridge between these discourses and education: English language teaching. The fifth section introduces the locus of the inquiry: links between these discourses and teaching and learning in the field. It emphasises East/West binary paradigms. The fifth section considers implications of the concept of “Thirdness” for teaching and learning in a culturally diverse world and the final section discusses current issues in transnational and international education.

3.1 What does it mean to be “Asian”?

According to Korhonen (1994), the metaphorical meaning of Asia has presented problems for developing regional identity for three main reasons. Firstly, geographically, it is a very large area. It contains a third of the world’s land mass and two thirds of the global population. It is home to many different languages, cultures and ethnic groups. Secondly, the term has come to hold pejorative connotations because of colonial encounters. Thirdly, it is quite a recent European import. Moreover, the word “Asian” has taken on different meanings for different peoples over the years (Hofstede, 2007). This mirrors differences between perspectives on geography and the different attitudes towards Asia that have sprung from colonial discourses.

Historically, Asia has been defined in different ways. The Macquarie Dictionary (Butler, 1981, p. 138) noted that Asia was ‘the continent which is the eastern part of the European land mass.’ From this definition it might be expected that Europe be listed as the continent that is the western part of the Asian land mass. The dictionary’s later
listing for the word “Europe” (p. 608), however, describes Europe as ‘the continent which is the western part of the Eurasian landmass.’ Both definitions are semantically indisposed to separate Asia from Europe but not Europe from Asia. This is an asymmetrical view reflecting East/West relations and underlying much of the discussion in this chapter. These asymmetrical relations are also in evidence in Asia itself. For example, Coedes (1968, originally published in 1944 and cited in Glassman, 2005, p. 790) documented the ‘Indianization’ of the South East Asian region and the influence of China. He referred to South East Asia as ‘Further India’ or the ‘Far East’ or even ‘Indo-China’. This leaves South East Asia again with only a relative position. The processes by which European powers have mapped the Other are, what Said has called, ‘imaginative geographies’ (Said, 1978, p. 54 cited in Glassman, 2005, p. 789).

Geography is one of the main ways in which Asia has been defined. Phoenician sailors located themselves between esch and ereb, dawn and dusk, east and west, Asia and Europa (Hofstede, 2007). In the 5th century BC, the Greeks also accepted this geographical distinction. They claimed everything east of them, including present day Turkey and beyond, to be Asia. Everything west of them was Europe (Hofstede, 2007; Korhonen, 1994). A ‘pan-Asian ideology’ at the beginning of the 20th century also saw everything east of the Mediterranean and west of Japan as Asia. Post-Second World War economic and political talk saw Asia’s western boundary contract to Afghanistan or Pakistan. Post the Cold War, the western boundary moved yet again to Burma, Laos and Cambodia (Korhonen, 1994, p. 360). What used to be deemed the Far East, or Extreme Orient, is now what people in Australia call Asia (Korhonen, 1994). The dynamic nature of the term “Asia” is, therefore, apparent. There are definitions that exclude Turkey, the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. They define Asia as comprising only the Far East, South East Asia and the Indian subcontinent (Welty, 1984). Other definitions consider Asia and Europe to be the same continent (MSN Encarta Encyclopedia, 2007) because it is possible to take a train from Holland to Hong Kong (Hofstede, 2007). Except in its arbitrary geographical meaning, the term is wide in its reference. Horne (1964) suggested that the entire concept of an Asian continent fails when it comes to Asia (Horne, 1964). Moreover, the term “Asian” obscures the
national, cultural and racial distinctions of those living in the region. It does not denote the same communities to Australians, Americans and British people (Matthews, 2002).

Asianness, in reality, is more closely tied to the notion of culture than geography. This conclusion is endorsed by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2006) and the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* (2006). East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea and North Korea) is usually thought to be dominated by Chinese culture. It shares Chinese-derived language characteristics, as well as shared religions like Buddhism and Taoism, and shared social and moral philosophy derived from Confucianism.

This definition is problematic, however. The word “culture” is very difficult to define. Fortman & Giles refer to the notion of culture as ‘ubiquitous, multidimensional, and complex’ (Fortman & Giles, 2006, p. 91). Miike (2013, p. 190) describes it as ‘deeply felt but inherently elusive’. According to Montovani (2000), the meaning of the term “culture” is a universal problem. Given the state of connectedness in the globalised world, it is impossible for a culture to exist in isolation (Piller, 2012). Determination to see individuals only through a cultural lens results in ‘imagined characteristics of the culture’ (Piller, 2012, p. 12) and the temptation to define the individual by the culture (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2004). Culture considered as nation, ethnicity, faith or gender is too large to be a real group and, therefore, should be seen as a discursive construction (Piller, 2012). In particular, equation of culture with nation encourages conservative representations of customs, traditions and culture. Recent promotion of Asian Values in Singapore, and elsewhere in Asia, encourages equation of culture with nation (Hill, 2000, 2010). What is more, generalisation can easily turn into Culturalism. This may then become a form of Orientalism (Said, 1978), which is described later in this chapter. This ideology supports colonial and neocolonial views (Piller, 2012). To focus on culture may be to the exclusion of other political, social, psychological dimensions such as gender, social class and age (Burman, 2007).
3.2 Related social and theoretical discourses: Postcolonialism, Orientalism/Occidentalism and essentialism.

Teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region has been situated in various social and theoretical discourses. These have viewed Asian culture through the conceptual lens of Postcolonialism, Orientalism/Occidentalism and essentialism. Separating these four discursive strands in order to explore each one in a tidy fashion is artificial. They are not conveniently self-contained either temporally or ideologically. All four concepts overlap and interact. They are dynamic not static. They have a symbiotic relationship in that they inform and feed each other.

The following paragraphs attempt to unpack briefly some of the key components of each discourse using examples from international and local domains to exemplify concepts and identify key voices in these discourses.

3.2.1 Postcolonialism

Donald Horne, in *The Lucky Country* (1964), suggested that in colonial times Europeans perceived tangible differences between themselves and “Asiatics”. To begin with, the latter did not speak European languages, had not had an industrial revolution, did not have Christianity and had allowed themselves to be ruled by colonial powers. Religious differences had resulted in the dislocation and massacre of Asians. An ideological justification needed to be developed, therefore, for Christians to be able to face each other in church each week. Out of guilt and rationalisation emerged the division of the superior white world and the inferior coloured world. This division was based primarily on power (Horne, 1964). Postcolonialism in Asia can, therefore, be attributed to Asia’s chequered history of colonisation by various European countries, namely Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Definitions of the term “Postcolonial” are varied. Firstly, “Postcolonial” can refer to the state of former colonial countries (Dirlik, 1994, pp. 331-332). Australia and the USA could be seen as Postcolonial using this criterion even as first world countries and colonisers themselves of indigenous populations (Dirlik, 1994, p. 337). This definition does not take account of developing countries which have never been colonies (such as
Thailand) or who have managed to overthrow their colonisers successfully very early on in the relationship but still engage in Postcolonial discourse.

A second definition of Postcolonial is more abstract. It describes a global condition after a colonial situation. It is equated with the third or developing world. The third definition constructs Postcolonialism as a discourse. It includes all of the above and is ‘informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of these conditions’ (Dirlik, 1994, p. 332). What these definitions have in common is: firstly, that Postcolonialism is a state of being after being ‘worked over’ by colonialism or the ‘aftermath’ (Prakash, 1992, p.8); and secondly, that Euro-American conceptions of Self have been molded from their experiences of colonising the world (since the constitution of the Other is also the constitution of the Self). Colonialism creates a crisis in identity for the coloniser as much as the colonised. It is this creation of a Western Self and an Eastern Other, in all aspects of public life as well as educational contexts, that is integral to the current study. It should be acknowledged here, however, that the terms “East”, “Eastern”, “West”, “Western” and “non-Western” are used in an attempt to present an accessible argument but the researcher recognises the problematic and disputed nature of these ‘metageographical’ terms (Tate, 2005, p. 351) within the existing literature in the field (see Lewis & Wigan, 1997, for example). Moreover, while the deconstruction of essentialist binaries such as Orientalism and Occidentalism is a discursive necessity, many academics (Lowe & Chen, 2002) unavoidably reinscribe them while trying to lessen or displace them. The current researcher may be no different. There is a constant tension between drawing attention to a particular construct in order to deconstruct it, as well as a dilemma between disposing of an “us and them” view of the world when there is nothing to take its place (Conceison, 2004, p. 56). These and other discourses about Western Self and Eastern Other are examined further in the next sub-section on Orientalism.

3.2.2 Orientalism/Occidentalism

The practice of “Othering” is what Spivak has called the invention of an imperial discourse for creating colonised subaltern subjects (Spivak, 1999). It derives from the ideas of Hegel, Lacan and Sartre. Bhabha (1996, p. 47) speaks of Othering as ‘pre-
constituted, “natural” poles of Black and White, with all its historical and ideological ramifications’. The colonial subject is constructed within this system of power as an Other or stereotype with a predetermined form of difference.

Othering is central to discourses such as Orientalism (Abdel-Malek, 1963; Gabrieli, 1965; Said, 1978, 1993; Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001). It can be explained by first looking at what is meant by “the Orient”. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) defines the Orient as incorporating countries such as Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Arabia and later on India, China, Japan and the whole of Asia. Orientalism can, therefore, be seen as a discourse about peoples and cultures from these parts of the world. More abstractly, a definition taken from Postcolonial studies sees Orientalism as representations reinforced by political forces. These forces entered Western learning, consciousness and empire and were constructed by the West to reflect what is inferior or Other to them (Sered, 1996). As mentioned earlier, Culturalism is a form of Othering and a kind of Orientalism. It is a discourse about ‘their’ culture which thinly veils discrimination (Piller, 2012).

Orientalism established itself as a field of academic inquiry during the 18th century. Travellers such as Busbecq (1554) and Vambery (1864) provided Europe with images of the Other to reinvent its self-image and become “modern” (Atabaki, 2003). Orientalist images in Western social discourses were also critiqued in the early 20th century by writers such as Jala Al–i Ahmad (1929-1969) who spoke of ‘Euromania’, ‘West-toxification,’ and ‘West-struckness’. He likened what he called ‘Occidentosis’ to a form of tuberculosis or an infestation of weevils, and noted that once the wheat was attacked from the inside, only the outer shell was left (Al-i Ahmed, cited in Irwin, 2006, p. 312).

Many have written on the legacy of Orientalism (for example: Al ‘Azm, 1981; Abdel-Malek, 1963; Tibawi, 2000). The name most associated with Postcolonial studies, however, is Edward Said (1935 -2003) (Nozaki, 2009). Said was a Professor of English and Comparative Literature. He was born in Jerusalem, Palestine and brought up in Egypt. Said defined the Orient as an invention of Europe and one of its ‘deepest and most recurring images of the Other’ (1978, p. 1). He argued that the West was ‘able to
manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively, during the post-enlightenment period. Furthermore, ‘the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.’ (p. 3). He followed this up with Marx’s idea that the disenfranchised cannot represent themselves. He maintained that the West had taken upon itself to ‘represent’ the East (Marx cited in Said, 1978).

The Orientalist was a scholarly person who usually had command of several Oriental languages and was well read in Oriental literature (Macfie, 2000). Orientalism depicted Westerners as ‘rational, peaceful, liberal, logical’, ‘capable of holding real values’ and ‘without natural suspicion’ (Said, 1978, p. 49). It depicted Easterners as ‘mysterious’, ‘barbaric’ (Said, 1993, p. xi), ‘irrational’ (Said, 1978, p. 49), ‘degenerate’ and possessing ‘unbounded sexuality’ (Said, 1978, pp. 172-190). From a Foucauldian perspective, these representations were not neutral but instilled with a desire to control, shape and take from the Orient (Said, 1978). Bhabha further points out that colonial and imperial discourse was ‘hybrid’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 33). The Oriental was presented at one and the same time as ‘savage’ and yet ‘obedient and dignified’; ‘mystical’, ‘primitive’ and ‘simple-minded’ and yet ‘the most worldly and accomplished liar’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 82). He called this ‘double inscription’ (Bhabha, 1994, p.108). Others have spoken of the ‘ambivalence’ of colonial discourse and authority (for example, Kapoor, 2002, p. 651). The ‘doubleness’ of the discourse also presents contrasting images of strong/weak, rational/irrational, normal/abnormal (Shim, 1998), master/slave, coloniser/colonised, civilised/uncivilised, white/black.

Said (1978) uncovered works which showed the extent of Orientalist Othering by those in the West. Lord Cromer’s book, Modern Egypt (1908) is one such work. Said quotes Cromer:

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity ... his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description ... the Oriental generally acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European (Cromer cited in Said, 1978, pp. 38-39)
Many researchers have critiqued Orientalism (for example: Abdel-Malek, 1963; Gabrieli, 1965). In particular, Edward Said has been accused of misrepresenting, romanticising and mystifying the Orient (Al ‘Azm, 1981; Hourani, 1994; Keddie, 1994; Lewis, 2000; Makiya, 1993; Richardson, 2000; Varisco, 2007; Warraq, 2007; Wickens, 1985). By virtue of this mystification, Said’s own project becomes Orientalist in nature, or what Al ‘Azm (1981) has called ‘Orientalism in reverse’. Said stands accused of broad brush denunciation of all vignettes presented by Orientalists, even those drawn by anthropologists and scholars such as Geertz. Richardson (2000) suggested that Said has unwittingly reinforced the words of the Orientalists themselves. He charged him with lacking academic rigour and pointed out that Marx was referring to the peasantry not to the Orient when he made his statement about disenfranchisement (Richardson, 2000).

Lewis (2000) criticised Said for failing to acknowledge German, Austrian, and Russian Orientalism. One of the most recent and widespread criticisms of Said’s ideas, however, has been his lack of appreciation of non-Western people’s agency and active resistance to the theories and practices of Orientalism (Gandhi, 1998; Graversen, 2001). This criticism has also been levelled at Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1993).

Even those who dispute Said’s thesis about Orientalism, however, cannot deny the presence of eurocentrism or ‘values, attitudes, ideas and ideological orientations that are informed by the notion of European uniqueness and superiority’ in many Western discourses about the East (Alatas, 2002, p. 761). Eurocentrism involves understanding non-European histories and societies from European experiences (Alatas, 2002) and has, at its core, ethnocentric approaches to the non-Western world (Miike, 2008a).

Orientalism also has a positive face, however (Dirlik, 1996). Western Historians believe that Western Oriental scholars helped to preserve many of the historical artifacts and cultural traditions in Asian civilisation. Moreover, Orientalism was not an entirely European invention. It was a discourse co-created by both Eastern and Western intellectuals in ‘contact zones’ (Dirlik, 1996). The notion of “Asian values” has been used by those in the West to explain the rise of the “Asian Tigers” and their rapid industrial and economic growth. ‘Positive Self-Orientalisation’ (Hill, 2010, p. 678) by Asian leaders, such as Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore) and Mahathir Mohamad (Malaysia), has been offered as an explanation for economic success. ‘Positive Self-Orientalisation’
forms the basis of resistance to Western concepts of human rights and other principles. This reversal of images was made explicit during the 1970s in an influential book called *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (Vogel, 1979). Such works laid the foundations for the growing discourse of Occidentalism.

Occidentalism has been described in simple terms as the mirror image of Orientalism. It can refer to biased representations of the West by people living in the East (Conceison, 2004). As a social and theoretical discourse it should not be overlooked in any work that draws attention to Orientalism. It is quite a different process to Orientalism, however, in that it is ‘intricate, fluid, uneven’ although it corresponds to Orientalism in its “speaking subject” and “othered object” (Conceison, 2004, p. 52).

Both Occidentalism and Orientalism are postmodern postures in that it is implied that one cannot exist without the other. Said concludes his critique of Orientalism with a plea to the world not to perceive Occidentalism as the answer to Orientalism (Said, 1978). The term has grown and taken on many meanings, however, and yet the concept remains hardly investigated compared to its well-known counterpart. Indeed, according to Ning (1997, p. 62), Occidentalism is: ‘an indeterminate and problematic quasi-theoretical concept’ which goes no way towards being a fully expanded concept nor covers the range of scholarship to be seen in Orientalism (although Orientalism is not without its flaws).

When the first ideas about Occidentalism emerged in the writings of Al Azm (1981) they were not referred to as Occidentalism but rather ‘Orientalism in reverse’. Perceptions of the West in China, however, pre-date Said’s 1978 exposition and Al Azm’s critique. The idea of the ‘non-Chinese barbarian’, an image to be perpetuated to this day, was recorded as early as the 4th century BC in texts such as *Zuo zhuan* and *Shanhaijing*, according to Conceison, (2004). In 1989, Wixted also talked about ‘Reverse Orientalism’ and attempted to put a new perspective on Said’s Orientalism and apply these perspectives to the way the East saw the West. He objected to the way that Said seemed to take two stances: one in which he appeared to be claiming that he spoke on behalf of all of Asia and the other in which he implied that his insider position as a Palestinian gave him greater validity to talk about Orientalism (Conceison, 2004).
The first to really talk about Occidentalism explicitly and its relationship with Modern China was Xiaomei Chen in her book *Occidentalism: A theory of counter-discourse in Post-Mao China* (1995) in which she describes the Chinese reception of Western literary and cultural forms. Earlier than this, her contemporary Frank Dikötter, had explored a second dimension of Occidentalism (although he had not called it Occidentalism) in his book, *The discourse of race in Modern China* (1992). Dikötter described how race took on cultural and political dimensions during the New Culture Movement in China (1910s and 1920s), as Chinese intellectuals returned home and began to reconstruct their national identity and culture around Western thought (Dikötter, 1992). They established Western norms as the measurement for change in China as well as presenting a discourse of the West as either an idealised version of itself or a contaminated foreigner. Dikötter identified three salient features of Occidentalism: polarisation (emphasis on the East/West binary), projection (attributing certain narratives to Western origins) and fragmentation (misrepresentation, ideas taken out of context and inaccurate quotation) (Dikötter, 1992).

Chen’s construction of Occidentalism is similar to Dikötter’s in that it involves both essentialisation of the West and ‘skewed adoption’ of Western models, although Chen’s version is much more constructive in its purpose (Conceison, 2004, p. 46). “Official Occidentalism” essentialised the West in order to support state nationalism and control the Chinese people. “Anti-official Occidentalism” was used by the Chinese intelligentsia to promote political liberation. A third kind became an overlap between these two (Chen, 1995, p. 25).

Eoyang (1994) introduced the notion of a “four-cornered logic” as an alternative to the East/West binary. He felt that, ‘binary oppositions between Western and non-Western exclude a significant population of people who are both Western and non-Western, or to put it another way, who are both Chinese and non-Chinese’ (Eoyang, 1994, p. 32). The four-cornered logic is explained by Eoyang as follows:

> Western thought tends to be dominated by binary logic, which is monolithic. Something cannot be both A and non-A. Chinese logic is “four-cornered”: it entertains the following possibilities, that something is (1) A; that it is (2) non-A; that it is (3) both A and non-A; that it is (4) neither A nor non-A.28 (Eoyang, 1994, p. 25)
This argument is not sustained, however, as in the next instance he says, ‘phenomenological paradigms are lost when fundamental differences between Western and Chinese ways of thinking are glossed over’ (Eoyang, 1994, p. 26).

Carrier (1995), in the introduction to his edited book, *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, emphasises that Occidentalism also ‘begins to call into question some of the ways that Westerners represent the West to themselves’ (Carrier, 1995, p. ix). He puts the East backstage in the discourse rather than centre stage. He considers non-Western images of the Occident to be productions of Self not of the Other: ‘ways that people outside the West imagine themselves’, although he acknowledges that self-image is often formed from comparison with the West. In short, he defines Occidentalism as ‘the essentialistic rendering of the West by Westerners’ (Carrier, 1995, p. 199) and Othering of the West by non-Westerners as ethno-Occidentalism (p. 198), a view not well supported by authors such as Conceison (2004). Buruma and Margalit (2004) also remind us that Occidentalism, like Marxism and many other ‘isms’, had its origins in Europe and was then conveyed to the rest of the world. They point out that:

> Occidentalism can be compared to those colorful textiles exported from France to Tahiti, where they were adopted as native dress, only to be depicted by Gauguin and others as a typical example of tropical exoticism’ (p. 6)

Occidentalism has been associated with discourses in countries other than China. Creighton focuses on non-Westerner Occidentalism in the rise of the white, Western Other in Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912). She describes how Japan’s Other shifted from China to the West (Creighton, 1995), with dual images of the West as both innovator and threat. ‘White foreigners’ in Japan were seen as objects of ‘glorified attention or, conversely, a standard of negative traits’ and in both cases ‘stripped of individual identity’ (Creighton, 1995, p.155). Buruma and Margalit (2004) describe how, in 1942, after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, Japanese scholars and intellectuals assembled for a conference in Kyoto. Some were members of the Romantic group, and others were philosophers from the Buddhist/Hegelian Kyoto School. They came together to discuss ‘how to overcome the modern’, in this case ‘modern’ referring
to the West (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p. 2). Although the intellectuals had strong feelings about what they were against, they had difficulty defining exactly what constituted ‘the West’. They saw it as a ‘disease which had infected the Japanese spirit’ and one former Marxist turned Nationalist stated that he had ‘felt as though dark clouds had lifted to reveal a clear summer sky’ when he heard the news of the Japanese assault on the West at Pearl Harbour. Another Japanese intellectual defined ‘the modern thing’ as a ‘European thing’ (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p. 2). The West (and particularly the United States) was ‘shallow, rootless, and destructive of creative power’ compared to Japanese culture which was ‘spiritual and profound’ (Buruma & Margalit, 2004, p. 3). Asian views were also coloured by the colonialism of the nineteenth century and China’s humiliation during the Opium Wars.

Added to the complexity of Occidentalism are the Chinese and Japanese narratives of ‘under-heaven’ and ‘Shinto’. Both of these share a ‘centre-periphery’ frame in which, in order to know Self, it is necessary to orient the Self towards a cultural model. The model should be ‘universally applicable’ as this orientation depends not on being inside of or outside of the model but being in close proximity to it. The distance between Self and the ideal is more important than the distance between Self and the Self’s many Others (Shih, 2010, p. 538).

According to Buruma and Margalit (2004, p. 11), strands of Occidentalism can be observed all over the world. It has flourished in all periods of time. It can manifest itself in hostility towards cities which are cosmopolitan and rootless or to the Western scientific mind. It can be present in the bourgeois who have become complacent and no longer value the self-sacrificing hero or to ‘the infidel’ who has blocked the way to pure faith. What all of these have in common is ‘the dehumanizing picture of the West’ (p.5).

Overall, it is worth observing that non-Westerners, just like Westerners, have been representing others in ways akin to stereotyping for a very long time. Just like many rises to power, Occidentalism in China was a means of asserting China’s ‘global legitimacy and national identity’ (Conceison, 2004, p. 46). However, it needs to be noted that, as Conceison (2004, p. 54) points out, Occidentalism is both ‘paradoxical’ and ‘dialectical’. It exists in ‘paradoxical relation to’ and ‘continuous dialogue with’ Orientalism and most importantly it is ‘open-ended, changing, active and self-
consciously temporal’. This is important because, as Sadri (1996) pointed out, Occidentalism contrasts Orientalism’s straightforward politics. He added, ‘the complexities of the motives and interests of various ethnic groups, classes, and nations in a globalized, postmodern, and postcolonial world preclude such simple associations’ (p. 612). Buruma and Margalit (2004, p. 6) also conclude that, ‘Occidentalism is not a simple matter ... there are too many links and overlaps to establish perfect coherence’. Occidentalism can subsume contradictions and four-cornered ways of seeing the world in which places like the USA are seen neither as purely negative, nor purely positive but both negative and positive. Such complex interactions are the beginnings of internationalisation and the juggling of benefits gained from globalisation with the reassertion of local norms and self-identity (‘Insider/Outsider’, ‘Self/Other’), according to Conceison (2004, p. 56). As Spivak (1990, p. 121) said:

What we are asking for is that the hegemonic discourses, the holders of the hegemonic discourse should de-hegemonize their position and themselves learn how to occupy the subject-position of the “other”.

In summary, Said has been seen as pivotal in providing a fresh outlook for Postcolonial studies and those indoctrinated by the views of Orientalists and pseudo-Orientalists (Tibawi, 2000). His ideas also prepared the ground for a dialogism of relationality of Self and Other (Bakhtin, 1981). His vigorous promotion of the idea of an Orientalist binary provided a departure point for Occidentalism, theories of Third Space, Culture or Stance (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 2009; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). The Third Space is discussed in detail in section 3.6. Said’s most important contribution to the field, however, has been his insistence on reflection upon the West’s essentialisation of the East. This is discussed in the next section.

3.2.3 Essentialism

Western histories of the East have been charged with ‘selective amnesia’. They have dismissed Eastern ‘creativity and originality’ and overlooked the wheel, the plough (5600 BCE, Mesopotamia), irrigation (5400 BCE Mesopotamia) and algebra (820 AD Persia). Historians have described Asia as having ‘continued essentially the same’ (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001, p. 23). The word “essential” is mostly understood as a belief
that everything has a real, true fixed essence. This essence is not variable. It has certain shared characteristics (Fuss, 1989). It shares universal properties which are not context dependent. Plato (Simberloff, 1980) conceptualised two universes: an Essential or perfect universe and a Perceived universe or the one that could be seen (Fancher, 2000). Imperfections and variations are part of the Perceived reality and not the Essential reality underneath. This means it is impossible, from this perspective, for a species or a people to change because all difference is perceived and not real. With an inbuilt idea of permanence, essentialism is at the politically conservative end of the spectrum. Existentialist thinkers, Marx, Nietzsche and Satre have criticised essentialism and yet it is the binding force for many radical political bodies (Beauvoir, 1974).

Historians such as Malcolm (1815) provided examples of essentialist thinking in their accounts. He described Persia as having ‘continued essentially the same’ as it always had; with ‘unhistorical history’ (Malcolm, 1815, p. 621). Fineman (1997) described the content of an official study in Thailand by the US Psychological Studies Board (1953), conducted more recently, as lacking in geographical, historical or anthropological insights. He found it fraught with imperial misunderstandings and stereotyping. The report referred to Thais as ‘gentle’ and ‘light–minded’, ‘not given to ponderous, philosophic thought nor to great war-like, and military ambitions’ (US PSB, 1953, p. 18).

The problem with these essentialist views is not the sense of sameness (or difference) but rather that these samenesses and differences are not accurate, according to Sayer (1997). There is a sense of a reluctance to acknowledge the dynamic nature of Eastern societies. A further problem is the conviction that certain parts of the world change and are “progressive” (the West) whilst other areas of the world remain the same and are static (The Rest).

Narratives of Middle Eastern or Asian historiography have suffered from overgeneralisation, Eurocentricism and reductionism (Atabaki, 2003). There has been an inclination to falsely universalise the characteristics of the dominant component of a group or society. Confucianism is referred to much more than Taoism or Buddhism when conflating approaches to teaching and learning with religious philosophies. There
has been an implicit acceptance of a “silent referent” in non-Western historical knowledge (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 2):

For generations now, philosophers and thinkers shaping the nature of social science have produced theories embracing the entirety of humanity. As we well know, these statements have been produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind i.e., those living in non-Western cultures... The everyday paradox of third-world social science is that we find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of "us," eminently useful in understanding our societies. What allowed the modern European sages to develop such clairvoyance with regard to societies of which they were empirically ignorant? Why cannot we, once again, return the gaze? (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 2)

Developing World historians refer to European history in their work. Europeans do not to reciprocate, however (Atabaki, 2003). Third World historians see Europe as the ‘modern’. Europeans know little outside of the Western world (Chakrabarty, 1992). Asia (including what is now the Middle East) is depicted in a pre-modern primitive state and in need of colonial assistance (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2001). Franz Fanon (1970, p. 44) referred to a common essentialist attitude as, ‘I know them ... that’s the way they are’.

Essentialist images of the Oriental have pervaded Western social discourses in the areas of artwork. Testimony to this are: Delacroix’s famous artworks: The women of Algiers (1834) and The fanatics of Tangiers (1837-38); Ingres’ Odalisque with slave (1839-40); Spies’ The landscape and its children (1939); and Tretchikoff’s The green lady (1950). Asian women on these canvases are depicted as demure, childlike, happy in their servitude or sexually decadent. They are featured against backdrops of timeless rural scenes. Western literature has created Pierre Loti’s Madame Chrysanthème (1887) which was the basis for Puccini’s opera Madame Butterfly (1904); Suzie Wong (Mason, 1957), Maughaum’s East of Suez (1922) and The Moon and Sixpence (1919). Early 1900s pulp fiction featured Dr Fu Man Chu (Rohmer, 1913). Feature films, such as Bridge over the River Kwai (Spegal & Lean, 1957) and The King and I (Brackett, Zanuck & Lang, 1956), exploited Orientalist themes. In all of these, Asian men are portrayed as inscrutable, cold and cruel. More recently, Memoirs of a Geisha (Spielberg, Barber, Bimbaum, Wick, Fisher & Marshall, 2005) has continued to paint Asian women as subservient and sensual. Films like The Scent of the Green Papaya
(Rossignon & Tran, 1993) and *Indochine* (Heumann, Labadie & Wargnier, 1992) play out the same themes in a slightly more subtle way. There has been some deconstruction of Asian stereotypes in films such as *Harold and Kumar escape from Guantanamo Bay* (Hurwitz, Schlossberg & Hurwitz, Schlossberg, 2008). The Asian protagonist in this film is still a victim for most of the film, however (Denison, 2009).

Postcolonial, Orientalist, Occidentalist and essentialist discourses are very much interwoven. While they exist in their own right, their relationship is one of intersection and overlap. The same ideas and perspectives are continually reshuffled and reframed within the discourses. Ideas may enter these discourses, but, on the whole, they remain ossified. Teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region is linked to these discourses. Figure 3.1 represents this relationship. The broken line indicates the semi-permeable nature of the discourse boundaries and the possibility of implicit transfer.

Figure 3.1: The interconnectedness of Postcolonial, Orientalist/Occidental and essentialist discourses

Section 3.3 overviews the presence and effects of these discourses, both historically and currently, in the narrower domain of Australasia.
3.3 Postcolonial, Orientalist/Occidentalist and essentialist discourses in an Australasian context

Australia is situated in the Asia-Pacific region yet since the arrival of the British, contact with Asia has been limited. Postcolonial, Orientalist and essentialist discourses have prevailed. The following sections describe these responses.

3.3.1 The historical context

Alexander Downer (2005), in his public address as Liberal Party foreign minister at the time, said:

Most Australians up until the 1950s rarely encountered people from Asia nations and near neighbours in their daily lives in Australia. Furthermore, the limited nature of people-to-people exchanges between Australians and the countries of South and South-East Asia no doubt had an impact on Australian engagement with Asia at that time… (Downer, 2005)

Australia’s relationship with Asia has been, as Downer says, a ‘limited’ one. This situation is historical. Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), despite having a reputation for being one of the more ‘open’ Australian Prime Ministers in his time, revealed his xenophobia when he talked about ‘menaces and contagion’ surrounding Australia (Deakin, 1963, p. 179). Australian popular sentiment also captured this fear of the East as demonstrated in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1895:

With us it is not a mere matter of sentiment or racial prejudice but the grave question of whether we shall preserve our existence as an Anglo-Saxon people, and prevent the Australian continent from being swarmed over by races that do not assimilate, and might in their multitudes alter or sweep away the institutions we are building for ourselves and our children (‘Proposed Reciprocal Treaty’, 1895).

Later, the same newspaper proclaimed that any external threats to the land would be diverted by ‘populating our country, by filling up the waste places, by settling on the land sturdy men of our own race and our own colour, who will hold Australia for themselves and for the Commonwealth’ (‘Our true protection’, 1907).

Neighbouring countries in the region, however, wanted to work and settle in the Great South Land. Early in Australian history, Indians arrived to be waiters. The Chinese
came to be shepherds and coolies. The Ceylonese, Javanese and South Pacific Kanakas were employed to work on plantations (not necessarily by choice) and the Afghans were brought out to be cameleers. Adelaide prepared for Japanese farmers to receive land and settle, particularly in the Northern Territory. In the 1850s free Chinese migrants came from Shanghai and Canton to pan for gold. They stayed on to raise families, work in trade, restaurants, laundries, market gardens and the railroad. Despite the Japanese government’s ban on travel from Japan, the Japanese arrived in 1878 to be entertainers, prostitutes, pearl divers and traders (Broinowski, 1992).

James Mario Matra, a midshipman on the voyage to Botany Bay with James Cook in 1770, and later a diplomat, offered one of the first glimpses of Australian-Asian relations. That was as far back as 1783. In his proposal for the colonisation of New South Wales, he suggested that Australia be a stepping off point for trade with China, Japan and Korea (Broinowski, 1992). Similarly in 1784, Sir George Young, a naval officer and colleague of Matra’s, encouraged settlers to come from the Loyalty Islands, east of Caledonia. Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1829), a British politician at the time of Australia’s colonisation, is reported to have said that Australia was in a good position to have relations with the hardworking people of Asia. He suggested the building of a bridge between the settlements and the overpopulated countries that surrounded Australia (Wakefield, 1929 cited in Levi, 1958). Arguments in favour of a union with Asia included creating the best mix of nationalities (Clarke, 1877 cited in Broinowski, 1992), providing an effective conduit for trade, saving souls (Cardinal Moran, 1888 cited in Broinowski, 1992) and establishing a focal point for the enlightenment.

These “idealist” notions were not commonly embraced by all, however. Most settlers coming from European backgrounds were ill equipped to deal with Asian migrants. Moreover, they were not amenable to sharing their land, their gold, their jobs, or their women with what they saw as the “Asian hordes”. This fear, lack of education and bigotry, forced colonial governments to reject more liberal immigration schemes and set up a series of discriminatory practices designed to exclude Asians from Australian shores. These practices were endorsed in 1901 by the Federal Parliament’s first Acts (Broinowski, 1992).
Artists, such as Arthur Streeton (1907), found the Orient to be energy sapping, feminine, submissive and seductive. It was a place where Western masculinity might be endangered (Streeton, 1907 & Wilson, 1905 cited in Boyd, 1968). Not every individual was of this persuasion, however. Other artists, like William Hardy Wilson (1905), travelled to the East and marveled in the world of the Oriental (Wilson, 1905, cited in Boyd, 1968). This disparity reflected the Australian settler for whom geography was important, and those, for whom, history linking back to the British Empire and British identity was paramount.

Arthur Tange (1952) was known for his controversial role in reforming the organisation of the administration of the Australian Defence Department in the 1970s. He had built the foundations of the modern Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) at the then Department of External Affairs. He attributed the misunderstanding between Australia and its nearest neighbour, Asia, to two important circumstances. The first was Australia’s isolated geographical position. The second was the formulation and endorsement of the White Australia Policy (Tange, 1952). William Lane first coined the term “White Australia Policy” in an 1888 publication of the newspaper The Boomerang. The Bulletin (1895) newspaper further captured the strength of the sentiment against Asian immigration with cartoonist Livingston Hopkin’s front page illustration, ‘The Yellow Trash Question’.

Australia’s geographical position left British subjects, who would ordinarily have had Europeans as their closest neighbours, isolated from Britain. According to Jupp (1995), the introduction of the White Australia Policy was an intentional decision on Australia’s part to isolate itself from neighbouring Asia. The significance of this policy for every other policy in Australia has been argued by historians such as Hancock (1961). The policy effectively excluded all non-European immigrants from access to Australia. It was enacted under the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 and was part of a wider ideology fashioned on theories of racial superiority popular at the time (Jupp, 1995). It drew on similar legislation drawn up in South Africa. The ideas behind the policy were backed by well-educated and open statesmen such as Alfred Deakin (1901). Deakin and his colleagues could not see the possibility of a blend between Australians and Asians. He said:
It is not the bad qualities, but the good qualities of these alien races that make them so
dangerous to us. It is their inexhaustible energy, their power of applying themselves to new
tasks, their endurance and low standard of living that make them such competitors (Deakin

The decision to introduce the Immigration Restriction Act into Australia was bi-partisan
in nature. The most ardent support came from the Australian Labor Party (Jupp, 1995)
and, in particular, the Australian Workers’ Union. This support continued well into the
1960s (Palfreeman, 1967; Price, 1974; Yarwood, 1964). William (Billy) Hughes, a
member of the Labor party who was later to become Australia’s seventh prime minister,
stated that Labor’s chief platform was a White Australia with no room for hardworking
coloured brothers (Hughes cited in Rise and fall of white Australia, 2001). Exclusion of
Non-European immigrants was not explicit in 1901. Those exercising the law were
given absolute discretion to bar whoever they considered to be ‘undesirable’ from
entering the country, however. There was no need to specify legitimate reasons for this
decision. Fines on carriers of “illegal” immigrants were also used as disincentives.

In terms of government, and the personalities that exerted influence upon the
Australia/Asia relationship, Edmund Barton, as first prime minister of the new Federal
Government, played a key role. He argued in support of the Immigration Restriction
Bill because he denied equality between English and the Chinese (Barton cited in
Kalantzis, 2001). In support of Barton, Isaac Isaacs, a Jewish member of parliament,
pronounced:

I am prepared to do all that is necessary to ensure that Australia shall be free for all time
from the contamination and the degrading influence of inferior races (Isaacs, 1901, p.
4845).

Barton introduced a dictation test as a barrier to Asian immigration. This action, though
discriminatory, was not as severe as many other parliamentary members desired. Many,
like John Watson (commonly known as Chris Watson), who was elected to Federal
parliament in 1901 and was later to become Australia’s third prime minister and first
Labor Prime Minister, wanted a complete racial ban on all Africans and Asians coming
to Australia. He worried that the Bill would not achieve the stated objective of effective
gatekeeping. Orientals, the parliamentary members argued, were so educated that they
might succeed in literacy tests and find a way in to Australia. What is more, folklore had it that the more educated the Oriental was, the ‘worse man’ he was likely to be (Watson, 1901). The dictation test, given in ‘a language not understood’ by the prospective migrant, resulted in 1,932 migrant exclusions between 1901 and the end of the test in 1958 (Jupp, 1995, p. 2). These restrictions on immigration were conducive to Australia remaining insulated from its Asian neighbours for a long time.

Robert Menzies (1894-1978), accused of being an Anglophile by many (Harries, 1968; McCarthy, 1977), held firmly to Imperialism and loyalty to the monarchy (Bongiorno, 2005). He stated:

> The thumb and forefingers of your right hand are, in a sense, separate. Taken one by one, they are relatively weak. Acting together, what a grip they can give; what a blow they can strike! Imperialism indeed, and what of it! Are we to give up courses and associations and the superb family instinct which seem to us to be vital to our progress and the development of our common assets just because some propagandist chooses to say “Yah! Imperialism”? (Menzies, 1948, p. 225)

In the early 1950s, Australia’s connections with Britain were still close. Britain was Australia’s main trading partner. Australia also continued to cooperate with the British military in Malaya. It was part of a regional imperial defence plan and the Colombo Plan (a Commonwealth aid initiative set up in 1951 by Australia to help developing countries in Asia discussed in Chapter 2). Diplomatic support went from Australia to Britain regarding issues such as Indochina (1954) and Suez (1956). There was close dialogue between Britain and Australia over the development of nuclear weapons (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 17).

British decolonisation in South Asia after the war was, therefore, challenging for Menzies. Australia’s identity, as an arm of the British Empire, was slipping away. Menzies was uncomfortable with the “New” Commonwealth and hostile to the process of decolonisation (Bongiorno, 2005). He was also a severe critic of Australia’s Indonesian policy in the late 1940s and, according to Bongiorno (2005), issues of race were ever present in his considerations. This is reflected in his comments after a heated meeting at the United Nations with Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister. He is
reported to have said of Nehru, ‘All the primitive came out in him’ (Martin, 1999, p. 422). He also spoke of the Egyptians as, ‘Gypos…a dangerous lot of backward adolescents’ (Hudson, 1989, p. 27), causing some such as Sir Walter Crocker, colonial official and Australian ambassador, to record in 1955, ‘Menzies is anti-Asian; particularly anti-Indian; yes, anti-Asian. He just can’t help it’ (Pemberton, 1997, p. 164).

Menzies’ views were put into even sharper relief against those of Prime Minister Deakin who, despite his earlier outbursts about the ‘menaces and contagion’ emanating from the East (Deakin, 1963, p. 179), saw the shared Aryan origins of Indians and British-Australians as giving them a ‘shared destiny’. He enthused about India and its ancient religions (Bongiorno, 2005, p. 410). In contrast, Menzies’ views reflected the narrowing views of the country (Bongiorno, 2005). Exceptions to this were statesmen such as Percy Spender. Spender was a rival minister in Menzies’ war time government and later Minister for External Affairs before being dispatched to the US. He was a key player in Australia’s setting up of diplomatic relations with Asia at that time. Spender was replaced as Minister for External affairs by Richard Casey, also a rival of Menzies. Both of these men have been credited with being the real architects of engagement with Asia (Bongiorno, 2005). Nevertheless, in the late 1950s, Menzies introduced reforms to the White Australia Policy (Jordan, 2006, p. 224). He acknowledged the ‘inevitability’ of radical change to the Commonwealth in 1960 (Goldsworthy, 2002, p. 23). This was built upon by Prime Minister Harold Holt who allowed entry to certain non-Europeans as migrants in 1966. He acted upon concerns that he had about Australia’s place in the world, its ability to build a special relationship with Asia and the offence caused by The White Australia Policy (Jordan, 2006).

By the late 1960s, The White Australia Policy had become untenable for Australia for many reasons, not least of these being a shift in foreign policy imperative. First of all, Europeans were no longer attracted to come to Australia once living standards had risen considerably in their home countries. Secondly, the policy estranged emerging independent Asian states (Jupp, 1995). Thirdly the White Australia Policy constrained images of Australia in Britain and Europe.
Historians have identified key events that brought about the end of Australia’s strong ties with Britain. These are: the fall of Singapore in 1942; the need for “friendly” countries in Asia during the Cold War from 1946; the Colombo Plan in 1951; the Japanese Trade Agreement of 1957; Australian involvement in the Vietnam War from 1965 and other wars such as the Korean War and the war in Afghanistan more recently; the modification of restrictive immigration in 1966 (Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (DILGEA), 1988); and a shift in preference from sea to air travel in the 1970s (Jupp,1995). Brawley (1995) and Dutton (2002) also argue that policy was fashioned from pragmatic decisions to respond to the changing political environment internationally, and to placate international opinion about Australia. The abolition of the White Australia Policy in 1973, by the Whitlam government, largely came about through a widespread ideological rejection of racism in Australia (Brawley, 1995). The White Australia Policy had built an Australia based on racial control which could not possibly succeed economically or strategically. The policy was abandoned but it left an unsound foundation from which to build international student policy and a living memory of Othering embodied in ideas of “we” and “they” (Kumar, 2005, p. 209).

The Colombo Plan has been called ‘Australia’s most ambitious attempt, outside of war, to engage with Asia’ (Oakman, 2004, p. 1). It was a battle ‘for the mind of Asia’ between the US, UK and Australia (Oakman, 2004, p. 168). Its role in opening up Australian/Asian relations has largely been overlooked by post war historians, however. This is perhaps due to the fact that, even by 1954, after years of trying to engender interest in Asia, Casey mourned the apparent ignorance Australians had about the East. They also showed lack of empathy with the UN, Colombo Plan and Asia (Millar, 1972). Nevertheless, some such as Tange, in the Department of External Affairs (1952), recognised the plan as facilitating a mix between Asians and Australians at the Australian higher education level. This had previously been impractical. Institutions were briefed to assist with the colonial objectives coming out of the British Empire. They needed to produce loyal employees who could be deployed anywhere in the world to work for the Empire (Rizvi, 2004). Australian academics’ world views were limited to modernist traditions of the European Enlightenment and the industrial era. Many
unwittingly viewed the world through an ‘Orientalist lens (Said, 1978). Federation did not change this pattern and it was not until after the Second World War that Australian higher education looked beyond Britain to the US and then to Asia after that.

In terms of social discourses, the film industry of the early 1900s continued the tradition of investing the perceived traits of one particular country in Asia to the whole of Asia. Raymond Longford’s motion picture *Australia Calls* (Spencer & Longford, 1913) highlighted the threat of the ‘yellow peril’ in the form of Japanese invaders. He called the Japanese characters Mongolians, however, in order not to upset the Anglo-Japanese alliance of the time (Broinowski, 1992, p. 8). Playwright Louis Esson wrote a series of articles on the Asiatic menace (*The Lone Hand*, 1908). Artists continued to make a living out of drawing cartoons and illustrations for *The Bulletin* using images of Asians as plagues of insects or Oriental dragons. They promoted stereotypes such as treacherous Indians, ruthless Japanese and inscrutable Chinese. The Mongolian Octopus illustration, dreamed up by May (1886), depicted tentacles reaching into Australian jobs and families. It first appeared in *The Bulletin* newspaper in 1886 and recurred from the early 1900s until 1952. The Octopus was alternately Chinese and Japanese. Even Casey, as Minister for External Affairs, referred to this image in his public addresses (Broinowski, 1992). The Mongolian Octopus surfaced again as recently as 1989 in *The Australian* newspaper. This time it represented the Japanese “mafia” in Australia and was captioned, “Beware the Octopus takeover” (“Beware the Octopus”, 1989, cited in Broinowski, 1992).

In the late 1800s, “invasion fiction” like *The Yellow Wave* (Mackay, 1897), and *White or Yellow?* (Lane, 1888), flooded the market. Popular stage shows like *The Great Rescue* (Holt, 1909) used fear of the Kanakas as a theme. Bedford’s play, *White Australia* (Bedford, 1909), described Japan and China locked in battle over ownership of Australia (Broinowski, 1992). Eggleston’s article, “White Australia” (1921) echoed Orientalism. In the article he characterises Asians as ineffective in an industrial society, with one unskilled Englishman able to do the work of three Japanese because of his greater strength, endurance, educated intelligence, appetite for, consumption and utilisation of food (Eggleston, 1921).
Australians constructed myths of closeness to Europe but distance from Asia. They continued the British idea that Asia was in the Far East and not the Near North. Broinowski refers to this as ‘Australia’s Far East Fallacy’, a ‘neo-Orientalist framework for Asia’ (Broinowski, 1992, p. 15). Australians identified with Boys Own (1879-1967), The Jungle Book (Kipling, 1893-94) and King Solomon’s Mines (Rider Haggard, 1885). These were all colonial adventure stories in which the heroes were male, superior, authoritative and mostly British. Colonised peoples were included in the stories as either immoral, primitive, treacherous villains of the piece or childlike, dependent, simple servants or loyal helpers (Broinowski, 1992, p. 39). In 1986, Kabbani (p. 59) identified in these adventure stories:

> a deliberate stress on those qualities which made the east different from the west, exiled it into an un retrievable state of ‘otherness’ and, once established, this concept meant that the whole of Asia was consigned to ‘illicit space’, a place made up of ‘allure’ and ‘repugnance’.

Asians also had their own racist, xenophobic expressions for Westerners or ‘outsider’ words which could be described as a kind of Occidentalism. They equated them with monsters, barbarians and devils (waiguoren, weiguk, gaijin, ferang, feringee, putih, dadidze, mat salleh etc) (Kabbani, 1986). The Chinese depicted Europe in three characters (Ouluoba). Translated this meant ‘shouting’, ‘silk’ and ‘earnestness’. More recently the characters Ouzhou and Ouren have been used and refer to the ‘loud continent’ or inhabited by ‘loud people’ (Korhonen, 1994, p. 350). Horne (1964) highlighted the divisions and feelings of difference or superiority between Asians themselves. Early references to Asia (Yaxiya) by the Chinese, before the Chinese saw themselves as part of this umbrella term, consisted of characters meaning ‘thin’ and ‘inferior’ (Korhonen, 1994). Such Occidental images coincided with the division of the world into Chinese civilisation and foreign barbarians (Zhen, 1991). These representations counter European idealisations of Asians as ‘charming’ ‘innocents’ and confirms that Asia embodies great religious, physical and political difference (Horne, 1964, p. 114).

Fear of the ‘yellow peril’ did not emanate only from Australia. Asian immigration to the US in the mid-1800s mirrored the situation in Australia during the gold rush. Asian contributions to the building of the transcontinental railroad in the US were overlooked
or radically distorted. There was no mention of the Chinese who comprised 90% of the workers on the project. The workers were treated like slave labour and died in the thousands. Chinese workers were suspected by the American public of remitting all their earnings to China, despite the fact that the Foreign Miners’ tax made up half of California’s state revenues from 1850 to 1870 (Tchen, 1984). Chinese workers were perceived as the “unassimilable Other”, as seen in Robert Lawson’s recollection:

> By far the most foreign and outlandish, they ran laundries, no work for a man anyway, they had no families or children. They were neither Democrats nor Republicans. They wrote backwards and upside down, with a brush, they worked incessantly night and day, Saturdays and Sundays, all of which stamped them as the most alien heathen... We knew they lived entirely on a horrible dish called chop sooy which was composed of rats, mice, cats, and puppy dogs (Robert Lawson cited in Isaacs, 1958, p. 109).

Australians had images of Asians, their closest neighbours, as totally opposite to their own self-image (Broinowski, 1992). Poets like Kent Hughes (1946) recognised this “one-eyedness”. He wrote in his odyssey, *Slaves of the Samurai*, that Australian people needed to move away from their isolationist views and to educate their children more about their Asian neighbours. Inglis Moore, in the same vein, created a Filipino Achilles in his work of fiction in 1935 (*We’re Going Through*), again looking to a more Australasian future.

Experiences of war with Asia found expression in Australian art, film and literature. These media either imprinted Oriental images further into the collective psyche or exposed Australians to an Asia that did not necessarily fit their stereotypes. On the whole, however, Australian history is rich with examples of colonial discourse and, in particular, images and texts which essentialise and Orientalise people of Asian descent. The next section briefly reviews the construction of these discourses in a more recent Australian context.

### 3.3.2 The current context

Historically, Orientalist and essentialist ways of seeing Asians in the Asia/Pacific region have thrived in various forms. They are reflected in Australian government policies and
Australian public opinion. There have been perceptible differences in the ways Asians have been perceived more recently, however. The reasons for this are outlined below.

3.3.2.1 Asian confidence

The following stanza from a Malaysian popular song reflects an Asian new found confidence:

Hey we equatorial people…[of] the Malay archipelago/United, we are strong/Divided, we are fallen…Malay, Chinese, Indian, Eurasian/United in spirit, working together/….We definitely cannot deny /Malaysia is advanced and prosperous (The Blues Gang, ‘Khatul Istiwa’ – Itoh Mohammed, 1983)

This self-assurance stems from rapid economic development in East Asia. Mahbubani observed, ‘there has been a switch in Asian minds… slowly and imperceptibly … [and] ‘with new found confidence, [Asians] are aspiring to peaks beyond the plateau that the West finds itself on’ (Mahbubani, 1998, p. 23). Such ‘cultural confidence’ and optimism is born out of educational excellence, according to Mahbubani, a Singaporean academic and ambassador to the U.S. Many Asians now realise that they are not inferior to their counterparts in the West (Mahbubani, 1998).

3.3.2.2 Asiacentricity

Asiacentricity has called for a focus on Asia which moves away from a binary with the West and sees Asians as agents in their own culture. According to Miike (2013), Asiacentricity is:

1. Asians seen as subjects and agents
2. Asian interests, values and ideals placed at the centre of knowledge construction, discourse and discussion about Asia
3. contextualisation of Asian people, documents and phenomena in Asian history and culture
4. Asian ‘ethical critique and corrective of the ‘dislocation and displacement’ of Asian people and phenomena’
Asiacentricity does not deny the influence of macrotrends such as science, technology, tourism, travel and migration on the global community but points to the importance of history and culture in these processes. Asiacentricity is not essentialist in nature and neither is it ethnocentric. It does not deny ‘internal diversity, hybridity nor fluidity’ of Asian cultures (Miike, 2013, p. 201). It can produce meticulous and nuanced appreciation of cultural difference inside Asia (Miike, 2006). It also takes interest in ‘commonalities and continuities’ amongst Asian cultures that may have been brought about through geographical location and intercultural exchange (Miike, 2013, p. 201). Asiacentrists are not culturally chauvinistic, nor separatist, but humanist. They refuse to remain within narrow Eurocentric perspectives and want to hear voices from all cultural locations (Miike, 2013).

Asiacentricity has promoted Asian values which have been both formative and reactive. They have been formative in promoting economic growth in places like Singapore and reactive, in that they have turned the debate to cultural assertion (Subramaniam, 2000). This search for cultural values is not new to Asia. The same phenomenon was witnessed in the May Fourth movement in China (1919) and the Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868), according to Subramaniam (2000). This ‘assertiveness’ has extended beyond Singapore. It challenges the perceived cultural imperialism of the West. Critics, however, have accused Singaporean leaders of creating ‘false monoliths’ of Asian values versus ‘Western liberalism’. These conceal ‘unresolved political and ideological disputes within Asia and the West’ (Rodan, 1996, p. 328). They have also suggested that Asian values are just Western conservative values. Moreover, societal values are a reflection of the times in which they appear. This weakens the claims of the proponents of these values (Kausikan (1997).

### 3.3.2.3 Asia’s status in Australia

According to King (1999), Asia’s reputation with Australians improved towards the end of the 20th century. This was due to the emergence of newly independent Asian states with increased economic power, the absence of war, the decline of Communism, the abolition of the White Australia Policy and moves, at a governmental level, towards integration with Asia. Numbers of foreign students studying in Australia are now
significant. Asia is seen by Australia as a business opportunity rather than a threat. The education of Australians about Asia has also increased. Sammut (2005) speculates that the thinking which promoted the White Australia Policy in Australia is now obsolete. Racial intermarriage is common, students in schools are studying side by side with Asian students and no serious anti-immigration national political forces are present.

Despite these changes, there is still a tendency to attribute alterations in Australian social conditions to the perceived rise in Asian immigration. This is particularly true when those immigrants happen to have arrived on boats as refugees. Markus (cited in Windschuttle, 2006) maintains that Australians still suffer from an insecurity brought about by geography. They cling to the myth of the ‘island continent’ and have a ‘conceptual blind spot about what Australia is and can be’, according to Nicholas Jose, writer, translator and guest on Radio National’s series programme, Mongrel Nation (Soutphommasane, 2013). Manne (cited in Windschuttle, 2006) states that anti-asylum seeker policies are expressions of racism fanned by the “Otherness” of people from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Some writers of blogs also refer to Australian racism, fear and jealousy of ‘smart, over-achieving, academically-gifted-but-socially-stunted’ Asians. There are media posts of stories of ‘unassimilated’ Asian students and the difficulties that Asian actors in Australia face securing roles which do not portray characters who are ‘smart’ or ‘nerdy’ (Orientalism Still Alive and Kicking, 2011).

While the education of Australians has increased, it has been slow and limited in scope (Dutton & Kessler, 2009). Some universities have shut down their Asian languages programmes despite calls by the Australian government to promote Asia literacy in the latest White Paper (Australian Government, 2012). Moreover, fewer than 10% of Australian high school students are currently studying an Asian language (Soutphommasane, 2013).

Sidhu warns that there still needs to be understandings of the ‘spatialities of power’. The flow of people and trade globally has been enhanced by the work of Postcolonial theorists. These theorists argue that ‘(neo) colonial and geopolitical rationalities continue to shape “East/West” relations’. Studies which focus on the cultural
dimensions of globalisation, of which teaching and learning is a part, require articulation with political, economic and geohistorical factors’ (Sidhu, 2004, p. 51).

In summary, this brief exploration of social and theoretical discourses impinging on constructed images of Asianess, highlights the interconnected, ahistorical nature of these discourses. They remain pervasive in both academic and lay environments. Although discussed discretely, they are, in fact, very much the same phenomenon. Essentialism, Orientalism and Occidentalism overlay Postcolonial conditions and contexts to varying degrees. The next section demonstrates how these discourses are reflected in prevailing educational discourses.

3.4 English language teaching and the discourses of colonialism

The bridge between the social and theoretical discourses described in 3.3 and the educational discourses summarised in 3.5 is the link between Postcolonial, Orientalist/Occidentalist, essentialist discourses and English language teaching within the field of critical linguistics and critical pedagogy. As pointed out by Widin (2010, p. 12), ‘The internationalisation of education and internationalisation of English are clearly intertwined and language is a critical factor in the selection of place of study’. The most well-known of the early authors to address these links are Alistair Pennycook (1994b, 1998) and his contemporary Robert Phillipson (1992). They drew attention to the politics of language and, in particular, the relationship between the English language and discourses of colonialism. Pennycook, especially, set out to ‘locate English language teaching and policy within the broader context of colonialism’ (1998, p. 2).

A recurring metaphor in the work of both of these authors is the story of Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday. Pennycook uses this classic tale to highlight the way in which the relationship between Self and Other is constructed through the English language in a colonial context. Phillipson (1992) suggests that Crusoe’s English lessons to Friday are a classic case of English linguistic imperialism, emblematic of the origins of the British Council and their mission to spread English around the world. Pennycook further points out that, not only does Man Friday not reply in his own language, but the English vocabulary that he uses is taken from the lexicon of colonial language.
Language teachers ‘walk in Crusoe’s footsteps’ and need to be aware of the imposition of European languages and cultures on people around the world or their ‘footprint in the sand’, according to Pennycook (1998, p. 16). Theories, practices and contexts of English language teaching (ELT) which derive from former colonial powers carry elements of colonial histories both because of an extended relationship between ELT and colonialism and because these theories and practices originated in European cultures and ideologies which were outcomes of colonialism. Thus Pennycook suggests that ELT needs to be seen ‘not only as a tool in service of the Empire but also as a product of Empire’ (Pennycook, 1998, p. 19). Ideologies central to current ELT originated in the cultural constructions of colonialism. Even the acronym TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), commonly used in the US and Australia instead of ELT, can be viewed as separating Self from Other. The idea of Self is appropriated in the TE (Teaching English) while the Other is represented in the SOL (Speakers of Other Languages), according to Pennycook (1998, p. 22). Furthermore, links between ELT and colonialism can be observed in the relationship between ELT and popular discourses on other cultures and the English language.

The latter part of the twentieth century saw a new global political context in which the spread of English could be described more as neo-colonial exploitation rather than colonial control, according to Phillipson (1992). This was facilitated primarily by the spread of English through popular culture (magazines, newspapers, video, social networks) and not necessarily academic influence. As Pennycook (1998, p. 162) points out, ‘we need to see language teaching as located in the domain of popular culture as much as in the domain of applied linguistics’ and the influences of social discourses of the type mentioned earlier in the chapter (art, literature, film) need to be acknowledged.

In a postmodern tradition redolent of Foucault, however, Pennycook has been charged with lacking appreciation of the ‘rules of evidence’. He is accused of using selective sources, not mentioning perspectives other than his own or any counter discourses, and not speaking Chinese well enough to know what the Chinese people were really thinking (Vickers, 1999, p. 453). Critics also say that he only reviewed a limited selection of travel writings in his attempt to emphasise the importance of the influences of popular culture on the English language and discourses of colonialism. Moreover, he
gave no consideration to the fact that these images may, in fact, be real and that Hongkongers and Taiwanese may supply the same negative images of the mainland Chinese. Chinese teachers would also acknowledge China’s highly authoritarian and exam driven educational culture which has been formed through events in history not through essential ‘Chineseness’. Many Chinese students have been found to be ready to offer opinions which are full of ‘Chinese cultural assumptions and prejudices’ (Vickers, 1999, p. 454) and amount to examples of Occidentalism (as outlined in 3.2.2), which he has ignored.

The most criticised aspect of Pennycook’s ideas is that he neglects to recognise the social agency of teachers and learners. With his focus on textual discourse, he omits any reference to student teacher interactions, either inside or outside the classroom. These interactions often bring together a range of discourses related to background (social class, culture, gender and ethnicity). He fails to contemplate the fact that social agents are not merely ‘passive mediators’ of the discourses he describes (Clayton, 2000; Phan Le Ha, 2008). Moreover, his viewpoint presents as somewhat static whereas others who critique similar issues make explicit the dynamic and contested nature of culture and the fact that it is constructed by external forces such as history and social conditions as well as internal forces such as the members of particular cultures (Widin, 2010).

Despite all of these criticisms, linking the teaching of English language to discourses of colonialism has had the desired effect of causing academics and English language teachers to pause and consider what it is that they are really doing. Almost twenty four years ago, Young (1990, p. 20) proposed that postmodernism emerged from the realisation that central constructs such as “Man”, “Humanity” and the “West” are no longer tenable and therefore European history and culture cannot take for granted ‘their unquestioned place at the centre of the world’. The same can be said for English language teaching theories and practices emanating from the West and yet these discourses prevail as can be witnessed in the educational discourses outlined in 3.5.
3.5 Related educational discourses

Numbers of Asian students in Australia have increased. Anecdotally, however, there seems to have been opacity about the learning approaches of these students. Recent research has questioned so called “Eastern” and “Western” ways of learning (Burnett, 2005; Nakamura, 2002; Takayama, 2008). Western teachers have internalised the idea that due to their Western culture they are more assertive, independent and socially adept than many teachers and learners with Asian backgrounds (Louie, 2005). Western educational theories and methodologies are often seen as superior to those emanating from Asia. Section 3.5.1 explores such ‘sedimented representations’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 246) of Asian teaching and learning. It describes how Australians and Asians, West and East have made sense of each other’s education systems. It critiques the ‘taken-for-granteds’ of Western educational discourses. It also encourages reflection on research that has promoted, what Takayama (2008, p. 19) has referred to as Orientalist binary paradigms.

3.5.1 Western educational discourses

Since the 1970s, Western educational discourses have largely discredited mechanistic theories of learning (Knowles, 1973, p. 15) associated with behaviourism. Learning has come to be seen as ‘organismic’. This term was first coined by Pepper (1942). The focus has been on learning as holistic, meaning making activity. Individuals construct, interpret and use knowledge rather than merely imitating behaviours (Askew & Carnell, 1998; Daniels et al., 2012; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Acceptance of this perspective means that learning is considered a process rather than a product. Experience is valued over training (Allen, 2009; Eraut, 2004; Reese & Overton, 1970). There is an emphasis on qualitative knowledge rather than quantitative knowledge (Sun, Slusarz & Terry, 2005). The former is socially constructed (Mayer, 2004; Prawat & Floden, 1994). There has also been a move towards “contextualism”. This is the notion that there is no single reality. All realities are dependent upon the social, economic, cultural and historical context (Daniels et al., 2012).

As long ago as the 1920s, Lindeman saw learning as the development of the Self. He advocated problem-centred thinking (Lindeman, 1926). The 1950s continued this trend.

Researchers and practitioners operating in Western educational settings attempted to conceptualise the ideal or “good learner and teacher”. Rubin (1975, p. 48) was one of the first to document these specific learning strategies. She detailed the characteristics of good language learners. According to her, good language learners were students who were: ‘willing and accurate guessers’; driven to communicate; not inhibited; focused on form; motivated to practise; prepared to monitor his or her own speech and the speech of others; and attentive to meaning. She acknowledged, also, that ‘there are lots of other things which the good learner does’ (p. 48), including varying strategies to suit ‘the task, the learning stage, the age of the learner, the context, the individual style and cultural differences in cognitive learning styles’ (p. 49). The concept of a tangible “good learner” (and teacher), behaving in a way reflecting Western learning theory, prevailed. This prototype added to the impact of similar dogmatic lists of effective teacher characteristics and practices (Hamachek, 1969).

Educational theorists, such as Hutchins (1970) and Schön (1983), steered learning theory away from the idea of formal education in designated places and times (Hutchins, 1970). They recognised that learning is integral to society, taking place at any time and significant to change (Smith, 2001). Mezirow saw learning as transformational (1991, 1994). It takes place when the individual intersects with the social (Tennant, 1993). Cunningham, Daloz & Mezirow distinguished between two ways of learning: instrumental learning which relies upon pre-planned learning tasks, defined needs, behavioural objectives and acceptance of the teachers’ social realities; and communicative learning which focuses on meaning, values, intentions and feelings. The latter can be experienced collectively or individually (Cunningham, 1998; Daloz, 1986, 1999; Mezirow, 1994, 1996, 2003). Other researchers associated

Educationalists took learning into the workplace. They examined the roles of learner intent, noticing and intervention (Boud & Walker, 1990). They espoused the benefits of informal and experiential learning, intuitive practice and tacit knowledge. The focus was on tractability and choice for learners (Eraut, 2004). Most recently, Johnsson & Boud (2010) have described learning as a ‘creative and opportunistic process emerging from contextualized interactional understandings’ (Johnsson & Boud, 2010, p. 359).

There needs to be consideration of the consequences of such Western dominated research, however, for contexts falling outside of the sphere of Western pedagogic environments. This is explored further in the next section.

3.5.2 Approaches to teaching and learning in Asia

The promotion of “new” directions in teaching and learning continues across learning environments even when prevailing pedagogies sit outside these hegemonies (Nozaki, 2009). This promotion creates a tendency towards Othering and perceptions of sub-standard non-Western education systems. It depicts the education system of the Other as ‘backward’, ‘traditional’ (in the sense of tradition being a burden), ‘imposing’ and ‘didactic’ (Bright & Phan Le Ha, 2011, p. 126). This was witnessed very much in early research in education and applied linguistics. The research essentialised Asian students to have different attitudes to learning from those of their Western counterparts (Grimshaw, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Phan Le Ha, 2004). They were portrayed as dependent on memorisation and authority and less able to think independently (Noesjirwan, 1970). They were thought to lack abstract thinking skills, preferring to conserve knowledge rather than extend it (Ballard, 1989, 1996; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, 1997; Chan, 1999). They were observed to have constraints on behaviour due to issues of “face”. They were accused of emphasising the concrete (which stifles creativity) and feeling compelled to please the group (Chan, 1999). Asian students were depicted as: passive learners who wished to just listen and obey (Chan, 1999); dependent rather than independent learners (Noesjirwan, 1970); and constricted by collectivist behaviours (Chan, 1999).
Learning was linked with cultural dimensions like individualism/collectivism (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Park, 2000; Nguyen Phuong-Mai, Terlouw & Pilot, 2005; Ralston, Thang & Napier, 1999; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Triandis, 1995; Tweed, 2000; Wintergerst, De Capua & Verna, 2003). It attributed differences in styles to cultural power/distance (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Hofstede, 1991, 2007; Schwartz, 1999). In particular, much research underscored the influence of Confucius on Asian education (Cheng, 2000; Kennedy, 2002; Tweed, 2000; Wong, 2004). This was possibly over-emphasised in light of the range of Asian philosophical traditions to be found in the region. As a result a number of approaches to learning have been attributed to Asian students and these are summarised and discussed below.

3.5.2.1 Passivity

Confucius did not record his own analects. His followers were responsible for that. He was portrayed by these followers as being convinced of the value of effortful, pragmatic, respectful, collectivist learning. They depicted him as focused on behavioural reform and the acquisition of essential knowledge (Tweed, 2000). Western educators have linked Confucian ideas with passive Asian classroom behavior. Some researchers have questioned this observation, however. They insist that Confucius also encouraged students to be active in their learning. Cheng (2000) uses a quote from Confucius’ analects which states, ‘A good student should study hard and always be ready to ask questions’ (Confucius cited in Cheng, 2000, p. 440). According to Cheng, context and language ability are much more likely to be factors affecting passivity in formal classroom environments. In similar studies, Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999) found that students in Hong Kong remained quiet unless invited to speak. They reported a close personal relationship with their teachers, however. The role of the teacher was coach or parent. The teacher should be strict and yet they should work from the “heart”. Asian students deemed expatriate Western teachers, on the other hand, to be more friendly and less formal but resistant to close involvement with students.

Politeness, passivity and silence have been researched more closely in recent years. Harumi (2011) highlighted the many different functions of silence in the Japanese classroom. She found a mismatch between teacher and learner explanations for silence
in lessons by both Japanese teachers and native English teachers. The former, ironically, were less aware of the culturally oriented use of silence than the latter.

Closely linked with the idea of learner passivity was the notion that Asian educational settings encourage a surface approach to learning. This is discussed below.

### 3.5.2.2 Surface approaches

Confucius said: ‘I transmit, but I don’t innovate’ (Confucius 7:1). This statement challenged Western educators brought up with a Socratic view of the world. In such a world students are encouraged to question and evaluate their own knowledge and beliefs as well as those of others (Tweed, 2000). A Confucian approach to learning appears to applaud memorisation and information transfer. Western educators, however, have deemed these to be “surface approaches” to learning. Such approaches remain unappreciated by Western educators (Marton & Saljo, 1976).

Western educators have also discouraged transmission approaches to learning or what Freire called “banking education” (Freire, 1970). They have advocated active engagement with the lesson content (Entwistle, 2001). They have supported construction of learning and negotiation of meaning (Twomey Fosnot, 1989; Von Glaserfield, 1995). Empirical research, however, has suggested that differences between Australian students and Asian international students’ approaches to learning may have been exaggerated (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). Kember observed that students of any background tend to adopt whatever approach the curriculum, task or situation demands (Kember & Gow, 1991).

Some interpret Confucius as disparaging learning for learning’s sake (Tweed, 2000, p. 10). They claim Confucius was reluctant to recognise a nexus between thinking and learning. Quotes, such as the following, have formed the basis for these conclusions:

> I spent all day thinking without food and all night thinking and studying without going to bed, but I found that I gained nothing from it. It would have been better for me to have spent the time in learning (Confucius 15:31).
Similarly, Chinese sayings such as, ‘although studying anonymously for ten years, once you are successful, you will become well-known in the world’ (Lee, 1996, p. 37), have led Westerners to believe that Confucius advocated an instrumental approach to learning. Such instrumentality in educational goals is often derided by Western academics. It is seen as being at odds with Western educational philosophy originating from Dewey (1899, 1916). Dewey himself, however, took a pragmatic approach to teaching and learning. He saw learning as self-improvement and understanding directed to the needs and interests of the individual. Confucius’ words could be translated to mean ‘success comes from years of hard work’ or ‘many years of study are necessary to achieve success and recognition’. Confucius advocated ‘Mastery Learning’ or ‘holding fast to what is passed on to the present from antiquity’ (Chien, 1986, p. 32). This implies learning without immediate reward.

Much research has sought to inform the surface/deep learning debate. Comparative studies have observed a pragmatic orientation to learning in Western tertiary settings. Students use few analytic or speculative approaches to their learning at undergraduate level in certain subjects (Azila, Sim & Atiya, 2001; Kirkpatrick & Mulligan, 2002; Walker, Bridges & Chan, 1996). What is more, memorisation does not necessarily preclude deep understanding (Kember, 2000; Kember & Gow, 1991). Moreover, a “deep” approach to learning can take years to develop even by academics (Haggis, 2003). Studies conducted by Biggs (1996, p. 45) attempted to ‘debunk’ the ‘deficit’ model. They reported Asian students as having achieved ‘not superficial but a deep understanding of problems posed’. Louie (2005, p. 22) warns that it is dangerous to see a ‘once maligned educational system as a born-again new saviour’ and as ‘superior’ to Western educational practices, however. Surface approaches to learning imply a lack of critical treatment of the subject. This reproductive learning style, commonly found in Asia, has also been the focus of much research.

3.5.2.3 Critical thinking

Selective quotation from Confucius has been used as evidence of a de-emphasis of the status of critical thinking in Asian approaches to education. Close reading of the analects, however, reveals instances where this is not necessarily the case. For example,
students are urged in analect 11:4 to sift Confucius’ teachings and criticise his statements. Furthermore, an apparent lack of innovative thinking is qualified by the conviction that creative thought must only be encouraged where there has been extensive preparatory knowledge (Confucius 7:28, 16:2). A learner who is not a Master of Knowledge in the field is not qualified to engage in criticism. In other words, it is not for the novice or acolyte to critique the work of the Master.

While, there is no doubt that critical thinking may be down-played in Asian educational environments, the reasons for this may be attributable to context rather than learning styles (Cheng, 2000). Thinking and socio-political structures form a classic dialectic. Confucian attitudes, said to be characteristic of Chinese society, are in many ways a product of the stability of the current time. Other schools of Asian thought, such as Taoism and Buddhism, emerged during periods of Chinese instability (Geyer, 2003). Buddhism, for example, recognises ‘a fundamental disparity between perceptions of the world and our own experience in it, and the way things actually are’ (Dalai Lama, 2005, p. 46). This philosophy fosters critical reflection and transformation of ideas and behaviours (Clarken, 2010). Moreover, Louie (2005) points out that, interpretations of the relationship between Confucianism and education have changed over the years. Neo-Confucianists now applaud Confucian education as a way of achieving prosperity and freedom. This is almost a heretical interpretation for traditionalists.

Perceiving the issue differently, some researchers have questioned the legitimacy of teaching Asian students to think critically in Western educational settings. Imitation of prescribed Western approaches falls short of ‘organismic’ (Kegan, 1994). It is more behaviouristic in nature, they allege, an approach largely discredited in the West. Asians need to move beyond the idea of ‘emulation’ of the West, according to Mahbubani (1998, p. 23):

For centuries, Asians believed that the only way to progress was through emulation of the West. Yukichi Fukuzawa, a leading Meiji reformer, epitomized this attitude when he said in the late 19th century that for Japan to progress, it had to learn from the west… The mental shift which is taking place in Asian minds today is that they no longer believe that the only way to progress is through copying; they now believe they can work out their own solutions (Mahbubani, 1998, p. 23).
More cynical researchers claim that critical thinking, in Western university settings, is sometimes little more than supervisors rewarding those students who mirror the lecturer’s ideas (Sandeman-Gay, 1999; Webb, 1997). On a less contemptuous note, Seah and Edwards (2006, p. 305) suggested that critical thinking in certain parts of Asia was readily being embraced. They described how Singaporean students were eager to think critically and wanted to have their ‘brains stretched’, according to the teachers and students used in their case studies.

Academia is fickle. Learners are asked to learn how to think critically and yet, at the same time, they are left to themselves to fathom how exactly this is to be done. Students often have limited historical, political and philosophical knowledge. The issue of learner autonomy is discussed in more depth in the final section of this chapter.

### 3.5.2.4 Learner autonomy

Western learning theories have emphasised the importance of learner autonomy in the educational process (Chan & Kim, 2004; Rogers, 1969; Tennant, 1988; Tennant, 2006; Wenden, 2002). Moore (1972, p. 81) called this the ‘intellectual Robinson Crusoe type image’. Researchers have contrasted this with Asian teacher-centred approaches (Chan, 1999; Noesjirwan, 1970) and dependent teacher-student relationships.

As mentioned earlier, educators have held Confucius responsible for promoting a master/servant oriented teacher/student relationship in Asian education systems. However, Cheng (2000), in an attempt to redress this, points out that Confucius also said, ‘The teacher does not always have to be more knowledgeable than the pupil; and the pupil is not necessarily always less learned than the teacher’ (Confucius cited in Cheng, 2000, p. 440). Asian classrooms, with large numbers of students and non-negotiable curriculum, by necessity, encourage learner dependence via a teacher centred approach. Independent learning can be developed through such a teacher centred approach in a subject focused curriculum, however (Brookefield, 1985a). This is in evidence in the way that Asian migrants, schooled in teacher centred ways, show remarkable independence and self-direction when forming informal networks and new businesses in new countries. Furthermore, Mezirow (1985) pointed out that self-direction can be at various levels of sophistication.
Linked to the idea of autonomy is the importance of the “individual”. Researchers have compared learning in collectivistic cultures with learning in individualistic societies (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Nguyen Phuong-Mai et al., Park, 2000; Ralston, Thang & Napier, 1999; Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Triandis, 1995; Tweed, 2000; Wintergerst, De Capua & Verna, 2003). Individuality is a cornerstone of Western thinking. Lukes (1973, p. ix) stated that ‘in Western society, individualism is the true philosophy… the common characteristic of Roman law and Christian morality.’ Although Western educational discourses have shifted to co-operative, communicative and collaborative learning, the central tenet of Western culture is still predominantly one of individualism. This contrasts with Confucian ideas that learning is the same for all students. Truth and good character are learned from the collective (Confucius 4:17, 7:1). Asian anthropologist Francis Hsu (1985) also questioned this Western preoccupation with the Self and the Individual. He said:

The concept of personality is an expression of the western ideal of individualism. It does not correspond even to the reality of how the western man lives in western culture, far less any man in any other culture. The stranglehold of the western ideal of individualism on our intellectual deliberations must at least be loosened (p. 24).

Critics of both Rogers’ and Maslow’s preoccupation with Self (Geller, 1982) have argued that humans develop within a complicated matrix of interaction to which they respond. The outside, or social, is not the Other (Mezirow, 1985). Moreover, Karl Marx proposed that it was not human consciousness which determined human existence but social existence (Marx & Engels, 1848). Hsu (1985, p. 27) endorsed this view when he remarked that ‘the meaning of being human is found in interpersonal relationships, since no human exists alone’.

3.5.2.5 Summary of approaches to teaching and learning in Asia

Learning theory largely emanating from the West has resulted in an over-abundance of “new” approaches to teaching and learning. However, some researchers (for example Haggis, 2003) see this as the perpetuation of educational “grand theories” or narratives. These discourses represent the goals and values of elite academic culture. They are not the experiences of the majority of students in a mass system (Haggis, 2003, p. 89).
Debates about “good teachers” (Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004) have moved towards searches for the “essence” of good teaching through a more holistic approach to teacher education (Korthagen, 2004). Simplified lists of learner and teacher characteristics have been overwritten. The “good teacher” has become part of a discussion that suggests a need to be aware of dominant discourses and ‘methodological dogmatism’ in teacher education (Liu, 1998, p. 4; Moore, 2004). The discussion also draws attention to what Giroux (1981) felt was lacking in the 1980s; critical examination of privilege and power in educational practice. Kegan’s suggestion that unequal power relations be acknowledged in the construction of meaning (Kegan, 1994) is also recognised.

Asking Asian students to adopt new approaches to learning may instill feelings of deficiency (Johnson, 1985). This has been observed through phenomenological studies, drawing on symbolic interactionism and critical ethnography. These studies have exposed the experiences of postgraduate students living and studying abroad. They document feelings of ‘worthlessness’ and ‘inadequacy’ in Asian students, when teachers attempt to reshape their thinking in ways incongruent with their ‘very essence of being’ (Aspland, 1999, p. 37).

In the 1980s, people like Jarvis (1987) reiterated that learning is not a neutral concept. His words harked back to Foucault who suggested that the “truth” received about teaching and learning is only a product of its time (Foucault, 1972). Learning is defined according to discipline or world view (Haggis, 2003). It is difficult to establish methodological “best practice” without consensus on the practices of a “good learner”. A starting point is the Third Space or ‘Third Culture methodology’, however. Detail about this is given later on in section 3.5 but the basis of it is educational discourse that is ‘context-sensitive and adaptable to the demands of the teaching and learning environment … [using] any method that works’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 239). Currently assessment of the performance of international students against the yardsticks of educational values and practices in the host country puts the onus on the student and not the teacher. The role of the academic is to ‘correct’ the “problem” and the role of the student is to ‘adjust’ to the new academic culture (McLean & Ransom, 2005, p. 45).
Many have argued that the cultural dichotomy set up between educational approaches in the West and those in the East exposes a colonial discourse intent on perpetuating the notion of cultural difference (Bax, 2003; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Chowdhury, 2003; Chowdhury & Phan Le Ha, 2008; Kramsch, 2009; Liu, 1998; Pham Hoa Hiep, 2004; Phan Le Ha, 2004; Takayama, 2008). Essentialised cultural influences in education were not borne out by educational research in Kubota’s study, however (1999). She concluded that educators need to critique the factors which come into play when forming and maintaining knowledge about the Self and Other (Kubota, 2001).

Critical pedagogy has encouraged deconstruction of long-standing Orientalist binary paradigms (Takayama, 2008, p. 19). Takayama states that, ‘… social, cultural and political contexts … are so diverse, the educational systems so incommensurable that it has become very difficult to make any generalizations about the best way to teach …’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 245). Still the research shows asymmetrical relations between Eastern and Western teachers, however. Widin’s study (2010) of expatriate teachers, involved in university English language teaching projects in East and South East Asia, describes the symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1994) of colonialism and aid manifest in such projects. She points to the de-valuing and marginalisation of better qualified host country Asian staff and teachers by expatriate teachers who often have less training, less interest in the students and less cultural capital. The inevitable result is host country teacher self-marginalisation and the consideration of their own skills and expertise as subordinate (Widin, 2010).

On the whole, the literature indicates that recent research has prepared the ground for East/West dialogue and the deconstruction of paradigms, derived in part from Postcolonial discourses (Takayama, 2008). Educational practices, and the philosophies underpinning them, are part of the dynamic social, political and economic climates of their time. Just as one set of educational principles has been established, another may emerge to meet the needs of a changing global economy, as observed by Takayama (2008). She observes that American and Japanese educational systems are now moving in opposite directions. Institutional and pedagogic beliefs have been recentralised in America. The US has moved from ‘progressive’ pedagogical beliefs to a neo-liberal focus on testing, standards and core curriculum. In contrast, Japan is shifting towards
decentralisation, differentiation of curricula and a ‘progressive’ pedagogical ethos inspired by humanistic notions of *kosei* (individuality) and *yutori* (more room for growth) (Takayama, 2008, p. 19). East and West have once more become ‘ships in the night’ (Green, 2000) and part of an East/West polar binary (Takayama, 2008, p. 27).

### 3.5.3 Cultures of learning

In 1996 Cortazzi and Jin produced a seminal work on English teaching in China which moved thinking away from the idea that individual Asian students adopted certain learning styles which were almost innate to them and towards the notion that current practices were developed in certain teaching and learning contexts. They pointed out, for example, that national syllabuses, exams, common textbooks, and clearly articulated perceptions of standard practice amongst Chinese teachers, were central to language teaching in China. At that time China was already changing due to rapid economic growth. Cortazzi et al detected some evidence of social change but reported little change in ‘perceptions and expectations in the education system’ (p. 61). Moreover, teacher, student and parent beliefs about what constitutes “good” teaching and learning and the expectations of these stakeholders were little changed.

As in many Asian countries, English has become a ‘barometer of modernization’ (Ross, cited in Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 64). English is developed informally through the media and Chinese people meet in public places to practise their English. The use of English as a ‘utilitarian tool’ to aid this modernisation is sometimes discordant with English seen as a road to ‘individual and cultural transformation’, however, with the former being the preserve of the English language and the latter being a role reserved solely for Chinese languages. The crossing over of these functions presents questions about the watering down of Chinese identity and whether modernisation, in this case, really means Westernisation (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p.64).

Cortazzi and Jin (1996) described Chinese approaches to teaching as characterised by a focus on the teacher, the textbook, grammar and vocabulary. This contrasts with practices promoted in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (the dominant paradigm in the West) which centres on the development of skills, the learner, interaction, tasks or problem-solving, functions and uses of language. As a result,
Chinese approaches to language teaching have largely become eclectic, with CLT adapted to the specific context in China. The Chinese believe their situation to be largely unique but it is typical of many of its neighbouring countries. Questions have been raised as to the suitability of CLT for Chinese or many other teaching and learning contexts. In the tertiary sector issues of mismatches between expectations in terms of roles of lecturers/supervisors, academic discourses, communication norms and appropriate study skills have emerged.

Findings such as those described above have relevance for many non-Western countries (as well as Western in some instances) which can find themselves in similar circumstances to China. If discussions and collaborations between teachers and learners across borders are to be successful there needs to be a ‘cultural synergy’ in which participants are informed about each other’s expectations, beliefs, attitudes, values and perceptions of effective teaching and learning, in other words each other’s ‘cultures of learning’, according to Cortazzi and Jin (1996). As such they propose their notion of a ‘culture of learning’ to describe:

> taken-for-granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values, and beliefs about how to teach or learn successfully and about how to use talk in interaction, among other aspects of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996a, p. 9).

A culture of learning frames teacher and student expectations in classrooms, interpretation of classroom procedures, the language used in teaching and learning and how interaction can be achieved as part of the ‘social construction of an educational discourse system’ (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006, p. 9). In other words, a Chinese cultural framework for interpreting others’ actions and talk, including teacher behaviour, might be used by Chinese students in Australia and an Australian culture of learning might be used by lecturers in Australia to evaluate Chinese students’ writing or their classroom participation.

The term ‘cultures of learning’ is deliberately plural as it recognises that even students from the same country linked by the same language and cultural heritage can exhibit great social and individual diversity (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). Cultures of learning can be varied as well as homogenous. Moreover, a culture of learning is not static in nature. Recent developments in ELT in China mirror changes occurring all over Asia with the
Ministries of Education encouraging communicative and student-centred approaches to teaching and learning in many places like China and Vietnam. In theory, active participation, practical language ability in real contexts, new teacher roles as ‘conductors’ rather than ‘performers’, and critical and evaluative thinking are nurtured alongside intercultural communication. In practice there is some way to go in terms of methodological change in China (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006) and many other countries in Asia, however.

Other considerations about cultures of learning are that the cultures that teachers bring with them to the classroom are not neutral (Zeichner, 1993). According to Zeichner (1993, p. 54), ‘a classroom is personally, institutionally and socially constructed’. The ‘culture’ brought to the classroom by the teacher may derive from the teacher’s own learning experience as a student and be a ‘hidden pedagogy’ (Denscombe, 1982, p. 249). In addition, it cannot be taken for granted that students’ perceptions of their own cultures of learning will match the stereotypes circulated about their cultures of learning (Kato, 2001). Understanding cultural influence and the many different cultures of learning that may be possible in any classroom environment is crucial to the smooth running of lessons.

3.6 Thirdness

Carl Rogers asked a series of questions, one of which was, ‘Will education be taken over by profit-making corporations, who can be more innovative, more responsive to social need and demand and who will also be more governed by the desire to produce the profitable “hardware” of learning?’ (Rogers, 1969, pp. vi-vii). Rogers could see the political implications of education as it was developing in his time. He could see a world that is both globalised and inward looking. Education would become a commodity and an export. The new world religion would be “schooling” (Illich, 1970). Schooling would be necessary for participation in any society in the world. ‘Pedagogic action’ would align with the interests of the dominant players (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 9).

The environment predicted by Rogers, Illich and Bourdieu, demands teaching built upon knowledge, and awareness of diversity (Milner, 2010, p. 118). This includes
mindfulness of race, cultural conflict, meritocracy, notions of deficit and expectations. The mindset, belief systems and attitudes of teachers entering teacher education need to be uncovered and discussed. If these things are not addressed there is a danger of enforcing, what Eisner (1994) has called, the ‘null curriculum’ or what teachers have not had the opportunity to learn. This will result in teacher failure to question or examine power structures. It will tempt them to perceive things only from their own cultural standpoint (Milner, 2010).

Freire (1970) was vehement about the need for all teachers concerned with bringing down hegemonies in all forms to be heard (Freire, 1970). Recent writings have emphasised that, in order to ‘have a seat at the table’ (Milner, 2010, p. 122), teachers need to develop increased metacultural sensitivity and awareness. This needs to extend beyond collection of cross-cultural information and generalisation or oversimplification of cultures as homogenous and static. It involves recognition that cultural knowledge is in flux, dynamic and, therefore, impossible to gather (Milner, 2010). Reductionist, essentialised, deterministic perceptions of culture encourage teachers to speak on behalf of students. These perceptions encourage notions of culture which can constrain and symbolise. This perpetuates stereotyping, Culturalism and Othering (Holliday, 2005). A study conducted in Vietnam, by Bright and Phan Le Ha (2011), found that expatriate teachers’ accounts of Vietnamese education were vastly simplified, generalised and reduced. They concentrated on ‘an imagined national culture’, irrespective of variables such as students’ language proficiency, funding, resources, educational values and the nature of Vietnamese teacher education programmes (Bright & Phan Le Ha, 2011, p. 130). A ‘meta-approach’ to the understanding of all cultures (Louie, 2005, p. 23), including one’s own, on the other hand, builds a good level of intercultural competence. It helps teachers (and students) to occupy what has been called the ‘Third Space’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 53). This Third Space is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 3.2.
The idea of a Third Space has captured the imaginations of scholars in many different fields. In cultural studies, the Third Space is criticism that denounces the discourses of domination. It ‘occupies a space that is neither inside nor outside the history of Western domination but in a tangential relation to it’ (Prakash, 1992, p. 8). Bhabha (1994, p. 277) referred to this position as one of ‘hybridity’; an in-between position; ‘an ambivalent space in which third perspectives can grow in the margins of dominant ways of seeing’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 237).

In the field of urban planning and design, Soja (1996) proposed a Third Space. He suggested the abolition of binaries (same or different) and adoption instead, of the words “both”, “and”, and “also” (Soja, 1996). He described the Third Space as a place where:

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  everything comes together… subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the
  real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the
differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the
disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history (p. 57).
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The Third Space is also a place for creative combinations. It provides alternative ways of thinking which go beyond conventional borders and the status quo (Soja, 1996).
In religious studies, Ingleby wrote about his organisation, ‘we need to develop ways of cultural interaction, of forming community, that both destroy existing oppositions and create newness, resulting in what I am going to refer to as “hybridity” or a “Third Space”’ (Ingleby, 2006, p. 1). He argues that we can do better than the ‘binary mind set’. The Third Space does not provide a new identity (all about me) so much as a new identification (all about me and another or even the Other, someone different from me). Culture, he says, requires an open notion of Self and own culture (Ingleby, 2006). Diasporas are situated both inside and outside of nations with hybridity raising questions of identity. Ingleby uses an extract by Mokades (The Guardian, 2005) to illustrate what he means:

So there you have it. I'm black and I'm brown and I'm a brother and I'm Indian and I'm Jewish and I'm Muslim..... I'm not alone, either. Among my friends I count a woman who is half-Zimbabwean, half-English; another half-Filipino, half-German Brit; a guy who is half-Dutch, half-Nigerian; and so on. All of us have complex identities.

Such discourse runs in opposition to essentialist ways of thinking. It sees cultural identity as a human construct. There is also recognition that culture is not a perfect entity but consists of systems of knowledge which are mixed up, imperfect and rough around the edges (Ingleby, 2006). As a new way is found through culture, there is a movement from ‘roots’ to ‘routes’ (Gilroy cited in McLeod, 2000). Culture, and the ontology and epistemology associated with it, needs to be seen as ‘a mode, but not a place, of belonging…’ as ‘imagined as it is real’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 248).

Kumaravadivelu (2008) provided a useful analogy to help deconstruct the meaning of Third Space. He compared the lives of two historical Indian figures: Nehru and Gandhi. Both lived through colonial encounters but each emerged into a different space. Nehru developed a partially hybrid identity but was left feeling culturally isolated and rootless. Gandhi, on the other hand, did not experience this same psychological ambivalence. He paid homage to Western traditions and Eastern traditions in his own identity development. He recalled his origins and embraced the best of his own culture and other cultures. He transitioned seamlessly to a Third Space (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 169).
In the world of teaching and learning Kramsch prefers to use the term Third ‘stance’. She sees Thirdness as a process or ‘oppositional way of being’ rather than a permanent or static place that people occupy (Kramsch, 2009, p. 248). She regards The Third Stance as an arena where teaching, learning and research are conceptualised differently to traditional dichotomies (Kramsch, 2009). It is a place where researchers can move their focus away from positivist research and towards more dynamic, emergent phenomena, disassembling binaries in culture (Kramsch, 2009).

Fundamental to all definitions of Thirdness is the perception of Third Space as socially constructed and produced through social interaction and discussion (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2008; Moje et al, 2004). It fosters collaboration and innovation (Bhabha, 1994). It encourages sense making (both joint and individual), shared understandings and practices (Gutiérrez, 2008) and intercultural competence (Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999). On a wider platform than intercultural competence, the Third Space educators see the Third Space as a position from which to help students negotiate and bridge differences between home and school, home and host culture (Moje et al, 2004). Thirdness can help teachers to navigate university and field-based education (Zeichner, 2010) or academic and practitioner knowledge bases. Encapsulated in Thirdness is Kramsch’s ‘ecological culture’. This is a teaching approach that is highly ‘context-sensitive and adapted to the demands of the environment’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 247). An ecological approach to language education means focusing attention on de-territorialised communicative practices (Blommaert, 2005).

The Third Space is not necessarily a harmonious space, however. It can involve the building of new practices and ontologies which may be historically and socially complex and chaotic (Gutiérrez, 2008). Teachers in a globalised world who embrace a certain amount of Thirdness may have the confidence of a new skill set and increased intercultural competence but, at the same time, they may experience ‘dislocation and disjuncture’ (Neilsen, 2011, p. 19) at least until they are fully inaugurated.

Notions of Third Space, Third culture, multiculturalism, hybridity and crossings are not without their critics, however. These critics worry that Thirdness only contests dominant interpretations of a homogenous culture. They take the nation, ethnic group or
‘big culture’ as their starting point and discount the ‘small culture’ observable in any cohesive behaviour of any group. The culture of the family group or company, therefore, can be overlooked. Reification and essentialisation of big culture may come to the fore when considering Thirdness (Holliday, 1999).

In short, Thirdness, either as a space, a culture or a stance, sits outside Postcolonial, Orientalist, Occidentalist and essentialist discourses and in opposition to them, and yet is defined and influenced by their existence. It can be seen as totally separate to either the first or second space (home culture and second or new culture) or anchored in the first and second space (Kramsch, 2009, p. 248). Teachers of Asian students, and Asian students themselves, may be influenced, either consciously or sub-consciously, explicitly or implicitly (hence the broken lines in the figure below), by the social and theoretical discourses of Postcolonialism, Orientalism, Occidentalism and essentialism. They can enter the Third Space during teacher education or skirt around it. In the latter situation, the influences of colonial discourses remain intact and internalised (Widin, 2010). These different journeys are represented pictorially in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Movement from Postcolonial, Orientalist/Occidentalist and essentialist discourses through or around the Third Space to teaching and learning
3.7 Current issues in transnational and international education

As already described in Chapter 2 of this thesis, transnational education, in particular, has become widespread as a mode of delivery for tertiary courses to students who otherwise may not have access to a university education and who want an education delivered through the medium of English but cannot afford to live and study abroad. ‘Education hubs’ in which international universities link up with cooperative programmes have been created in the Asia-Pacific region (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013). In China, the government has supported 169 international cooperative programmes with Australia as lead provider in 16 countries and organisations, including Hong Kong (Wu & Yu, 2006) with Singapore and Malaysia also intent on becoming regional hubs. The extent of transnational education in the region can be understood from figures that indicate that currently, one third of Singaporean students and one quarter of Hong Kong students are enrolled in transnational tertiary courses (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2008). Transnational higher education is attractive because it can be provided without the financial burden that the development of such infrastructure might ordinarily bring to a country (Campbell & van der Wende, 2000).

Participants in this study were involved in international or transnational education either as learners or lecturers. As such, they populated contact zones (Canagarajah, 1997; Clifford, 1997; Hall, 1996; Pratt, 1992). These zones can be seen as ‘spaces of intercultural import-export and transculturation’, according to Singh and Doherty (2004) who paraphrase Hall (1996) and Pratt (2002). Contact zones are not neutral zones, however (Smith, 2001). Historically, contact zones have engaged occupants in ‘interlocking understandings and practices, often with radically asymmetrical relations of power’ (Pratt, 1992, p. 7). As such, experiences of students and lecturers involved in international education and transnational courses in Australia and Asia can be seen against the backdrop of Postcolonialism, Orientalism/Occidentalism, essentialism, and Thirdness already discussed in this chapter. Globalisation itself embodies ‘many of the practices and assumptions of European colonialism and imperialism’ (Phan Le Ha, 2014, p. 6), and raises questions about equity, equality, social justice, knowledge, power and identity (Popkewitz & Rizvi, 2010; Rizvi, 2005). As Widin (2010, p. 10) points out, internationalisation can exacerbate ‘global inequalities’. Education in the developed
world is sought after whereas education in the developing world is devalued. There are few instances of students moving from wealthy countries to less wealthy countries or countries with colonial pasts where English is dominant in education and government. Some of the main issues which arise can be examined under the headings of marketisation, standardisation, student experiences and educator experiences.

3.7.1 Marketisation

Some critiques of international and transnational education focus on cultural imperialism in international higher education. These critiques have circulated in the literature produced by organisations such as Education International. One critique is neomarxist in nature. It describes the tension between human rights and the public good in transnational education and market forces and private competition (also a binary between culturally appropriate education and culturally imperialist education). Education is no longer seen as available for the public good but as an item to be traded (Phillipson, 2006). The second critique depicts transnational programmes and providers as conveyors of homogeneity designed to quash national cultures, languages, teaching and learning approaches. The third critique asks that educational activities across borders be organised through public universities not private providers (Education International, 2004). These critiques fuel debates about the marketisation of education.

In Australia, universities are now compromised with regard to internationalisation as it stands. They genuinely want to contribute to the development of the poorer nations, particularly those in the Asia-pacific region, with scholarships and aid-funded projects, but they are on ‘a more explicit path of attracting fee-paying international students to raise income for themselves’, according to Widin (2010, p. 11). Marginson (2002) has written at length about government agendas to corporatise higher education governance. There has been ongoing concern and a ‘perceived conflict of values’ between those who see education as a product for sale and those who fear for rigour in university academic standards (Morgan et al, 2004). The notion of the “customer always being right”, and the pressure of rewarding those who pay very high fees, lead to a fear of awards being given which are higher than the students’ performance deserves. Academic standards may, as a result, be eroded over time. Schapper and Mayson suggested that (even in
2004) the standardisation of education in a post-industrial era was still strongly Taylorist and Fordist in approach (Schapper & Mayson, 2004). They claimed that any progressive notion of ‘internationalisation’ (p. 201), which attempted to side step standardisation, was stymied by commercial imperatives. The easiest and cheapest way to develop a curriculum that has to be taught to students all over the world at the same time is to create a curriculum that exists totally independent of its context, is generic and universal. Such a design also renders it very suitable for global online education and ‘knowledge products’ (Ziguras, 2008, p. 49) and can be ‘sold across borders’, without any exchange or discussion of ideas or expertise. In many cases this can create what Smith (2009, p. 472) has called a “parent” versus “child” institution, in which offshore campuses are painted as ‘not up to standard’ or in some ways ‘inferior’.

3.7.2 Standardisation

Transnational education impacts on students, local lecturers and home university lecturers and raises many considerations, not the least of which are: the question of standardisation in areas such as academic performance by students; student approaches to learning; content of courses; approaches to teaching content by local and home university lecturers; and issues of planning of units of study. Currently the standardisation debate centres on two main issues: whether transnational courses should consider the new cultures in which they are being offered (Hicks & Jarratt, 2008; Leask, 2008; Wang, 2008; Ziguras, 2008) or whether difference should in fact be ‘dimmed down’ (Egege & Kutieleh, 2008). These debates are considered in terms of both teaching and learning and seek to answer questions like those proposed by Ziguras (2008) on the necessity for cross-cultural awareness education for lecturers travelling abroad or students coming to a new culture, and the need for adaptation of delivery styles to the new culture either in host or home universities.

Pre-occupation with “standards” and “equivalence” has formed one of the main stumbling blocks for engaging offshore partners in more dialogue about the planning and delivery of transnational programmes, according to Pyvis (2011) who suggests that the word “quality” has come to be synonymous with “sameness” to the home university
programme in terms of the transfer or reproduction of the values, understandings and methods identified in the home programme. The drive to achieve sameness dictates that courses delivered transnationally use ‘the same teaching approaches, the same curriculum and the same test team to grade final exams’ with ideas and methods just ‘passed on’ (p. 736) and the home university leaving ‘nothing to chance’ (p.737). As Chapman and Pyvis (2005, p. 27) point out, however, ‘quality in teaching offshore is not necessarily assured through following models of practice that work at home’. A UNESCO spokesperson observed that there is a ‘danger’ of ‘companies selling education outside their frontiers ‘and this will ‘impose the same standards everywhere’ causing a dissociation of education from ‘the social, cultural and political origins of a country’ (James, 2000, p. 19). Guttman (2000) cited Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Director of the Commonwealth of Learning, as saying, ‘a mismatch between offshore curricula and local hopes of building national cohesion, maintaining cultural identity and addressing local resource needs’ is threatening to undermine higher education. He goes on to talk about transnational education as a ‘dumping of local products created for domestic consumption’.

Educators need to know the transnational teaching context and be prepared to develop and adapt the curriculum to the new context. This involves development of a context-sensitive approach and an intercultural stance (Pyvis, 2011). As Seah and Edwards (2006, p. 303) described, teachers in their case study ‘saw a great need to incorporate examples taken from Asian contexts’ in their delivery, in order to help increase the ‘rate of knowledge building’ by their students. Such an approach is endorsed by the AVCC code (2002) which stated that students on transnational programmes needed to be given the chance to ‘relate… studies to their home environment’ (AVCC, 2002, p. 8). Dunn and Wallace (2006b) found that whilst Australian academics might add local examples to materials in offshore teaching they did not change their teaching and learning styles or their assessment practices.

Traditional notions of acquaintance with the new culture have been discounted by some, however, because they realise that notions of Western or Eastern are not static, fixed or bounded ‘sociocultural wholes’ (Singh & Doherty, 2004). Hicks and Jarrett
(2008, p. 435) have stated that transnational teaching is complex because it involves ‘multiple people, cultures, roles, settings, programs and modes of delivery’. It seems that ‘tightly bounded notions of culture no longer adequately inform pedagogic practice in these globalised and globalising sites’, according to Singh and Doherty (2004, p. 9). Moreover, educators working on transnational programmes cannot entirely know or predict ‘the other’ because local lecturers and students may have entered a third space and a new hybrid identity (Singh & Doherty, 2004). Furthermore, in many transnational programmes the context is culturally heterogeneous (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006). For example, cultural constructs are no longer viable in contact zones in which classes are diverse cultural mixes and students from all over the world. The practicality of fly-in/fly-out teachers preparing materials which are informed by understandings about the students and the local context is unrealistic. Moreover, lecturers are often compromised more by the intense nature and time frame of the face to face component of most transnational programmes than the crossing of borders. As outlined by Gribble and Ziguras (2003), FIFO academics often travel overseas two or three times per year for up to ten days at a time, compressing large amounts of input into a few intensive lectures which may be held over a weekend. They may experience jet lag, climate differences, health and dietary issues, transportation anxieties and dissatisfaction with accommodation provision. Added to this, the short exposure to students and the necessarily military pace at which the sessions take place can make the encounter ‘superficial and unrewarding’ (Gribble and Ziguras, 2003, p. 213). Academics are also required to keep abreast of their own work at the onshore campus at the same time and continue to publish and research (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003) while maintaining families at home.

### 3.7.3 Student experiences

As seen earlier in this chapter, international and transnational students have been viewed through a deficit lens in which stereotypes of the kind highlighted earlier in Chapter 3 were formulated. More recently, this has changed to a surplus model, according to Phan Le Ha and Chowdhury (2014), in which international students are given ‘pluses’ and held up as examples of best practice or superior attributes (although
this could still be seen as a form of stereotyping and culturalism). Coming from a different perspective, some recent works now claim that ‘cosmopolitanism and worldliness’ attributed to international students gives them an advantage over other students. Again this could be viewed as “surplusing” disguised as something else (Chowdhury & Phan Le Ha, 2014, p. 10). These educational discourses permeate the literature on international or transnational student experiences and have been dealt with in some depth in section 3.5.

Alongside this literature is the vast amount of research which has been done on international students’ feelings of alienation and culture shock when studying away from home (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, 1986; Pyvis & Chapman, 2005). They have to deal with relocation and changing their lives to fit the new country while studying full time. In contrast, students enrolled on transnational programmes, have many more time issues as they are usually working full-time and studying part-time so they struggle to juggle their job, family and study (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003).

Communities of practice usually develop naturally when people work together in the same physical space (Wenger, 1998) but the communities of practice in transnational education often do not cross borders (Dunn & Wallace, 2006b). Moreover, it cannot be assumed that students studying transnationally will necessarily be studying in their own country. Education hubs like Malaysia do not have homogenous classrooms. Students travel from Brunei, Canada, China, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Mozambique, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore in order to take transnational programmes offered by Australian universities there (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013). Transnational students in such situations struggle with leaving the “community of practice” in which they find themselves once the face to face component of the course is finished and they go back to whence they came or are left to study in a host community which is alien to them with all the culture shock that this may bring (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005). Chapman (2008, p. 175) describes this as a ‘compromise of democratic professionalism’.

Another issue which can arise in the experience of students studying transnationally is expectations. Students often enrol in foreign degrees transnationally because they want to experience a curriculum that is different to their local curriculum, with different
teaching styles and an international perspective (Dixon & Scott, 2004). Chapman and Pyvis (2006, p. 236) proposed that students studying with an Australian university offshore in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong had chosen these transnational programmes because they wanted to construct an identity as an ‘international person’. They were prepared for personal growth and a change in identities. Wang (2008, p. 60) proposed, however, that students on transnational programmes may experience ‘cultural dissonance’, when they actually meet with the new methods of delivery and assessment. He maintains this may not be a cause for concern as they can experience what it is like to study ‘overseas’ without going ‘abroad’. Such interactions can lead to more discussion and consultation in class. Students can be encouraged to ‘look inward and reflect’, processes which are more ‘affective than cognitive, more experiential then intellectual’. Lecturers and students on the programme, whether it be a transnational programme or a course comprised of international students at the home university, need to ‘learn about each other’ with students especially having an insight into the cultural knowledge they require in order to operate in the new community of practice (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005, p. 32)

3.7.4 Educator experiences

Leask (2004, p. 3) has suggested that offshore local tutors, particularly those in Asia, remain as the ‘ground force’ – the people who come in after the ‘airforce’ to sort everything. They never attain the same status as the onshore team and as a result often lack self-esteem. Local tutors are not usually involved in curriculum or assessment design (as mentioned above in ‘standards’). They may also miss out on professional development and intercultural pedagogy. Even if professional development is available, an insensitive approach to this risks continuation of a neo-colonial structure of international academic interactions in which activities and ideals are just transferred wholesale to host contexts without any thought of the ‘cultural milieu’ forming the background to the teaching and learning (Kanu, 2005). Offshore teacher education for local teachers can be predicated on the notion of “developing Others” (Manathunga, 2005). Smith (2009, p. 472) reported how a relationship between an Australian campus and an offshore provider in the UAE was initially seen as a ‘parent/child’ one which
caused some antipathy towards the home university campus. An extension of this was local lecturer feeling that the home university was uninformed about the UAE context and that the former saw the UAE campus as 'somehow inferior'. The proceedings from a conference presentation by Debowski (2003, p. 2) corroborates some of the misgivings of the UAE staff. Debowski talks about FIFO lecturers being ‘exemplars and mentors for those who wish to learn better models of Western instructional guidance’. Moreover, with their experience, expertise and ‘high level teaching skills’, they can serve as ‘strong models to local teachers’.

Local teachers may also be undervalued by their students who prefer lecturers from the home university (as highlighted in the studies of Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Shea & Edwards, 2006 conducted in Singapore) because they assume that the quality of teaching by these lecturers will be higher (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006). Seah and Edwards (2006, p. 302) described a situation in which an Asian immigrant fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) academic experienced extreme dissonance in her first encounter with the offshore students on the programme. She felt that, having enrolled for a Western qualification, the students expected ‘someone white’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon’. When they did not get this ‘they looked down on’ her. This scenario is not specific to transnational programmes in Asia.

Just as students studying transnationally or internationally can experience a sense of isolation, academics from the home university teaching offshore (especially FIFO) may feel cut off from the community of practice with which they are familiar and out of their depth in terms of the new cultural and contextual norms. Professional development programmes which prepare FIFO lecturers for the new environment may help to remedy some of this but these “workshops” tend to be opportunities for information transfer rather than opportunities to discuss educational and cultural discourses (Hicks & Jarratt, 2008). Leask (2004) has suggested that transnational teachers from both the onshore and offshore sites can have their views of teaching and learning called into question in transnational situations (Leask, 2004, p.147). While some intercultural learning can take place simply by experiencing the contact zone and there can be some reflection and modification of world views and values (Seah & Edwards, 2006) this needs to be
augmented with formalised sessions in planning and course review in which both local
staff and FIFO staff work together as a team and all participants are given an
opportunity to affect decision making in curriculum and delivery. On the whole, many
of the issues which arise in transnational programmes for educators and academics are
similar to those they might experience back home in their own culturally diverse
contexts (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003). The ‘most pervasive issue’ for many researching in
the field and striving for a ‘holistic’ approach to transnational education appears to be
communication, according to Pannan and Gribble (2005, p. 7). Dunn and Wallace
(2008, p. 250) suggest that factors such as ‘workload, geography, national borders and
institutional practices’ often prevent inclusive communities of practice from developing.

3.8 Conclusion

The literature in this chapter provided a backdrop and impetus for the present study. It
stimulated a desire to know where participants in the study were situated in terms of the
influences of certain social, theoretical and educational discourses and occupation of the
Third Space. It also encouraged critique of the issues, including notions of a Third
Space.

The first part of the review examined historical perceptions and definitions of Asia and
Asians. The second part drew attention to Orientalist, Occidentalist essentialist and
Postcolonial constructions of Asians and Westerners. It highlighted past constructions
of Asians as inferior, childlike, less intelligent, with minds that are lacking ‘symmetry’
and reasoning which is ‘slipshod’ (Said, 1978, pp 38-39). Underlying many of the
images was an ever present fear emanating from the West.

The third part considered these discourses in historic and current Australian contexts.
Once again fear was identified and comprised loss of “Anglo-Saxon” values and
institutions, fear of being taken over by “swarms” of people who do not assimilate
(‘Proposed Reciprocal Treaty’, 1895) and fear of the Other. The West has been reluctant
to acknowledge the dynamic nature of Asian societies even when faced with evidence
provided by academics (Mahbubani, 1998, p. 23). Asian ‘cultural confidence’ is a by-
product of rapid economic development, educational success and Asiacentricity. The status of Asia has improved in Australia but progress is still limited.

The fourth part of the review looked at the bridge between social and theoretical discourses and educational discourses: English language teaching and its connection with the discourses of colonialism. It provided points of view from those who ascribe to critical pedagogy and asked the reader to consider the idea central to English language teaching for many years that English language teaching is a form of neo-colonial exploitation and that the idea of Self and Other is appropriated in the word TESOL.

The fifth part of the review turned to implications of all of these discourses for teaching and learning in the region. It critiqued wholesale acceptance of Western educational hegemonies. It queried the conviction that Western educational discourses are equally applicable to educators operating in non-Western countries. The continual portrayal of Asian approaches to teaching and learning as ineffective and inappropriate pervades older literature. Recent research has attempted to critically reexamine perceptions based on Western research. The “one-way-street” approach to teacher education does not value the role of Asian plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. It also fails to recognise that, in many instances, Asian educators and students have been educated both at home and abroad. They are, therefore, close to Thirdness. This part also discussed cultures of learning.

The sixth part of the review deconstructed the concept of the Third Space, Third culture, hybridity or crossings and its interdisciplinary nature. Implications of Thirdness for teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region were examined. The notion of Thirdness was also critiqued.

The seventh part summarised current literature on issues related to transnational and international education. Rather than discussing policy and history, as in Chapter 2, it drew attention to the discussions that are currently taking place in terms of marketization, standardization, student and teacher experiences.

With these theoretical and empirical issues in mind, the next chapter describes the research questions, design, method of data collection and analysis which were used to
achieve a greater understanding of how Asian postgraduate students, in their dual roles as both learners and English language teachers, and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters.
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODS

4.0 Introduction

As previously noted, the main research question driving this study was: How do lecturers and their postgraduate Asian students in Australia and Vietnam make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters? Issues emerging from the related literature review suggested the need to explore the impact of Orientalist, essentialist, Postcolonial and educational discourses on Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers. There was also a need to explore movement towards the Third Space. These concerns informed the development of the guiding questions that refine the focus of the central research question. This chapter describes the research framework and methods employed to address the research questions.

To begin with, the chapter presents the theoretical framework for the study. It outlines the key characteristics of qualitative, and interpretivist paradigms within which the study is located. It explains the reasons why the present researcher considered these approaches and paradigms suitable for the current study. It also describes the research design and the case study approach. It provides details about the case study sites and participants. The subsequent sections address, in turn, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Theoretical research framework

The researcher decided to adopt a qualitative framework for the study and an interpretivist approach. Details about each of these means of conducting research and the reasons for their implementation are provided in the next two sections.

4.1.1. Qualitative framework

In addressing the main research question, the researcher sought to investigate the world views of Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers on the MA Applied Linguistics course. The specific aim was to explore how they live, work and make subjective meanings of their experiences. The research methods most fitting for such a study are located in the qualitative research paradigm. Characteristics of qualitative research are
outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). First of all, qualitative research is usually conducted in circumstances where the researcher has had considerable, concentrated, everyday contact with the participants. In this case, the researcher had established connections with the participants in the study as a lecturer on the MA Applied Linguistics course in which they were enrolled. Secondly, qualitative approaches to data collection allow for “holistic” and integrated overviews, without rigorous standardisation of the data collection instrument. The researcher is the instrument. In the present study, interview questions were merely a stimulus for meaning making between the interviewer and the participants. Thirdly, many interpretations of the qualitative data are tolerated. Original forms of the data, such as word clusters or semiotic segments, can be reviewed with participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This enables the reporting of ‘perceptions of local actors’ deep from within (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6) and the exploration of individuals’ understandings, explanations and transformations in their everyday lives. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to define the processes people go through to make meaning and is not focused on the outcome. Participants can describe how they interpret their encounters (Merriam, 2009). As Patton (1985) pointed out, each situation is unique. It is formed in a particular context with particular interactions. Qualitative research can enable the researcher to know and understand, in depth, what it is like to be in the research setting, what the lives of the participants are like, what the world looks like to them and what their meanings are. All of these considerations were relevant to the present study.

Qualitative inquiry is “naturalist” in nature (Wolcott, 1982). Moreover, it is constrained by the values implicit in both the researcher and the researched. Findings are ‘idiographic’; they are bound to a particular time and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). The present study is located within a naturalistic paradigm because of the nature of the research question and the researcher’s belief that realities are holistic, constructed and multiple. Moreover, realities interact in a state of ‘mutual simultaneous shaping’ without any separation between the knower and what is known (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 151).

In order to generate theory about how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam,
the study explored the subjective experiences of the students and lecturers. It was given that social actors do not react uniformly to their environment but, rather, actively interpret situations before acting upon their interpretations. As such, the researcher decided that the best way to achieve this aim was to conduct a study which was interpretivist in its theoretical perspective.

4.1.1.1 The interpretivist paradigm

Interpretivism, ‘as a basic set of beliefs that guides action’ (Guba, 1990, p. 17), and a way of conducting research, is not a new phenomenon (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). It has derived from the “interpretive sociologies” of the early 1920s (Pope, 1982). It was promoted by symbolic interactionists and ethnomethodologists against the positivism of the time. They believed that social science should be providing deeper understandings of individuals, their ways of seeing the world and the meanings they attach to life (Reynolds, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 76). Interpretivism acknowledges that researchers and participants are active in interpreting reality (Blumer, 1969, 1980). This interpretation is reliant upon historical and social practices (Rowlands, 2005). At a very general level, interpretative paradigms are constructivist. They assume a relativist ontology (multiple realities exist), a subjectivist epistemology (the researcher and the participant co-create meaning and understanding) and a naturalistic (set in the natural world) methodology. Terms such as validity, reliability and objectivity are replaced with credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24), trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interpretivists, such as phenomenologists and social interactionists, view the researcher as part of his or her study. He or she is a by-product of the culture and historical time in which the study is taking place. The interpretivist researcher recognises that he or she comes to the study with his or her own world views, conceptual orientations, perceptions and convictions. These will undoubtedly impact upon what is seen, heard or noticed in the field. Interviews are not the gathering of information but rather the ‘co-elaborated’ act of both parties involved (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8).

Although interpretivism is aligned with symbolic interactionism, the Blumer-Mead version of symbolic interactionism has been criticised by Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p.
124). They see it as ‘naïve empirical realism’ and a ‘romantic conception of the Other’. This study, therefore, took an interpretivist interactionist theoretical approach. By doing so it was hoped that the researcher could avoid romanticism by keeping the voices, emotions and actions in context. An interpretivist interactionist approach focuses upon how interacting individuals link their ‘lived experiences to the cultural representations of those experiences’ (Denzin, 1992, p. 74). This enables the researcher to reveal participants’ self-concept’, ‘emotions’, notions of ‘power’, ‘ideology’ and cultural criticism. It also adds another dimension to interviewing: epiphanies. These have been described by Denzin (1989a, p. 15) as ‘those interactional moments that leave marks on people’s lives [and] have the potential for creating transformational experiences for the person… dramatizing and focusing on existential moments in people’s lives’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 709). Underpinned by the principles described above, the present study lent itself to a case study research design conducted at two sites as detailed below.

4.2 Research design and strategy

The study took the form of a case study investigated at two sites. A description of case study research is outlined in this section along with details about the case study sites and participants.

4.2.1 A case study approach

The characteristics of a case are that it is a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). A case can be an individual, a role, a small group, an organisation, a community or a nation. It could be a decision, a policy, a process or an incident. Case studies take “the case” as the central point of the investigation. Punch (2005, p. 145) identified four characteristics of case studies:

- the case study has boundaries;
- the case study is a case of something;
- the case study is an unequivocal attempt at keeping data whole, holistic, unified and full of integrity;
- the case study utilises multiple sources of data and data collection methods typically in a naturalistic setting;
Stake (1988, p. 258) took a slightly different perspective and described a case study as ‘a study of a bounded system, emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time’. In situations where little is known about an issue, or knowledge is fragmentary, the case study can be the very important first step in a larger study.

The present study aimed to investigate the in-depth perspectives of Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers. It was a single case conducted over two sites. The aim was to stay as close to participants’ original voices as possible. According to Freeman (1996), the word “voice” encapsulates three different sets of interrelated ideas: an epistemological position; a sociopolitical position; and a methodological position. All three positions are applicable to the present study. In reporting the findings, participants’ voices have been extensively retained by using large tracts of direct quotation. This technique allows the authentic persona of participants to emerge and their ‘multitude of voices’ to be heard (Moen, 2006, p. 5). By retaining narrative form, participants remained merged with their socio-cultural context. In this way, the study suited a case study approach which values holistic, unified treatment of data and retention of integrity.

The present study also sought to triangulate findings by utilising several sources of data and varied data collection techniques. The main bulk of data was the interview data collected from the participants. Also important, in forming an idea of how meaning was made by the participants, were documents used in the delivery of the units. These comprised lecture notes, readings, PowerPoint presentations, assessment tasks and materials that reinforced the descriptions given by participants. While these written materials were not the prime focus, they served to verify, exemplify and triangulate interview data. This is in line with Punch’s characteristics of case study approaches. Primary texts, often historical in nature, were a further source of data. Methods of data collection and analysis are described in detail later in this chapter.

Stake (1994) divided case studies into three main kinds, intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case study is one in which the researcher seeks to understand more about a particular case. The case itself may be important, unique, interesting or
misunderstood. The aim is not to generalise from the case to other contexts or situations but to understand the case itself in all its complexity and entirety. An instrumental case study provides insights into a related issue or helps perfect a theory. This may mean studying a negative case in order to understand ‘the typical’ by understanding the ‘atypical’ (Punch, 2005, p. 146). A collective case study is an instrumental case study that incorporates multiple cases in an effort to understand more about a certain phenomenon or condition (Stake, 1994). The present study sought to investigate the way that Asian postgraduates and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters. The case was “bound” and the aims of the study were both intrinsic and instrumental. This made a case study research design the natural choice.

The limitations of case study research are well documented. A single case study cannot provide enough evidence to enable robust generalisations. A case can confirm the presence of a phenomenon (Van Maanen, 1988), however. It can be used as a basis for the development of theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003). Intrinsic case studies can be made generalisable by focusing upon conceptualisation. Instrumental case studies can be made generalisable by the development of propositions (Punch, 2005). In both cases, findings can be hypothetically applicable to other cases. They can move from description, towards abstract concepts or propositions and arrive at potentially generalisable findings (Punch, 2005).

Case study research provides in-depth understanding of a unique or unusual case. It is a detailed picture of one case in its ‘natural context’ (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Punch, 2005, p. 144). Again these properties made it an ideal approach for the present study which sought to investigate present day experiences within real life environments (Yin, 2003). Case study data collection can be carried out over numerous visits to field sites (Walsham, 2002 cited in Kelliher, 2005). The present study was located at two very separate sites, an eight hour plane journey apart, in order to accommodate diversity within the unity of Asia.

The case study findings are described in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 7 the discussion moves beyond description to a more abstract level; propositions and theory are
developed from the data. As Punch (2005) points out, every case is, in some respects, unique, but every case is also similar to other cases.

4.2.1.1 Case study sites

The researcher chose two sites for the single case community of Asian postgraduate learners and their lecturers. Having two sites made it possible to do some cross-site analysis and compare findings between the groups of participants as well as treat the notion of Asianness as diverse as well as shared. It also allowed for perspectives from a variety of participants on the internationalisation of education on many fronts: Asian international students residing in Australia; the lecturers of these students; Asian/Vietnamese students studying an international programme “offshore” in their own country; and Vietnamese lecturers delivering input and marking assignments on the course. As the sites have been de-identified, only information that will not lead to the recognition of the institutions has been included in the institutional profiles below. Closer detail about each site was outlined in Chapter 2.

Site One

Participants were drawn from a tertiary institution in Australia that was given the pseudonym UoA (as described earlier in the thesis). UoA has hosted international students, especially Asians, for over 30 years. Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are offered by the university at its onshore campuses and offshore campuses. Transnational offshore twinning programmes have been set up in many countries, particularly in Asia. Like many universities, UoA is involved in the provision of courses and degrees online.

The MA Applied Linguistics is offered as a one year full time programme within UoA. It has run for over 15 years. The onshore course is typically populated by approximately two thirds Asian postgraduate students and one third local Australian students. All of the postgraduates have a related first degree, a TESOL qualification and English language teaching experience or a related first degree and some English language teaching experience. Lectures are conducted face to face. Lecturers are very experienced and four out of the six have a background in English language teaching.
They all hold doctoral degrees in education, applied linguistics or related areas. They are employed with UoA as lecturers, associate professors and professors.

**Site Two**

Participants were recruited from a high profile educational training centre in Vietnam that was given the pseudonym VCoT earlier in Chapter 2. VCoT has operated in various forms since the 1960s and for over 15 years in its current arrangement. It provides educational training, consultancy, development, exchange opportunities and English language teaching for adults and children. The majority of teachers at the centre are Vietnamese but there are some expatriate native speaker teachers. Vietnamese postgraduates usually number around 50 per intake and come from local vicinities or further away in the rural regions. They are all English language teachers seeking to upgrade their qualifications. Some have been awarded scholarships by sponsoring institutions. Students are required to travel to VCoT four times during the MA course in order to take the one week of input sessions with fly-in/fly-out onshore lecturers and local Vietnamese lecturers. They study two units per week every three months and submit assignments to administration staff at VCoT between input weeks. The administration staff send assignments to Australia or local Vietnamese lecturers (three units only) for marking. UoA sends materials to the postgraduates in Vietnam on CDs. Problems with the Blackboard platform in Vietnam have been prevalent. The Vietnamese lecturers are very experienced and all have doctoral degrees obtained from universities in the US or Australia. They have a background in English language teaching.

The sites were selected for four main reasons. First of all, Asia, and in particular Vietnam, is a growing source of overseas students globally. Sizeable numbers are studying through Australian universities. It is imperative that Australia know more about the perspectives and encounters of such students. Secondly, relatively little research has been conducted on Vietnamese learners. Thirdly, some of the lecturers in the study teach both the Asian learners onshore and those in Vietnam. This allows the present researcher to collect deeper insights. Thirdly, site selection allowed the researcher to treat the Vietnamese participants as a cultural sub-group of the Asian
participants. This provided opportunities for cross-site comparison. Fourthly, both sites were convenient for the researcher in that they are places of work as well as research. The researcher visits Site Two twice a year to lecture on the MA Applied Linguistics course. This facilitated data collection and verification.

4.2.1.2 Participants

An invitation to participate in the study was given to ten Asian postgraduate students of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds and nationalities enrolled in the MA Applied linguistics course onshore in Australia. The researcher had already identified them through a process of, what Cresswell (2012) calls, ‘purposeful sampling’ or what others have referred to as ‘purposive sampling’ (Punch, 2005). Qualitative sampling most naturally lends itself to a purposeful sampling approach in that it involves selecting people or sites best suited to help understand the phenomenon under investigation. Such an approach helps to ‘develop a detailed understanding’ leading to the collection of ‘useful information’. It can provide information about ‘a particular phenomenon’ and give ‘silenced people a voice’ (Cresswell, 2012, p. 206). Within purposeful sampling, Cresswell (2012, p. 208) identifies ‘theory or concept sampling’. This present study could be viewed as taking a theory or concept sampling approach to data collection. It sampled individuals and sites which could help develop or discover theory or specific concepts within a theory.

The researcher chose Asian postgraduates of varying ethnolinguistic backgrounds and nationalities at Site One in order to reflect the constructions of “Asian” covered in the literature review. As noted by Miike (2013, p. 202), Asian ‘commonalities’, ‘continuities’ and stabilities are present due to geographical proximity and intercultural exchange but ‘diversities among and within Asian cultures’ exist. The possibility of influence from outside of Asia is acknowledged (Miike, 2013). The students at Site One derived from China, Indonesia, Japan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan. Onshore lecturers were of mixed backgrounds: first generation migrants from Britain, Malaysia, and Zimbabwe; a second generation migrant from Italy; and a sixth or seventh generation Australian. Onshore lecturers were also involved in fly-in/fly-out delivery of units on the MA Applied Linguistics in Vietnam. At Site Two the participant
postgraduates and their lecturers were Vietnamese. As mentioned earlier, the choice of particular sites within Australia and Asia included factors of convenience. The UoA and VCoT were easily accessible for the researcher as workplace environments. They also housed the participants best suited to provide the data needed to answer the research question.

4.2.1.3 Profile of participants

The Asian postgraduates, offshore and onshore, were of similar ages and educational experience. Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 summarise the individual profiles of the participants. Pseudonyms were allocated in order to protect the identity of participants and allow them to feel comfortable in their narration of events and expression of feelings, belief and opinions. Interview excerpts quoted in subsequent chapters use pseudonyms/pseudonym initials and transcript line number as codes. Interviewer excerpts are coded TD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education and qualifications</th>
<th>English language teaching experience (years)</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yin Yin (YY)</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Widjaja (LW)</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andee Sustanto</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Indonesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoko Ono (YO)</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahar Amir (SA)</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wong Li (WL)</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Ngo (NN)</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansour Yani (MY)</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Saudi Arabian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravinder Koo (RK)</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Wen (JW)</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Profile of Asian postgraduate participants at the onshore Australian site
The Asian postgraduate participants onshore were qualified English language teachers with some prior teaching experience in English language to children or adults in private English language centres or government settings. As described earlier, they came from various locations in Asia, namely China, India, Japan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Indonesia and Bangladesh. They spoke many languages between them including Khymer, Javanese and Banjar. Some students spoke up to five different languages and all spoke at least their own language plus English fluently. They had qualified for the
MA course with an IELTS score of at least 6.5, the minimum English language entry requirement for postgraduate coursework at UoA.

Most of the Vietnamese postgraduates had lived in Vietnam all their lives with limited opportunities to travel, study or work abroad. They were all qualified English language teachers with some formal teaching experience. They were relatively inexperienced compared to their Vietnamese lecturers. They spoke English to at least an IELTS level of 6.5. Between them they also had a command of Chinese and French.

As stated earlier, the decision to include two groups of Asian students who were not identical in terms of ethnolinguistic backgrounds and nationalities was deliberate. In this way it was hoped that a diversity of experience and perspectives could be captured from a student and teacher body that is often designated to the umbrella term of “Asian” without acknowledgement that, despite commonalities of culture and circumstances, they are not a homogenous group.

The onshore lecturers were, on the whole, very experienced teachers and academics. They all held teaching qualifications gained either in Britain, Europe or Australia as well as academic qualifications. They had spent a good percentage of their lives as teachers in secondary education and/or private and government English language teaching institutions prior to joining UoA. They were lecturers, associate professors and professors. Four out of the six onshore lecturers also originated from countries other than Australia, namely the UK, Zimbabwe and Malaysia. Between them a few languages were spoken with proficiencies ranging from fluent to survival level. These were French, Cantonese, Malay, German, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew and Aboriginal languages. All had doctoral qualifications obtained in Australia and had published widely. Their fly-in/fly-out status on the MA Applied Linguistics meant that they had all spent at least two weeks living and teaching in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese lecturers were qualified English language teachers who had lived, worked and studied in many places in the world, including America, Thailand and Australia. They had taught in both public and private Vietnamese educational settings with children and adults. They all had PhDs gained at English medium universities in
Australia, Thailand and America. Between them they spoke Vietnamese, English, French and Russian. All were at senior management level and responsible for the day to day running of the centre in Vietnam. They organised and delivered teacher education courses.

The extent of detail which can be provided here is limited by the need to retain confidentiality and anonymity both for the individuals themselves and the institutions in which they work. Subsequent chapters will identify participants by their pseudonyms or nationality.

4.2.2 Data collection

The researcher collected data in a number of ways best suited to the research questions. Having a variety of sources provided triangulation for the information gathered. The following section describes the research questions, both main and guiding, the interview questions and other sources of data, namely documents and primary texts.

4.2.2.1 Research questions

As outlined earlier in the chapter, the study sought to elicit data located in the broad field of experiences of teaching and learning and related disciplines. The investigation drew on the perspectives of academics (Asian and non-Asian) and postgraduates (Asian) who also happen to be English language teachers. It sought to provide answers to the main research question:

How do lecturers and their postgraduate Asian students in Australia and Vietnam make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters?

Guiding questions were formulated as follows:

1. What influence has the Western construction of “the Asian” and the related social and theoretical discourses had on postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?
2. How have Asian background and culture contributed to Asian postgraduate students’ and their Asian lecturers’ perceptions of themselves as Asians?

3. How have theories of teaching and learning established mostly in the West influenced postgraduate Asian students’ and their lecturers’ views on teaching and learning and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?

4. How have postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers responded to theories about “the Asian learner”?

The two main sources of data were interviews and documents. The use of several forms of data provided some triangulation for the study. Such corroboration of evidence from different individuals, different types of data or different methods of data collection, was necessary for the study to have authenticity, credibility and accuracy (Cresswell, 2012).

4.2.2.2 Interviews and interview questions

Interviews were the primary source of data collection. At Site One, UoA, the researcher approached Asian postgraduate participants after their unit lectures and gave them information about the study. They were invited to participate in one-on-one interviews. If they agreed to be in the study they were given informed consent documents to sign and an interview time. It should be reiterated once more that the researcher is also a lecturer on the MA Applied Linguistics course in which students were enrolled. The researcher approached potential participants after they had finished taking the unit delivered by the researcher. The latter’s decision to take the role of interviewer was influenced by Patton’s (2002) comments. He claims that personal knowledge of the researcher or the research can improve participation. The timbre of the MA sessions with postgraduate students, both onshore and offshore, was one of informality and chattiness. Both lecturer and students engaged in “yarning” about their own personal lives and experiences as they related to theoretical points and created ‘a bonded classroom’ (Senior, 2006). Therefore, the ‘hierarchical pitfall’ described by Reinharz (1992) appeared to be minimised (as much as was possible in any teacher-student relationship). This facilitated openness and honesty, a greater range of responses and, ultimately, richer data. The researcher conducted interviews on the Australian campus
over a period of three months during 2009 with the aid of a digital recorder. They were then transcribed for analysis.

The researcher contacted the administrative staff in VCoT via email and asked for volunteers. Ten Vietnamese postgraduates came forward. The administrator at VCoT allocated times for each participant during the week of lectures conducted for each unit of the course in Vietnam. It was necessary to do interviews at this time as it was the only time that all participants came together from different parts of the city and outlying rural areas. The researcher flew to Vietnam to conduct the interviews at the same time as the students were taking the week of unit input. This procedure was the same for the three Vietnamese lecturers. They too were interviewed one on one during the week of lectures for the MA Applied Linguistics at the centre in Vietnam. Interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and then transcribed.

The researcher approached onshore lecturers face to face or emailed them and invited to them to participate in the study. Of the seven lecturers approached, only one declined the invitation. After receiving signed consent, the researcher arranged and conducted one-on-one interviews on the Australian campus over a period of six months during 2012. Data was recorded using a digital recorder and researcher transcription.

Interviews were semi-structured (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990). The interviewer approached each interview with the same set of questions but was also prepared to be “led away” from these questions if, and when, participant issues arose. Semi-structured or unstructured interview techniques have become the mainstay of feminist and postmodern research because they have sought to include both the interviewer and the interviewee in co-construction of interview data. This is a move away from what feminists perceived as a masculine tradition of scientific positivism, objectivity, detachment and towards openness, engagement and the establishing of trust between interviewer and interviewee (Punch, 2005). Postmodern researchers have also questioned the moral side to the traditional researcher-subject interview. They have queried the role of the interviewer and the influence of the interviewer on the data. They have highlighted issues of gender, race and perspectives of the ‘decolonised, disadvantaged and disempowered’ (Punch, 2005, p. 174). Interviews with no structure
or guiding questions, while leaving the interviewee free to construct their own story without fear of influence from the researcher, cannot guarantee that valuable data will emerge (Silverman, 1993) and may create confusion on the part of the participant. A key component of any social research interview should be the rapport between the interviewer and the interviewed (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) if maximum data is to be elicited.

In this particular study the interviewer could be accused of implying a binary between East and West; the ‘Asian learner or teacher’ and other learners and teachers, in the interview questions (see questions in Table 4.5 below) and sending this message to interviewees. This was unintended but unavoidable if useful data was to be collected. The relationship between the interviewer and the participants in the study enabled participants to realise that such questions did not necessarily represent the interviewer’s perspective and were simply a means of pursuing a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984) and ‘inciting’ or ‘provoking’ meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 1998, pp. 124-5). Interview questions were open-ended. The researcher used “how” and “what” type questions so that participants ‘could best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings’ (Cresswell, 2012, p. 218). Comments, and narratives provided by interviewees, were always going to be “filtered” through the views of the interviewer. The latter ‘creates the reality of the interview situation’ through ‘situated understandings’ that have been tempered by his or her personal characteristics (Punch, 2005, p. 176). The researcher used closed-ended questions to establish information that could support theories and concepts in the literature review (Cresswell, 2007). This type of question provided gate keeping for further questions on the topic. The closed questions were followed by open-ended questions when affirmative answers to closed questions were given. A full list of the main interview questions is provided in Table 4.5. The researcher asked participants further questions during interview to prompt and probe for further information. All postgraduate participants had been exposed to the literature on learning styles and strategies, Western and Eastern educational discourses, in the MA Applied Linguistics course and possibly previous TESOL courses that they had completed. Interview questions, therefore, were within their realm of experience and knowledge.
Main interview questions for semi-structured interviews

1. How do you think people in the West see Asians?
2. How have people in the West seen Asians in the past?
3. How has the West depicted Asians in Western literature, art, movies and media?
4. Are you aware of the ideas of Edward Said and his theories about Orientalism? What are your perspectives on this?
5. How have Western views of the ‘Asian’ affected you? *(For lecturers only) – For example teaching the units/materials?*
6. *How do you mediate/alter/prepare Western material or pedagogy for your Asian students?* *(Not for onshore lecturers)*
7. How has your (Asian) background affected your perception of yourself do you think? *(Not for onshore lecturers)*
8. What does the “good teacher” do in your opinion?
9. What does the “good learner” do in your opinion?
10. Are you aware of the learning styles attributed to Asian students (by people in the West)?
11. What is your response to these theories?

Table 4.5: Main interview questions

Provision was made for follow up interviews with both the Asian postgraduates and their lecturers onshore. Follow up interviews for the Vietnamese participants were more problematic due to considerations of distance and cost. Even if the researcher could have overcome these obstacles, the Vietnamese postgraduates were busy and often lived hundreds of kilometres from the CBD. It was unlikely a further interview would be possible until the next input sessions for the MA, three months after the initial interview. Email was a possibility, however. All Vietnamese postgraduates supplied email addresses for the purpose of follow up interviews. In reality, email contact proved to be problematic. Most Vietnamese participants were managing two jobs, extended family scenarios, long travelling times, coursework for the MA and the occasional typhoon that brought down internet access. The three Vietnamese lecturers in the study were top management personnel and in senior positions at the time of the study. Their availability was limited to time between international visits and high profile commitments. One of the Vietnamese lecturers in the study (DA) passed away unexpectedly in November 2011, shortly after being interviewed. His invaluable contribution to this study has been acknowledged at the beginning of the thesis.

Overall, very little follow up eventuated with any of the participants. This might be attributed to the extended length of interviews (approximately one hour) or the very informal manner in which interviews were conducted which gave ample opportunity for the interviewer to follow up any ambiguities seamlessly.
4.2.2.3 Documents

The researcher collected primary and secondary documents for two main reasons: to verify and triangulate the data collected from interviews; and to help build knowledge of the institutions involved in the study. With the first aim in mind, the researcher collected lecturer generated unit outlines, tutorial plans, lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, reading texts, teaching activities and any other teaching resources from participant lecturers. This helped to corroborate data obtained from participants about changes they had or had not made to the UoA units for the offshore site in Vietnam (see interview question 5 above and additional question for lecturers only).

At Site One, the researcher collected documents by approaching the MA Applied Linguistics postgraduate course coordinator at UoA and requesting MA unit outlines. These documents could be classified as official-private in terms of authorship and restricted in terms of access (Scott, 1990). As a staff member of the UoA, collection did not present any problems. The researcher approached individual staff members and asked about the materials used to teach their units. The material for each unit is updated each course and then sent to Vietnam on a CD. It was a simple task to access all readings, PowerPoint presentations, assessments and lecture notes and to compare them with the onshore delivery materials. The researcher was also the former MA course coordinator and so the material used for the course was very familiar. The researcher investigated any changes to the material, in response to the new Vietnamese context, during interviews.

At Site Two, documents from the Vietnamese lecturers were a little harder to collect. During interviews the researcher requested access to any extra materials or resources used to supplement lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations sent on the CD. Lecturers initially reacted defensively. They were keen to emphasise their adherence to the prescribed course materials and assessments. There was a sense that admitting they had changed or added to the material might result in reprimand from the home university. They were more forthcoming, however, once they had been reassured that this was not the case and that, in fact, adaptation of the materials to the new context was to be commended.
Other documents collected for the study were government policy and information
documents, university policy documents, centre annual reports, background documents
and documents outlining educational change in Vietnam. These were collected from
official websites. They were used to help verify and exemplify points made by the
participants as well as shed more light on institutional history and background, strategic
aims, internationalisation vision and practices and educational discourses. At all times
the source of the document was kept in mind alongside its authenticity, credibility,
representativeness and meaning, factors which are also discussed under document
analysis.

4.2.2.4 Primary texts

In order to research the features and characteristics of social and theoretical discourses
such as Postcolonialism, Orientalism and essentialism, the researcher needed to located
primary texts. This involved searching data bases for historical works including Lord
Cromer’s *Modern Egypt* (1906), Sir John Malcolm’s work on essentialism (1815) and
archived copies of *The Bulletin* from the 18th century. The researcher also did a search
for Orientalist influenced works in the forms of art works, literary texts, popular culture
texts, music, stage productions, films, radio broadcasts and television broadcasts. All
these were described in Chapter 3 and are also referred to in the discussion and
conclusion chapters. These works functioned as more than just a literature review
because they were a research strand in themselves.

4.2.3 Data analysis

The researcher analysed the data in ways suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994). The
type of data that the researcher analysed fell into four main areas: short responses to
questions in interviews; longer responses or narratives; documents and primary texts.
Analytic processes for each type of data are described in the next four sections.

4.2.3.1 Interviews

Interview data were analysed using an approach described by Miles and Huberman
(1994, p. 4) as ‘transcendental realism’. The researcher chose this approach because:
transcendentalism resembles grounded theory approaches in that it is bottom up in nature but, unlike a grounded theory approach, it allows for the gathering of data in only a few sittings and on a few occasions. This was very important for this present study as travel to Vietnam was limited to a few collection visits;

- theory can be generated from the data;
- the inductive nature of the approach allows maximum opportunity for participants’ voices to be heard; and
- interviews can be guided although they are semi-structured. This was important when dealing with second language learners, fairly small windows of opportunity for scheduled interviews and limited opportunities for follow up interviews.

The three main components of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) approach to analysis are data reduction, data display and drawing, verifying conclusions. This cycle is portrayed in Figure 4.1.

Data reduction occurred in many forms. To begin with, the researcher summarised the interview data immediately after transcription. This meant that issues and topics were still fresh in the researcher’s mind. The researcher then allocated a two page Contact Summary Form (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to each transcript. This contact form summarised the main issues of the contact, information collected and not collected, related points and questions to be included in future interviews.
The researcher located answers to the interview questions in the transcript summaries, then coded and reduced the information by descriptive and inferential (pattern) coding (Punch, 2005, p. 200). This was accompanied by, what Glaser (1978) and Miles and Huberman (1994) have called, memoing-theorising about ideas and relationships. The informal, semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that answers to questions might not arise at the moment they were asked but as a side track from other questions or in general conversation. The researcher grouped responses to the interview questions together under four categories for ease of reporting: Asian postgraduates from the onshore Australian site (which included Asian students from many different ethnolinguistic backgrounds and countries); Vietnamese postgraduates from the offshore Vietnam site; lecturers from the onshore Australian site; and Vietnamese lecturers from the Vietnam site. Categorisation of all the data pertaining to each interview question was then carried out and displayed.

In order to arrive at a further reduction of data down to central themes and concepts, the researcher returned to the transcripts and identified common emergent themes for each group of participants. As common themes started to emerge, headings were created for each theme. Comments could then be added to previously identified themes or new headings created. The researcher listed each comment under an identified theme and coded back to the interview turn. This meant that comments could appear in both the analysis of answers to interview questions and the identification of key themes. If comments were not supported widely in the sample but were still interesting comments because they shed light on a related issue, the researcher made a memo and a heading for additional relevant data. Similarly, the researcher noted the number of times particular words arose. This was not done with a view to conducting a content analysis but more as a way of verifying the emerging themes. All of this was done while attempting to avoid loss of information and maintenance of the data within its context.

In the final stage of data analysis, comparison of themes across the participant categories led to the development of theoretical propositions and the diagrammatical display of these propositions in some instances. The researcher took the opportunity to display findings in the form of relationships, networks, diagrams and tables throughout the analysis. Throughout the process the researcher was mindful that while meaning is
not accidental (Schirato & Yell, 2000), interpretation is not truth. The researcher can only hope to arrive at credible and satisfactory interpretations of the data (Fairclough, 2003).

4.2.3.2 Narratives

Some of the participants’ responses constituted what has been called ‘narrative’ (Labov, 1972, 1982). Not all narratives are stories in the strict sense of the word. Narratives may be habitual (events reoccurring with no peak), hypothetical (events do not happen at all) or topic-centred (snapshots of thematically linked events) (Reissman, 1993, p. 18). This may be particularly true of learners and teachers (Delamont, 1989, 1990; Goodson, 1992; Measor & Woods, 1984).

During semi-structured interviews, participants sometimes narrated anecdotes or stories or wove ‘themes into long accounts’ which had particular ‘coherence’ and ‘sequence,’ ‘defying easy categorisation’ (Riessman, 1993, p. vi). The researcher felt that sometimes it was in the researcher’s interests to preserve, not fracture, participants’ ways of constructing meaning (Atkinson, 1992; Reissman, 1993). Fragmenting experiences might have meant losing the essence of what was being said. Furthermore, many researchers have recognised that an important way for individuals to make sense of experience is to transfer it into narrative form (Bruner, 1990; Gee, 1985; Mishler, 1986a). Moreover, the literature has described intact narrative as ‘inherently interdisciplinary’ and capable of extending the ‘interpretative turn’ (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987). These qualities encapsulated the aims of the current research. The researcher analysed and displayed extended narrative offered by participants in the study along with the segmented analysis.

4.2.3.3 Documents

Documentation took the form of lecturer generated unit outlines, tutorial plans, lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, reading texts, teaching resources and teaching activities. The lecturers provided this material in response to interview question 5 (lecturers’ version). The researcher used it to corroborate comments made by the lecturers. The onshore lecturers did not offer extra material to that contained on the
CDS. Material on the CD was enough to corroborate comments made by onshore lecturers.

The researcher used government policy documents, institutional policy/information documents and institutional website information to verify and support comments made in interviews. Documents were coded alongside interviews and included in the same categories which contributed to the emergence and identification of patterns in the data.

While considering documents, the researcher took into account the social production of the document and its context (Finnegan, 1996; Macdonald & Tipton, 1996) as well as ‘the social organization of the document’ (Silverman, 1993, p. 63). The researcher scrutinised documents for authenticity, credibility, representativeness, meaning (‘multilayered’ according to Finnegan, 1996, p. 149), truth and error.

4.2.3.4 Primary texts

The researcher analysed historical texts, artworks, literature and any works depicting Orientalist and essentialist themes in the light of statements made by Edward Said (1978) and others. This added credence and evidence to social, theoretical and educational discourses discussed in the study. Primary texts also provided a backdrop to interview data and helped locate the comments of participants in Asia and Australia, past and present. The researcher did not closely analyse texts but used them to exemplify, corroborate and inform first-hand about colonial images of the East and Western constructions of Asians. The researcher took into account the social production, context (Finnegan, 1996; Macdonald & Tipton, 1996), authenticity, credibility, representativeness, meaning, truth and error of the document. Analysis of the primary texts formed a conceptual framework in which to “read” the data analysis.

4.2.4 Summary of data collection and analysis processes

Table 4.6 summarises the data collection and analysis procedures for each guiding question. The nature of the interviews allowed for a great deal of “overlap” in addressing the individual research questions. This was reflected in the analysis. Reference to the inclusion of primary texts in the analysis of data is not made because,
as mentioned earlier, the primary texts were used only as a conceptual lens through which to make sense of the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding question</th>
<th>Data collection processes</th>
<th>Data analysis processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What influence has the Western construction of “the Asian” and the related social and theoretical discourses had on postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?</td>
<td>Lecturers onshore and offshore: - Collection of unit outlines, teaching resources and activities, Power point slides, reading texts compiled by lecturers. - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Students off-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. - Follow up e-mails. Students on-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews.</td>
<td>Coding of content of documents alongside interview data. Miles and Huberman approach to analysis of interview data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How have Asian background and culture contributed to Asian postgraduate students’ and their Asian lecturers’ perceptions of themselves as Asians?</td>
<td>Lecturers onshore and offshore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Students off-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. - Follow up e-mails. Students on-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews.</td>
<td>Miles and Huberman approach to analysis of interview data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How have theories of teaching and learning, established mostly in the West, influenced postgraduate Asian students’ and their lecturers’ views on teaching and learning, and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?</td>
<td>Lecturers onshore and offshore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. - Collection of any documents compiled by lecturers - unit outlines, lecture notes, reading texts, teaching activities, Power point slides, tutorial plans. Students off-shore: - Individual, semi-structured in-depth interviews. - Follow up e-mails. Students on-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews.</td>
<td>Miles and Huberman approach to analysis of interview data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How have postgraduate students and their lecturers responded to theories about the “Asian learner?”</td>
<td>Lecturers onshore and offshore: - Collect any materials/Powers point slides, unit outlines, lecture notes, tutorial plans, teaching activities written by lecturers. Students off-shore: - Individual semi-structured in-depth interviews. - Follow up e-mail ‘interviews’ when necessary. Students on-shore: - Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews.</td>
<td>Analysis of lecturer produced works alongside interview data. Miles and Huberman approach to analysis of interview data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Data collection and analysis processes for each research question

The researcher analysed the findings in three ways. First of all, as illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6, categories were formed which remained very close to participant responses to the interview questions. Secondly, categories were constructed which grouped similar responses and highlighted different responses at a level above the words of participants.
Thirdly, more abstract categories, developed from deeper analysis of the summaries of responses, combined with insights gained from supporting documents and the literature, were created which formed the basis of the five propositions presented in Chapter 7.

4.2.5 Trustworthiness

The measurement of concepts such as internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity is inappropriate in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that, none the less, it is still necessary to ask certain questions of the research. These include questions about the “truth” of the findings, the applicability of the findings across contexts, the consistency of the findings in repeated studies using the same participants and the “neutrality” of the study. Moreover there needs to be consideration of the extent to which the results may be a result of researcher bias, motivations, interests and perspectives. In other words, it is necessary to establish, ‘research legitimisation’ (Kelliher, 2005, p. 123). To this end, Guba (1981a) suggested that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are a better fit with naturalistic epistemology. Consideration of such factors leads to greater trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The researcher established credibility in the present study in several ways suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 301). The first was ‘prolonged engagement.’. The offshore program in Vietnam has operated for seven years and over this time the researcher has built up a knowledge and profile of the students typically studying in Vietnam. Furthermore, the researcher conducted the study over five years with several visits to the sites. Triangulation enhanced the analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of interview data with relevant, related documents and historic, interdisciplinary, primary texts. Member checks with participants ensured validity of data interpretation and credibility of the study.

Transferability of the findings to other contexts is more problematic in qualitative case studies, as explained early in this chapter. Findings can be used to confirm the presence of a phenomenon (Van Maanen, 1988) in an intrinsic case study (Punch, 2005), however. This can be a basis for theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003) in an instrumental case study (Punch, 2005). The researcher does not attempt to claim any transferability
index but does attempt to provide the widest possible range of data and thick description to make it possible for judgements on the part of ‘potential appliers’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). The focus on Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers at two sites allowed greater transferability or dispute of theories and themes than if only one site had been used.

The researcher established dependability by using transparent research procedures. The emphasis was on the display of primary data. Interview data were confirmed by numbers of participants espousing similar views, by documents corroborating the interview data such as policy documents, background documents, teaching resources and by the related literature and primary texts.

4.2.6 Location of the researcher

As with many qualitative studies, this study relied on the perspectives and findings of a researcher with insider status. As such it was an emic study. The decision to conduct such a study was not made naively, it was informed by literature which has stated that closeness of the researcher to the data can add to the credibility of the study, through ‘prolonged engagement’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). Contact with participants in a study prior to analysis can develop a degree of ‘reflexivity’ (Bourdieu, 1992). Social research cannot be carried out in a vacuum because it is connected to the wider society and, to some extent, the researcher if he or she has been involved with participants prior to the study. Reflexivity acknowledges that the positioning of researchers will be formed by their socio-historical locations, values and interests. Moreover, fieldwork can be enhanced by familiarity with the language and culture of the research sites and shared understandings between the researcher and the researched. At the same time, in such instances it is imperative that the researcher appreciate that what appears as “normal” to her should be treated as unknown and open to re-examination.

It is conceded that insider preconceptions may unwittingly have been formed in this study with such closeness, however. With this in mind, the researcher took care to avoid this by keeping questions open-ended and non-leading. Data analysis retained participants’ voices and included stretches of narrative. None the less, the researcher acknowledges that she is a gendered, classed, raced individual who is constantly
constructing and recounting a location as well as negotiating a position with regards to interactions of domination (Giroux, 1991). During interviews some of the Asian participants called her ‘ma’am’, indicating a power differential. It is also possible that the insider relationship with students may have influenced them in their choice of responses. However, to assume that the Asian participants had no agency in their own responses would be to fall into the same trap as that alluded to by Phan Le Ha (2008) and Clayton (2000) in Chapter 3, in which authors and researchers fail to contemplate the fact that social agents are not merely ‘passive mediators’ of the discourses they inhabit. Moreover, as highly educated critical thinkers, it might be assumed that, in fact, participants might seek to critique rather than comply. There was also a risk of a perceived dependent relationship between the Asian learners and the researcher because the researcher was a lecturer on the course in which participants were enrolled. Such a situation may foster familiarity and comfortableness for the participants but could also be perceived as an unequal power situation that may lead to the Hawthorne Effect (Landsberger, 1958). The researcher considered interview technique and explanation of the aims of the research carefully to avoid this power play. In addition, interviews onshore were timed to be after any units conducted by the researcher had been completed. Co-lecturers marked Vietnamese participant assignments.

The researcher has had considerable experience working with students from Asia and has lived and worked in Vietnam, Egypt and the Sultanate of Oman. This experience could add to researcher credibility but there was also the danger of being accused of being an apologist for these cultures. In contrast to this, the researcher also recognised that she was probably personally steeped in Orientalist subjectivity without even realising it. In-depth interviewing, peer debriefing and member checking helped to reduce the impact of any unintentional bias. Nevertheless, the researcher remained aware that this study was itself in danger of Othering (Fine, 1994). The researcher reported the words of participants closely but recognised that simply by getting involved, analysing, probing, speaking, remaining silent or even walking away, the researcher had made a decision ‘to nuance… relations with/for/ despite those who have been deemed Others’ (Fine, 1994, p. 74). In recognition of this, the researcher attempted to treat participants as ‘constructors and agents of knowledge’ (Fine, 1994, p. 75).
Finally, interviews were conducted in English, a second, third or fourth language for all of the Asian postgraduate learners, three of the Vietnamese lecturers and one of the onshore lecturers. Although all participants were at an IELTS English language proficiency level of at least 6.5, topics such as those discussed in interviews were complex and academic. It is possible that, firstly, the meaning that was made between interviewer and interviewee was not always what was intended by the participant or understood by the participant. Secondly, certain concepts might have got “lost” in translation. As an English language teacher in a previous life, the researcher allowed participants ample time to think and formulate answers, summarising and checking meaning after several exchanges. Participants were also encouraged to exemplify and narrate around the questions, adding whatever information they felt was relevant. They deviated from the topic a lot of the time. The researcher retained these deviations in the transcripts in an attempt to include as much surrounding context material as possible.

4.2.7 Ethics compliance

The study was approved by the University of Western Australia’s Research Ethics and Research Services Department (M459) on January 7 2009. The statement of approval is reproduced here: ‘Please be advised that ethical approval of the above project has been granted in accordance with the procedures of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Western Australia’.

4.3 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter outlined the theoretical framework and design of the study, the ways in which data were collected and analysed and the reasons for this approach, and the ways in which trustworthiness was assured. Chapters 5 and 6 present the case study findings. Chapter 5 focuses on findings related to the postgraduate students and Chapter 6 then describes the findings pertaining to the lecturers.
CHAPTER 5 CASE STUDY FINDINGS: ASIAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ONSHORE AND VIETNAMESE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OFFSHORE

5.0 Introduction

The overall aim of this study was to generate theory about how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam. In the view of the researcher, this aim necessitated an investigation into possible impacts of Orientalist discourses, Eastern constructions of the “Asian”, Western and Eastern educational discourses and movement towards the Third Space. In line with these aims, this chapter presents the case study of the Asian postgraduate participants. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first main section reports findings at Site One Australia. The second reports findings at Site Two Vietnam. Each of these sections is organised according to the main interview questions and overall topics that were discussed. This is exemplified in Table 5.1. Analysis of documentary data is used to triangulate findings from the interviews. Points made by postgraduates and lecturers in interviews are merged with narratives as a way of further illustrating key themes and issues.

Findings are an approximation of the meanings that might have been intended by participants. The researcher does not contend that participants had the ‘same or similar subject positions’ (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 42) in relation to their professional identities as English language teachers/postgraduates and university lecturers. Responses indicated a common discourse, however, and some shared understandings. The study was not conducted at a single site but a community of practice (Wenger, 2006) could be distinguished in that all participants were educators and most were language educators.

Where there is consensus in responses, this is indicated, but the study did not seek to report only on shared meanings. Rather, it was acknowledged that there may be much disparity of experience and perspective amongst a student and lecturer body often referred to collectively as “international” or “Asian” and treated as a homogenous unit. The third main section of the chapter presents cross–site observations but cross-site
comparison was not the main aim of the study. Such an aim would have entailed much tighter control of the choice of participants. Categories and sub-categories developed for responses to the main interview questions are shown in Table 5.1. Discussion of the themes and propositions generated from the case study findings takes place in Chapter 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main interview questions</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Beyond the classroom: Perceived images of Asians</td>
<td>Present images</td>
<td>Appealing images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How do you think people in the West see Asians?</td>
<td>Past images</td>
<td>Pejorative images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How have people in the West seen Asians in the past?</td>
<td>Western media, literature, art</td>
<td>Double inscription (Vietnamese postgraduates only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What about in literature, art, movies, media? What images have been depicted?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Beyond the classroom: Effects of Orientalism, Western views and Asian backgrounds</td>
<td>Orientalism</td>
<td>Beneficial effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are you aware of the ideas of Edward Said and his theories about Orientalism?</td>
<td>Western views</td>
<td>No/little effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How have Western views of Asians affected you?</td>
<td>Asian backgrounds</td>
<td>Deleterious effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How has your (Asian) background affected your perception of yourself do you think?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic: Western educational discourses, the &quot;good teacher/learner&quot; and &quot;Asian&quot; approaches to learning</td>
<td>Western educational discourses</td>
<td>Teacher being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How have theories about teaching and learning established in the West influenced the way you think about teaching and learning?</td>
<td>The &quot;good teacher&quot;</td>
<td>Teacher knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What does the &quot;good teacher&quot; do in your opinion?</td>
<td>The &quot;good learner&quot;</td>
<td>Teacher doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What does the &quot;good learner&quot; do in your opinion?</td>
<td>Asian approaches to learning</td>
<td>Teacher giving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are you aware of the learning styles attributed to Asian students (by people in the West)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learner personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What is your response to these theories?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learner strategies</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Memorisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Passivity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: The organisation of the findings in Chapter 5

5.1 Site One: Asian postgraduate students in Australia

Postgraduate students grouped together under this heading differed in their ethnolinguistic background and nationality. Participants derived from China, Taiwan, India, Japan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Therefore, as indicated earlier, whilst there was some consensus of opinion and experience, responses were often diverse. This arrangement was deliberate as both consensus and difference is of interest to the researcher. The range of perceptions and experiences is reported here.
As reflected in the guiding questions, the findings fall into two broad groupings: Asian perceptions of Western images of Asians in general; and those perceptions which relate directly to teaching and learning. The former findings relate tangentially to the main research question and were beyond the classroom. The researcher felt that these were fundamental to an understanding of wider issues impacting on education in the Asia-Pacific region and meaning that was made by teachers and learners. The latter findings explicitly address participants’ perceptions of Western images of Asian teaching and learning.

Interviewer talk is not always included in quotes from transcriptions in an effort to avoid an over-reflexive approach in which the interviewer becomes preoccupied with his or her own contributions (Riessman, 1993). Co-constructions can be further examined in the transcripts, however. The latter were used frequently when meaning determined by the researcher needed further endorsement or re-examination.

5.1.1. Beyond the classroom: Perceived images of Asians

In response to interview questions 1, 2 and 3 Asian postgraduates spoke of images of Asians that they felt were current as well as images they imagined prevailed in the past. It was sometimes difficult to separate past and present as they sometimes flowed seamlessly into one another in the accounts given by participants. The researcher acknowledges in advance, therefore, that there may be some blurring of the lines between these sections. Participants also described images they perceived to be promoted by Western literature, media, movies and art.

5.1.1.1. Present images

Asian postgraduates’ perceptions of present images of Asians fell mostly into two main discourses: appealing (or neutral) images of Asians and pejorative images of Asians. Where positivity or negativity was ambiguous these instances are discussed separately.
Chapter 5 Case study findings: Asian postgraduate students onshore and Vietnamese postgraduate students offshore

**Appealing images**

Asian postgraduates offered perceived images of Asians’ personal characteristics. Some thought that Westerners see Asians as ‘honest’, kind and generous as the example below demonstrates:

They say Japanese people are honest … sometimes some people drop wallets in … street but the Japanese don’t (laughs) don’t steal … very many wallet money … even money to the police … station … (YO17).

Others focused on appearance and reported that Asians are seen as stylish and colourful by Westerners:

LW20: Mmm… What I think is Western see Asian, ah, maybe it’s a little bit stylish

JW14: Maybe they'll think… Asian women … just wear too … colourful... their clothes … they were too colourful.

Pleasing behaviours thought to be attributed to Asians, by people in the West, mostly focused on Asian commitment to hard work and perseverance (particularly in the areas of teaching and learning in this instance). Included in this was an eagerness to learn, seriousness about work, and a strictness or stoicism in lifestyle:

SA8: What they say is… Asian students are more hard working than the Australian ones… Aussie ones

NN3: Actually I don’t have much idea about this point of view but er in my opinion I think erm … yes… Asian learners are very serious and some are very eager to learn a foreign language

YO15: [Generally er … Japanese er … very… Japanese work hard….very hard…

WL10: … because the Asians they work very hard … they do anything they can do so they can make a lot of money so they are among the first ones who bought a car so some… all this …

In some instances it was unclear whether participants’ comments referred to what they perceived Westerners thought of them or what they actually thought of Asians
themselves, as demonstrated in NN3 above. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the interviewer to clarify this with further confirming questions on the occasions when this happened as well as referring back to the transcripts and instances of co-construction between interviewer and participant. The fact that interviews were conducted in a second language for all of the Asian participants meant that contingency clarification questions were anticipated and extended time allocated for interviews.

**Perjorative images**

Ravinder Koo, an Asian postgraduate student from India, believed that Australians see Indians as too relaxed. She recalled that she once mentioned that she was a Sikh to a customer in her place of work and the response from the customer was, ‘Oh that’s why you are more relaxed…’ (RK9). Interestingly she took this comment as an insult rather than a positive description. Similarly, the Saudi postgraduate, Mansour Yani, commented that he thought that people in the West see people from his country as wealthy but not hard working. The implication was that his countrymen had come about their wealth by less than honest means. His comment had an Occidental undercurrent to it and was based on literature or media coverage not firsthand experience:

> From the articles I have read … I thought that Western culture … Western people see the Arab people as rich people and they don’t care … (MY15) … it’s about the petrol and how the Gulf people steal the money from the Western people … by buying them petrol and high prices…(MY18).

Pejorative images of Asians focused on behaviours and environments. Comments ranged from images of Asians as having slightly irritating behaviours (often in classroom contexts) and unsavoury living environments, to behaviours that participants believed summoned up images of an “inhuman” Asian. In terms of the former, many Asian postgraduates commented that Asians are seen by Westerners as shy, passive and unable or unwilling to express their feelings in public. The Japanese participant, Yoko Ono, made the following observations:
They often said … Asian … especially Japanese students … are very shy … they hesitate to talk spontaneously … they don’t like to express themselves…express their feelings in front of other people … they tend to hide their feeling … they tend to hide their emotions because they think expressing their emotions directly is not adequate (laughs) so usually they say they shy … (YO12)

Westerners see Asians as ‘mysterious’, according to Jane Wen, the Taiwanese participant. This image is in line with much Orientalist art and literature. It is ambiguous in its value judgement. She appeared to interpret ‘mysterious’ to be quite a positive image but this description has been equated with other terms such as ‘inscrutable’ in Orientalist literature and artwork:

JW7: Oh I’m from Taiwan.

TD8: Are there any sort of positive images?

JW8: Positive … I can’t recall any … okay maybe for my friend he say that we are mysterious Asian.

TD9: Ahhh [mysterious…]

JW9: [Because] because they didn’t question … they don’t have any question in class or they don’t even ask friends about how doing this assignment but they just can get the good grades….

Lisa Widjojo, an Indonesian student, felt that Asians have a reputation for being cliquey and reluctant to mix with Westerners or in this case Australians. She said:

What I think is Western see Asian…they always gather with their own friends, Asian with Asians, like for example, Chinese with Chinese, ah, Indonesian with Indonesian, with our own group, and then they hesitate to, ah, make friends with Western people (LW20)

In some cases, perceived images shared by the Asian postgraduates were gender specific. They differentiated Western images of Asian women and Asian men. Asian men might be seen in the West as dominating, macho, treating women unfairly and not inclined towards household duties. Asian women, they felt, might be seen as subservient. These images embody Western Orientalist discourses:
Westerners think Japanese men are sometimes treat Japanese women unfairly because … in the family Japanese men don’t prepare a dinner or don’t dish wash or don’t prepare house work … share housework … sometimes Westerners get angry because Japanese men treat (laughs again) unfairly with Japanese women … also the children … (YO21).

Unlike Mansour, Yoko seemed to be speaking about first hand encounters of some kind as she added, ‘they said…yeah they think so … I remember’ (YO22).

Many of the images of Asians that Asian postgraduates perceived to be prevalent in the West, focused on the physical environment of Asian countries. Jane Wen, the Taiwanese student, commented that she thought Westerners have an image of Chinese food as ‘quite a bit stinky’ (JW3). Other images associated the people with the living conditions. Participants shared the view that the West has an image of Asia formed from prejudice, colonialism and racism. Andee Sustanto, an Indonesian postgraduate student, claimed that Westerners see his countrymen and women as dirty. This image derives from the many epidemics and pandemics that have occurred there. He felt this was unjustified:

They just generalise that all people in Indonesia are like that … they are dirty people … they don’t care about that health problem because … the … health problem that we experience like this … the last two decades like stomach flu really associated with cleanliness … this is the most disease that happen all over Indonesia … it is not their fault … (AS27).

Similarly, Wong Li, a Chinese postgraduate, suggested that the West discriminates and stereotypes Asians. Images of impoliteness, unhygienic practices and generally ‘bad’ behaviour had arisen in the West from encounters with Asians, he felt. These seemed to be contradictory statements but on closer analysis he seemed to be saying that when individual Chinese people did behave like this, Westerners were too keen to generalise this behaviour to all Chinese.

Some of the images that Asian postgraduates talked about had emerged from contact with expatriate Australian teachers in workplace staff rooms in students’ countries. Expatriate teachers had complained that Asian students were always making excuses and complaining, according to Lisa Widjojo. It was difficult to decide how to categorise these responses because they occurred in an educational setting but in the end it was decided that they were more like informal chat than issues connected directly with
teaching and learning. Other impressions arose from experience of living and working in Australia. Ravinder Koo claimed that the West’s image of Asians’ deficient linguistic capabilities had manifested itself in her workplace. A customer had said, ‘Oh your English is not good you Asians’ which had resulted in the Indian staff member crying (RK10).

More disturbing were the pejorative images that Asian postgraduates claimed painted Asians as inferior to Westerners. The West see Asians as ‘less developed’ in their thinking. They ‘underestimate the capability of Asian people’ and attribute them with ‘primitive’ ways of thinking and learning which are ‘not necessarily true’. Mansoor Yani felt that Westerners see people with Middle Eastern backgrounds as lacking knowledge, a proper moral code and human aspects:

The Western people see us as different people … we don’t have knowledge … all the people with money with no respect to any other thing …according to the Western people the Arab people or the Middle Eastern people don’t have the same human aspects as they have … they are very bad image about the Arab people ..(MY15)

Overall, participants perceived the West as viewing Asians in differentiated ways. There were, however, strong common threads amongst them. Shared perceptions were of Asian shyness; willingness to work hard; men taking dominant roles; and women taking subservient roles. Postgraduate Asian students coming from previously colonised countries, for example, India, Indonesia, Vietnam as well as Islamic countries and China, largely perceived Asians to be seen as inferior by the West. Similarly, nearly all of the Asian postgraduates felt that the West perceived a very real divide between East and West. Some of these images had formed during their roles as teachers interacting with expatriate teachers. Nguyen Ngo, the Vietnamese postgraduate, quoted an expatriate teacher as saying, it was, ‘very hard to teach [Vietnamese] students because of their differences in the cultures and er concepts … or readings’ (NN3). Mansour Yani claimed that his reading had led him to believe that, ‘… the Western people see [Asians including Arabs]… as different people’ (MY19).
5.1.1.2 Past images

Asian postgraduates’ perceptions of past images of Asians that prevailed in the West, once again, fell mostly into two main discourses: appealing (or neutral) images of Asians and pejorative images of Asians. Below is a description of these findings.

**Appealing images**

Many Asian postgraduates felt that past images were also present images. Westerners saw Asians as hard workers who maintained a strict and punctual regime, who were unable to relax, who were brilliant mathematicians, who were always accurate and who always obeyed the rules. Most felt that Western images of Asian women had focused on physical aspects such as their dark, dusky beauty. The West saw Asian men, on the other hand, as brave, warrior-like, leaders and providers. The Indian participant gave the example of Gandhi and the Japanese participant gave the example of a Samurai. The Jackie Chan image, of all Asians able to perform Kung Fu, has also remained a prevailing image, according to many of the students (although Asian actors rarely get more than ‘three seconds or fifteen seconds of the action’, according to Jane Wen, which she claimed was ‘ kinda rude’ (JW 26)).

Some participants felt that Western perceptions of Asians had changed. More recent images of Asian men are lighter and more humorous, they felt. Japanese traditional art, a recurring image that the West may have had of the East in the past, is no longer so prominent. Others mentioned fairly neutral images of Asians as sellers or restaurateurs, buyers of branded or designer clothes or singers of Chinese songs.

In terms of diverse impressions, Sahir Ahmed, the Bangladeshi postgraduate, was the only one to state that she felt that Asian men were seen as sexier than Western men by Westerners. Her conclusions were drawn from reading English literature with an Orientalist bent, however, and so the researcher needed to take this into account:

SA37: Orientalism…. E.M Forster’s talks about this thing that… foreigners are …like when British ruled our Asian they were scared of their wives being attracted to Asian men…
TD38: Mmm … And why would that be?

SA38: Because…the Asian men are more … sexy than the […] white men

**Pejorative images**

Asian postgraduates felt that Western images of Asian women in the past were images of passive housewives pampering their husbands and behaving subserviently. These are images which called to mind Orientalist images from the past. There were ‘warrior/leader type images of Asian men’ that were extensions of the idea of the Asian man as the boss who takes ‘control of everything’. These images may be construed as positive within many Asian communities even today but Westerners generally conceive of these archetypes as less than positive in present day Western societies. Ravinder Koo was keen to point out that such an image was misleading in the current context:

Previously used to be like house wife, she has to produce children … she has to take care of them and just do the housework when the husband comes everything should be ready, she should know when he comes and what he wants … even you have to hand a towel to him but nowadays it’s changed a lot because most of the ladies they are doing jobs… and [working] (RK43).

Despite some Western perceptions of Asian women as warriors (identified by Ravinder Koo), past Western images of Asian women were perceived to be the ‘shy’ woman who covers herself demurely and is ‘not as open as Western woman’ (YY44). This image has not been helped by the fact that most Westerners watch Asian movies with subtitles that can disguise the real strength of language used by women in Asian films, according to Jane Wen.

Some of the most pejorative past images of Asians, believed by the participants to be widely held by Westerners, were Asians as unpunctual, lazy, and living in dirty, mosquito infested places. More sinister Occidental images portrayed the East in perpetual conflict with the West, ‘from the past until now’, and staying that way ‘forever’. Darker images of Asians, perceived by Ravinder Koo and Wong Li, portrayed Asian immigrants in Australia as objects of hatred. These perceived images were more
nuanced than would appear, however, as they were entangled with issues of Australian residency:

Some Chinese here who have been perhaps here for more than twenty or thirty years … when they first settle here…the government is very kind to them…help them in every way… but it seems the Australian people not so kind to them because … they work very hard …they do anything they can do so they can make a lot of money so they are among the first ones who bought a car so some Australians they are a little bit jealous maybe…they hate them. .they took … our jobs and everything but they say now everything has been changed…. at least there is no public discrimination (WL10).

5.1.1.3 Western literature, media, movies, art

Asian postgraduates felt that Western social discourses depicted varied images of Asians. They suggested that some of these images were fairly innocent. Other images were flattering on the surface but contained depths not immediately apparent. What they all had in common was the notion, once again, of ‘difference’. Yoko Ono said, ‘Western people perception …East Asian people are sometimes … significantly different from Western cultures’ (YO35). Not with standing this, there was some agreement, however, that these images ‘show it … pretty … well. They do resemble us … they show… the way we make foods… movies show that…when we eat and … how we cook… that is the main er…difference I think…they show pretty well’ (SA33). Participants pointed out that, although not always realised in Western perceptions of Asian women, Western TV, literature, media and globalisation had all contributed to change in Eastern women’s roles and behaviour. Andee Susatanto commented on this:

I think because of this globalisation the image is gradually changed to a better one since we also have some ministers… some women in the government so… the Western people now see us differently (AS12).

5.1.2 Beyond the classroom: Effects of Orientalism, Western views and Asian backgrounds

Findings in this section emerged from interview questions 4, 5 and 6. Asian postgraduates examined their knowledge of Orientalist discourses. They then discussed the effect they believed perceived Western views of Asians and their own Asian backgrounds had exerted on them.
5.1.2.1 Orientalism

The interview question which aimed to probe how much was known by lecturers and post graduates about Orientalism, was, not surprisingly, of little value. Few Asian postgraduates reported awareness of the theoretical discourse of Orientalism or the ideas of Edward Said. Mansour Yani was the only participant with any knowledge of the area. This was to be expected with Said’s focus being Western texts which describe the Arab world:

I think he has spoken about the struggle between the two wings of the war – the West and the East. .. this is what I know…”(MY54) … I didn’t read anything about Edward Said but from what I have read from other writers … the Arab world suffers from some Orientals …who have written bad things about our culture but in the same time there are very good and honest [Orientals…] (MY55).

In this quote, the term Orientals is taken to mean Orientalists. Mansour is a Muslim. His comments continue the notion of Occidentalism and active conflict between East and West mentioned earlier in the data by the same participant. He suggests that Orientalism is not always an exercise in negative stereotyping but can hold truth. Nguyen Ngo had also heard that Orientalist literature was ‘eurocentric’ (NN17). Sahar Amir reported having come across Edward Said’s ideas while studying novels by Somerset Maugham at school in Bangladesh. Overall, knowledge of Orientalism as a discourse was limited amongst Asian postgraduates. Where there was some familiarity, it derived principally from secondary sources. While this question appeared to be of little research value, the lack of knowledge of an educated elite about an entire discourse of which they are the central focus was a finding in itself; just as the reverse would probably be true if academics in Australia were asked about Occidentalism.

5.1.2.2 Western views

Asian postgraduates felt the effect of Western views on them was variable. Effects ranged from beneficial to deleterious.
**Beneficial effects**

The majority of Asian postgraduates observed an ongoing process of mental and behavioural change due to the influence of perceived Western views of Asians. They had become more ‘open-minded’, less conservative and punctual they said. They also reported changes in ‘living style’ due to the influence of Western music, TV and films. Jane Wen recounted how she had become more direct in conversation and no longer simply agreed with everything everybody said.

**Little or no effect**

Sahar Amir, however, said confidently that she felt that Western views had exerted little effect on her because what was held in high regard in Western forums is the same in her Bangladeshi culture. This comment highlighted the fact that participants often could not countenance any perceivable difference between themselves and the West and reinforced the notion of ‘Asianess’ as a discourse constructed by both the West and the East. Significant others deliver guidance within certain parameters, she explained:

> My teacher taught me to express your opinion and criticise a situation if you will find something that you do not agree with … (SA55) you can go against your teacher but you are also have to be respectful of others’ opinion… so whenever I go and talk to others I respect their view and also I have my [view] (SA58).

Some Asian postgraduates reported that they were not influenced by Asian or Western views of them. They just saw themselves as ‘human’ (MY85), themselves or felt that ‘people in essence are generally the same …’ (WL39). Again such a comment strengthened the view held by the researcher that the notion of ‘Asianess’ is to a large extent socially constructed even by some Asians themselves. Others reported being affected equally by perceived Asian and Western views. Yin Yin, a Chinese postgraduate, did not feel influenced by Western views of Asians but she did feel irritated by them. She provided detailed narrative to help explain how frustrated she had felt by a non-Chinese colleague’s uninformed views about China and Chinese people:

> Back in China we don’t … need a prescription, we pretty much can go to the pharmacy and tell them, I got cold or something, and we just get them … medicine and take it. And …
[the non-Chinese colleague] is kind of saying, oh, this is a culture thing and I say I don’t think it’s nothing to do with culture, it’s because we don’t have a family doctor and there are heaps of people in China, and even if you go to the hospital you … might have to stay in a queue and wait for half of the day, or even the whole day, it’s just not worth it. And since you know, say, this is for sharp pain, this is for cold and then you already know which medicine it is, you can just go in and get it. … he still say that it’s a culture thing. And then we have argument … (YY51)

Deleterious effects

Ravinder Koo and Lisa Widjojo went as far as to say that perceived Western stereotypes disturbed them. The ‘word’ ‘disturbed’ was explained as a fear of being stereotyped in negative ways. It is possible that in this case the choice of word was too strong and not entirely appropriate for such an experience but without being bilingual in Hindi and Bahasa Indonesia the researcher had no recourse but to accept what was said. This highlighted one of the problems the researcher encountered conducting interviews in English with speakers of English as an additional language, although it is possible that interview difficulties could also emerge with two L1 English speakers.

In a similar way to Ravinder and Lisa, Yoko Ono commented that she did not feel she was Asian anymore and focused most of her energies on trying to fit into the context in which she found herself. She aimed to become more of a citizen of the world. She commented, ‘… so I don’t concentrate on … Asian lifestyle or Asian background … just I try to … fit the situation’ (YO92). This highlighted another instance where the Asian/non-Asian binary was not considered important by a participant.

5.1.2.3 Asian backgrounds

It was important to investigate the effects of perceived Western views on Asian postgraduates, but it was also important to balance this by probing the perceived impact of their Asian background (if any). Collection of this data offered an opportunity to identify potential cultural clashes between participants’ identity formation as Asians and their perception of Western constructs of Asians. The impact that this (potential) clash had on their roles as learners could then be described. Asian postgraduates onshore did not talk at length about what Asian background had brought to their lives, however.
This was, perhaps, because they found this question rather difficult to understand, especially in a second language but it could also be because having lived and studied abroad, they did not necessarily categorise themselves as Asian. In the interview with Mansoor Yani he described himself as ‘human’, as already reported above, but this was in the context of religious tolerance and self-determination. He stated, ‘I have a Shia friend … I will not follow his religion or his understanding of Islam and he will not follow me … we are human … ’ (MY85). When asked what she wanted to do about perceived images held by the West, Lisa Widjojo replied, ‘Just be myself’ (LW60). Sahar Amin also admitted she did not see herself as an Asian person:

TD50: [No?] … [Okay] Alright so how do you think that your own Asian background…How has that affected the way that you see yourself? Or your perception of yourfself? [How do you…] [How do you see your…?]

SA50: [I don’t ….I don’t]

TD51: [Aah…mmm]

SA51: …see myself as [an Asian person.], I see myself as a human being er… if someone er… behaves rudely or someone has a racist kind of view at me that’s his problem [not mine]

Similarly, Wong Li also denied feeling particularly Asian as seen in his comments:

TD39: But how do you think the Western views er… of Asians . has that affected you in any way?

WL39: Er… not much . I think the people in essence are generally the same .

Alternatively, participants may have identified with country rather than region and seen themselves as Bangladeshi, Chinese or Indonesian rather than Asian. Overall, responses tended to be descriptive rather than evaluative and did not easily fall into the same categories of degree or type as those which emerged in response to the question about Western influences.
Several students mentioned how they had been instilled with a sense of respect, humility, quietness, and reluctance to ask questions by their Asian background. They felt the need to remain close to the family unit. Other participants talked about being indoctrinated on the importance of politeness and patience. They felt that their Asian background had affected their evaluation of Self and Other. On another level, they observed a deeply held sense of hierarchy present in Asian culture. They discussed the importance of relationships between ‘seniors and juniors’ and ‘superiors and subordinates’. The conclusion was that a sense of hierarchy was very marked in Asia.

Unlike Yoko Ono, some of the postgraduate students felt that their Asian background and upbringing had overridden many Western influences. Despite reporting being very influenced by Western ideals and views of Asians, however, they still found that being too talkative did not sit easily with them:

From Japanese perspective… talkative is not good for social … in a opposite way ... we see talkative as not so nice so that’s why we don’t so talk too much about ourselves but when I am with the native speaker or Western people I try to talk [not about myself] YO65

Some participants reported being less affected by Asian backgrounds than individual family circumstances.

5.1.3 Western educational discourses, the “good teacher/learner” and “Asian” approaches to learning

This section moves discussion away from Asian postgraduates’ perceptions beyond the classroom and towards explicit perceptions of teaching and learning. Findings on this issue emerged from interview questions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. All Asian postgraduates in the study were English language teachers in their own countries as well as being postgraduate students on the MA Applied linguistics course run by UoA. They had completed several units of the course when they were interviewed, including a unit in language teaching and learning approaches. The researcher assumed, therefore, that they would be in a position to be able to comment on Western educational discourses, good teaching and learning and Asian approaches to learning. These assumptions proved correct in most cases but some participants found it difficult to comment on approaches to teaching in Asia as this was so broad. They were only confident to talk about their
own country or even their own neighbourhood. This section highlights key themes which emerged from the analysis of data.

5.1.3.1 Western educational discourses

Most Asian postgraduate students said they had been influenced by Western approaches to teaching and inspired to try out different ways of teaching. Yoko Ono added that teaching in the Asian context, by her Asian colleagues, was not good. This feeling was not shared by the other Asian postgraduates, however. They expressed positive appreciation of the approaches taken by their Asian colleagues (a finding quite surprising for the researcher having listened to Asian post graduates diatribes about their own educational systems and teaching and learning practices in the past). They claimed to be influenced by both Eastern and Western educational discourses. They valued strategies, like memorising and Asian teacher qualities, such as willingness to encourage, attention to student level and good management skills. Yoko Ono felt that Japanese English language teaching textbooks were ‘nice’ and well ‘organised’ (YO104). She identified ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ in both Western and Asian styles of teaching:

I compare to Western teachers teaching style because for many years I taught with native speakers in the classroom and so I saw Western people teach in a classroom … if I found out a good points or good teacher’s style … I tried to observe in my teaching style and then also I look at Japanese teachers’ teaching style and … in high school or Junior high school and in fact there are a lot of nice good Japanese teachers as well. So … both have a weakness ….both have strengths (YO100).

There was, though, a general feeling that interactive or communicative teaching was not appropriate for many Asian contexts. It might lead to ‘chaos’ with the teacher unable to stop the students from talking. Such problems could be avoided by following participants’ ‘own belief’ and teaching in the Asian way, they said.

5.1.3.2 The “good teacher”

Comments about good teaching are grouped together under four super-ordinate headings. Each denotes an emergent sub-theme: teacher being; teacher knowing; teacher doing; and teacher giving. These categories were not easy to disentangle and the
researcher recognises the artificiality of such clear-cut divides. Moreover, the arbitrariness of placement of comments in one or the other category was very apparent to the researcher. For ease of reporting, however, these very fluid categories were delineated, in the hope that an educated reader would be able to see the practicality of such an exercise in providing access to large amounts of raw data.

**Teacher being**

“Teacher being” captured the idea that teachers need to possess certain qualities in order to be effective. Participants implied that many of these qualities are innate and linked with teacher personality and characteristics. For example, Asian postgraduates mentioned that good teachers are good communicators. They do not necessarily need to be perfectly fluent or accurate in the language they use but they need to be able to get their message across successfully.

The good teacher is also patient, according to some of the Asian postgraduates. This is a necessary trait in the situations in which Asian teachers often find themselves. As Andee Sustanto pointed out:

> Being very patient maam … that’s like… dealing with forty five students in one class at the same time is a headache and …if you’re not patient then you will be just … you know … (AS59)

Teachers need to be caring and dedicated. Yin Yin observed, ‘Don’t matter like the knowledge and the theories, everything you’ve learned in Uni, you need to be caring to your students’ (YY68). They should choose teaching as a first preference career rather than as a fall-back position. Concern for students takes precedence over ‘knowledge and theories’. Too many graduates in teacher education courses become jaded with the profession very early in their careers, coming to the conclusion that ‘teaching sucks’, she said.

Good teachers are also humorous, according to some of the Asian postgraduates. They are well-liked by their students. They are not constrained by rigid lesson plans but possess the personality, confidence or disposition to feel comfortable with being flexible and responsive to students’ needs. Mansour explained about his lessons:
MY207: … I’ll tell you what I do with them… for example yesterday it was a football match and … in the early morning I come to the class they are sleepy and they don't want to have the class.

MY210: we spent the whole time talking about the match or talking and...

TD215: … so… you think a good teacher is flexible is that what you're saying?

MY215: Yeh.

MY216: We don't need to follow ... the books.

MY217: I don't like to because when those who have written the book... they are looking at their child they want to... give him the best things...

MY218: But... if we apply what they have written in the real life... I think we cannot... we cannot follow their instructions in the books...

Such “flexibility” is not well documented in the literature on Asian approaches to teaching. Instead there are images of large classes, centralised rigid curricula, reliance on textbooks and pressure for teachers to get through material and successfully prepare students for competitive examinations (Hamano, 2008; Peyser, Gerard & Roegiers, 2006; Roxas, 2004).

**Teacher knowing**

“Teacher knowing” is also a prerequisite for good teaching, according to Asian postgraduates. They talked about knowing the students and knowing the subject matter. In terms of the former, many participants felt that it was important for a teacher to recognise student effort and those deserving praise and encouragement. Nguyen Ngo thought that a teacher should understand something of student psychology in order to be effective in his or her role. Sahar Amin emphasised the role of pastoral care, in the form of assistance with student accommodation, work and study.

In terms of teacher knowledge of the subject, a few Asian postgraduates mentioned the necessity for a good teacher to have a sound knowledge base. On the whole this was downplayed much more than might have been expected, however.


Teacher doing

The theme of the “good teacher” as a “doer” emerged from shared ideas about classroom management, techniques and strategies in lessons. Sahar Amir talked about the necessity of giving students ‘a chance to speak rather than imposing her or his ideas’ (SA77) on them. Others discussed knowing how to deal with students in lessons, setting up situations in which learners can be encouraged to learn on their own, being able to adjust the level of the input to the level of the students and assuming students know less than they do rather than more than they do.

A good teacher is also well-prepared but deviates comfortably to suit students’ needs and desires. Adequate preparation time is an issue for many teachers in the Asian region, as Andee Sustanto explained:

AS60: … the willingness to invest time to prepare the materials before class … and that’s what most of Indonesian teachers don’t have...

TD61: Why don’t they have that?

AS61: probably there are too many reasons maam… Number one is because they don’t think that they paid high enough … and the second, for that amount of money they just give a little effort as well and they have too many things to take care of after finish the teaching and most of the teachers have … part time job … outside the ..

TD62: What like in a private school?

AS62: In private schools ….yes…usually this for the thing like private tuition for students and then the students come after the school…

TD63: And that’s better paid?

AS63: Yes maam…and because they [the teachers] are easy concentrating this one they neglect the previous one…

Teacher giving

The fourth “good teacher” prototype identified by Asian postgraduate students at the Australian site was the teacher as a “giver”. A good teacher gives students confidence
and praise, relaxes them by making them feel at ease, gives friendship rather than being ‘strict’, enables learners to feel comfortable and discusses ‘what problems they have’. In this way he or she earns the respect of the student.

A good teacher gives students positive feedback and ascertains progression from input to uptake. Good teaching also takes into account the importance of “knowledge transfer”. This may be in the form of life lessons, as emphasised by Lisa Widjojo:

> For me a good teacher is the one who is capable of transferring knowledge suit[able] to students’ needs, and then…research teaching, for example, like, specific subject, English …. I think the teacher is the one who can give the lesson to teach something else that is good for their life, like my teacher, my English teacher when I studied English before … at the end of the lesson he always told a story about everything, … it’s good for us to reflect … to learn something from the story (LW79)

5.1.3.3 The “good learner”

Shared understandings of the “good learner” fell under two headings: personality traits and learning strategies. These are summarised for ease of access in Table 5.2 in full knowledge that the two categories are by no means mutually exclusive or neatly dichotomous and any attempt to make them so is an artificial divide. ‘Pays attention to material’, for example, could be seen as either a personality trait or learning strategy.
Chapter 5 Case study findings: Asian postgraduate students onshore and Vietnamese postgraduate students offshore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits (innate)</th>
<th>Strategies (tactics)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• motivated</td>
<td>• has good learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• active and experimental</td>
<td>• discovers their own learning style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sociable</td>
<td>• reviews and previews lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>• responsive</td>
<td>• takes up opportunities to learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>• listens to the teacher, not easily distracted by classmates</td>
<td>• criticises and consolidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• hard working, concentrates</td>
<td>• memorises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pays attention to material</td>
<td>• asks questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knows what is best for them and explores life - not just focused on grades</td>
<td>• records input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• willing to invest time</td>
<td>• follows instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• not afraid to make mistakes</td>
<td>• develops independent sustainable habits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• catches up with lessons or input missed by looking at material or asking around in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• well organised</td>
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<td>• has a balance between study and play</td>
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Table 5.2: Onshore Asian postgraduate students’ perspectives of the “good learner”

Table 5.2 suggests that Asian postgraduates saw the development of good learning strategies as slightly more important than learner personality type in achieving “good learner” status. However, arguably, certain personality types may be more inclined towards certain behaviours or strategies. Participants mentioned many strategies which would be considered the repertoire of the good learner in current Western educational practice. They also stressed the importance of strategies which are less well received in the West nowadays, such as memorisation. The next section addresses Asian postgraduate students’ responses to learning styles attributed to Asians by people in the West.

5.1.3.4 “Asian” approaches to learning

As mentioned previously, the interview question for this section required participants to be aware of the research on Asian learning styles. Postgraduate students in the study had completed a unit of formal study which covered this research. Where students were unclear as to what was required of them in answer to this question, the interviewer provided prompts and examples and as mentioned in Chapter 4, an ‘active’ strategy was utilised in which responses were ‘incited’ or ‘provoked’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 1998, pp. 124-5). Questions were often rephrased and a conversational tone, including
hesitations and restarts, was adopted in order to decrease the power relations between interviewer and interviewee and encourage participants to request clarification if they did not understand. It was found useful as an interviewer to adopt a less assured tone in questions and comments to create a stronger bond between interactants and invoke a stronger narrative voice from participants. The interviewer used intonation with a referring tone interviewer turns converged towards those of informants in terms of pace, grading of English and vocabulary. Nonetheless, some participants were oblique in their responses probably because they did not entirely understand what was required of them or if they did understand they just did not have any impressions about this subject.

Asian postgraduate comments fell into three main areas: rote-learning/memorisation; learner passivity; and critical thinking skills. Again the researcher recognises that these three approaches to learning are not discrete and, as indicated in Chapter 3, much research has linked memorisation and critical thinking together as two sides of the same coin. However, for the purposes of this analysis the two will be treated separately for ease of access for the reader. Asian postgraduates’ comments also fell into three main areas: agreement with the findings from the research about images of Asian learners; agreement but with reservations; and total disagreement.

**Memorisation/rote learning**

The majority of the participants talked about the way that the West sees Asians as rote learners. They proceeded to offer their considered opinions on this recurring image. They confirmed that this approach to learning was common in educational institutions in Asia and that Western perceptions of “the Asian as a rote learner” were accurate. As Mansour Yani observed, ‘we memorise everything’ (MY10). He included himself and his Japanese and Chinese postgraduate colleagues in this statement. Another common perspective, however, was that memorisation was only used in certain situations such as examinations. It is one of a number of strategies used to help students through tests, along with the making of notes and the collective sharing of those notes:

> Before the exam we usually photocopy from others’ notes and then memorise it before the exams so that we remember, and then …we write it in the exam. And then some people,
like my brother, … he doesn’t like to memorise, he prefers, like, calculating so before exam he always makes notes in small type and then, you know, cheats (LW136)

Ravinder Koo, compared schooling in her own country to her experiences in Australia. She pointed out that there were very few assignments set in her university in India and assessment was all exam based. This led to an increased likelihood of memorisation strategies being used by students. Another context in which memorisation was utilised and encouraged, according to the Taiwanese student, was in spelling exercises. All of the participants who favoured the use of memorisation as a legitimate learning strategy gave reasons for their beliefs. These ranged from the necessity of memorisation for learners of a second language not lucky enough to be in the second language environment, to the belief that rote learning did not necessarily mean lack of understanding, a view in line with Kember’s research (2000). As Nguyen Ngo, observed:

They try to memorise a lot of things from the materials … they also filter which part they should write on in the exam… that’s a sign of understanding actually some memorising with understanding…(NN72).

Some Asian postgraduates (Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, Saudi and Vietnamese) offered a contrasting view, however. They felt that memorisation was not to be encouraged because it led to surface learning and it took up a lot of class time. Furthermore, learners did not always understand what it was they were memorising. Participants mostly agreed that Westerners were right to see Asians as having a reproductive approach to formal education. As products of this system, they were ambivalent about this approach, seeing this strategy as neither problematic nor necessarily beneficial to their learning. It is situated within particular learning contexts and exam oriented systems.

Jane Wen felt that the choice of strategy fitted the subject. Yoko Ono felt it was decided by the task. This meant that most learners were involved in switching between strategies necessary for breadth of information and those designed for depth of understanding:

I use both … .so depend on the subject or depend on …what I learn …so maybe sometimes I use rote memory and sometimes … deep learning or discuss or talk with any other people … I think learning needs both … learning needs memorisation and also reflection (YO152)
Similarly, rote learning could be either deep or surface learning depending upon the learner, the context and the task. The important thing to note, they felt, was that strategies are dynamic. Learners adapt to the learning environment in which they find themselves relatively quickly. They are not necessarily shackled to the styles to which they have become accustomed. This leads to another contention about Asian approaches to learning: passivity amongst learners in lessons.

**Passivity**

Asian postgraduates recognised that Asian students were often seen as passive learners by teachers in the West. The majority of participants thought that this was a fair assessment. The reasons they offered for student passivity were: physical environment; teaching approaches and constraints; learner attributes and styles; class atmosphere, etiquette and dynamics; and cultural background or setting.

In terms of physical environment, the Vietnamese postgraduates attributed lack of interaction to seating arrangements. The Chinese and Japanese postgraduates commented that large class numbers hindered interaction and one-on-one teacher/student time. When split into smaller groups, Yoko Ono and Jane Wen felt that interaction did occur. This was contested by Yin Yin, however. Many participants identified the teacher’s approach, and perceived role, as a factor determining learner passivity. They also identified constraints on time in an exam driven system:

> The environment it kind of affect people’s learning style as well, and this is the … main point why Asian learners are all, passive and they use the kind of learning style…. because this is how they’ve been taught. This is the teaching style there (YY81).

> The teaching style is really different because … the relation from students and teachers… should be hierarchical … (JW110)

Learner factors affecting passivity fell mainly into two areas: learner personality and learner style/strategies. A common response from the Asian postgraduate students was that learners in their countries were ‘shy’. They did not necessarily see this as a negative attribute but it could hamper learning. As already mentioned earlier, Jane Wen felt that this passivity led non-Asian colleagues to see Asians as ‘mysterious’ and able to
achieve with a minimum of interaction or advice. According to Lisa Widjojo, Asians are ‘more auditory’ and ‘peaceful’ in their lessons (LW96) (although this does not necessarily apply to children). For example, in language classes, they are used to a grammar translation approach in which they learn the grammar, analyse and translate the meaning. Andee Astanto, put ‘passivity’ in the classroom down to lack of preparation before lessons by the learners. Identifying with this predicament himself, he said, ‘…we don’t have any idea what to ask because like sometimes we don’t even understand half of what the teacher said simply because we haven’t prepared it …’ (AS72). Nguyen Ngo suggested that involvement in the classroom interaction or interaction with the teacher depended upon the ‘cleverness’ of the students. He said, ‘some of student is quite clever and they can talk to the teacher…’ (NN43). The common theme here is that, so-called passivity is a complex phenomenon which can be explained by any number of factors and should not merely be seen by teachers as student unwillingness to participate.

Asian postgraduates identified culture and background as reasons why some Asian students may be reluctant to get involved in classroom interaction. Nguyen Ngo claimed, ‘Asian culture… student usually just really respect the teachers and they don’t want to talk, or to be occupied with teacher …’ (NN43). Respect for the teacher was mentioned by a third of the participants as underlying the lack of questions directed at the teacher. Yin Yin commented that Asian students born in Australia were reluctant to speak up in front of the group in tutorial situations unless the task was a seminar presentation requiring a monologue. Students participated in group discussions happily but would not volunteer to be the person reporting back to the teacher or the class. They relied instead on ‘Western students to do the talking’ (YY33).

Yoko Ono attributed the importance of obedience and authority in schools and universities in Japan to the influence of Confucianism and its promotion of respect for older people. Such ‘obedient behaviour’ is not witnessed in all contexts in Japan, however. Holliday (1999) linked classroom culture (small culture) and ethno-linguistic culture (big culture) with the perpetuation of fear. This can be seen reflected in the comment by Nguyen Ngo:
They don’t want to ask questions … even the teacher gives someone idea but student[s] just sit there and they smile and they just whisper with their friend and they don’t dare to talk to teacher … (NN43)

It was not clear from this comment if fear arose from breaching classroom etiquette and power dynamics or from fear of loss of face, a phenomenon well documented in the literature on Asian cultural mores. Follow up comments, obtained after further probing of Nguyen, indicated that it was students’ fear of breaking with the tradition of silence that was evident in the situation described. Yoko Ono gave a similar example. She explained that, Asian students in lessons, ‘don’t want to express their feeling … don’t take risk in front of other students…’ (YO165) … [They] don’t want to make mistakes in front of other students (YO166). She added:

We were taught ‘don’t speak in the classroom’… ‘be quiet in the classroom’…(laughs) … very strict situation (laughs) … talking in the classroom is not good … it is rude…(YO161)

This last comment made overt reference to the influence of culture on classroom behaviour and relates to the cultures of learning described in some detail in Chapter 3. In a similar way, some participants attributed Asian learner passivity to inability to understand the content of the lessons. They claimed that although keeping quiet might give the impression that a student has nothing to offer, speaking out may be worse as this may confirm lack of ability (and in turn lead to loss of face). Andee Sustanto articulated, ‘if they are quiet then the public will probably think that they are stupid …if he is trying to say something then it will remove all doubt right …?’ (laughs) (AS83).

In particular, passivity was attributed to lack of confidence in using the second language (English) and the subsequent feelings of shame, embarrassment and loss of face. Yin Yin pointed out that even when students had a good command of the second language, they were sometimes unsure when to talk and when to be quiet in the second language culture. These are issues of style, register and appropriacy. Participants indicated that Asian students have concerns that the classroom atmosphere or flow of activities will be interrupted if wrong evaluations are made about when it is acceptable to interject:

Say, people are talking, just like casual talking, and then, Asian people … they do a lot of listening … don’t know what is the right time to get in to the talking because… those two
are communicating and I suddenly say something and it’s kind of disturbed them. It’s kind of impolite. So we don’t know what is the right time to talk... we normally wait until … they finish the conversation and someone else will start another topic and it will be okay, … (YY41).

Another reason offered for learner passivity was that, in any classroom or public situation, students want to avoid being labelled ‘show offs’. Indonesian and Chinese postgraduates narrated incidents in which they had tried to speak out, interact and practise their English language in a meaningful and authentic way, but had felt self-conscious about performing in public:

Outside class they … seldom speak English … some people say you are showoff…even for me sometime when I went back to my home town it’s where I was brought up sometime because I have been outside many years I tried to speak standard Chinese…. I mean not the dialect … but of course when I went back I tried to speak the dialect but sometime still quite bit different to standard Chinese … but some people say …you are not speak the … local dialect …I think I am not try to show off …it’s nothing but some people will think different way (WL74)

And one time … I was riding my motorcycle with a foreigner in the back … we keep practising …I keep practising sorry he is not practising … (laughs)… we keep this conversation going and… the other passer-by he was just…oh yes I know you can speak English he said…I said , No I practise my English not because I want to show off that I can speak English but because . .. I realised that my English is not good enough …because I … want to be a teacher one day then I need to be a confident English user myself and that’s why I practise my English not because I want to show off and that’s also what happened in …in the students …I still keep in touch with my student with social networking and they keep telling me about this look ‘Sir, whenever I practise the other try to mock me … (AS93)

Mansour Yani concurred that Western images of Asian students focused on passivity. He considered this to be an unfair assessment saying that it was true of some Asian learners but not all. Ravinder Koo questioned the definition of “passive”. Related to this, quite a few of the Asian postgraduates shared an understanding that passivity in expression may not be passivity in thinking. Some pointed out that task type or medium may be a contributing factor. Students may be ‘active’ when it comes to writing but ‘passive’ in speaking. Asian students were not inclined to ask questions to the teacher in
class but sometimes asked after class, according to Jane Wen and Ravinder Koo. In class one person might ask and then relate the answer to all the other students, but, mostly, learners were more inclined to ask questions to other learners than the teacher.

Mansour Yani observed that “passivity” could be attributed to individual learners and their personalities rather than external factors. He said, ‘Even when … we say passive it depends on personality …’ (MY256) ‘… I think I am a passive person but I have friends who are not …’ (MY257). Finally, Yin Yin was convinced that these inclinations in students were dynamic not static; influenced by the immediate context and requirements and perfectly able to be modified to adapt to any new situation:

As long as we stay in here … we kind of know, … this is how people learn here and… , we start to be not as passive as before and we start to talk to the teacher and also … because we are in this English speaking background we talk to people rather than memorising stuffs (YY90).

Critical thinking

Participants reported that Western perceptions of Asian students included images of learners who remained at the “reproductive” end of the learning spectrum (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, 1997).

There was unqualified observation, by many Asian postgraduates, that Asian students were generally disinclined towards a critical approach to learning. Participants claimed that this was due to cultural influences such as the ‘hierarchy system’ and respect for elders’ or teachers’ expectations. Ravinder commented, ‘If questions are asked in front of the whole class, the teacher will say that you are insulting him’ (RK140). Some also blamed the exam system in which students are ‘expected to… reproduce what they have already learned from the book in the exams’ (AS104) with ‘not many analysis’ (AS106). Some participants mentioned that critical thinking had been a problem for them in their English language bridging course at the current university. Jane Wen qualified this by speculating that perhaps it was the task (a critical review) that was above her level rather than the thinking itself.
Sometimes, there was a certain irony in what participants were saying about the ability or willingness of Asian learners to criticise and the examples provided. Asian participants unwittingly demonstrated the very characteristics that they reported missing in Asian students. For example, Nguyen Ngo, having declared that critical thinking was not common amongst Asian students, went on to criticise the teaching in his country saying, ‘the text book… is quite good… the teacher and the teaching method is not so…’ (NN34). Mansour Yani, having agreed that critical thinking was difficult for him, then went on to criticise the understandings of the Koran common in his country. An incident narrated by Andee Sustanto stands out as being particularly notable and is described below:

One of the experiences that I cannot forget until now … this man came in …he was late actually but when I give them a chance to ask .. he raise his hand and he said … I think what you have already talk about … this method confidently from the beginning to the end …actually he didn’t follow the beginning but he said that anyway and then he said … ‘but you know what I personally think ..I think this one bullshit’ (AS50).

Asian postgraduates observed that, despite a tendency to circumvent a critical approach to learning in many instances, a critical approach was in evidence sometimes. They attributed lack of critical thinking to the level of maturity of the students. Higher order thinking was not common in primary school or even high school. It was more common in tertiary institutions in places like China, especially with the advent of the internet. Subjects such as English literature also develop critical analysis.

Many Asian postgraduates reported feeling that Asian students did have potential for critical thinking skills but for various reasons, these were often suppressed. For example, they explained that Asians often tried to fit into the situation in which they found themselves. When the Japanese context dictated that these skills be de-emphasised because of the social situation, then students adapted to this. Furthermore, critical thinking was embraced by ‘scholars’ and ‘college students’ according to Andee Sustanto, but not ‘lay people’ (AS114, 117). The latter fear ‘saying bad things about the government’ even though the situation in Indonesia has changed somewhat since the days of Suharto and there is now democracy and a ‘limited freedom’ of speech. Andee described the fear of being ‘jailed or kidnapped’ during President Suharto’s time and
recounted a story about ‘a big… grave where people are buried there… like hundreds of them …’ (AS120).

Another common understanding was that Asian students think critically provided they are familiar with the topic, are in small groups and are in particular contexts or relationships. Jane Wen suggested that critical discussion, about subjects such as politics, was acceptable in Taiwan with friends but not parents.

Asian postgraduates raised many points, either supporting or contesting images that the West might have of Asian approaches to learning. They also broached issues which were not directly elicited but came up in the course of the interview. One of these issues was the private/public schooling divide in Asian countries. The public system is often burdened with large numbers of students in classes. Private establishments usually have the luxury of small classes. Many of the teaching and learning styles developed by teachers and students are influenced by these constraints. In Bangladeshi public schools (Bangla Medium), government-issue text books encourage rote learning rather than critical thinking. In private fee paying English medium schools, expensive textbooks, ordered in from the United Kingdom and Australia, foster critical approaches. Teachers in the public systems in Indonesia are badly paid and little motivated to extend themselves. They have jobs for life regardless of their performance, as can be seen in the conversation below:

AS66: … the headmasters they know what happens but you know they cannot … change them just like that… they try to give motivation but motivation alone is not enough…they need ….real motivation in form of money.

TD67: … they can’t get rid of them?

As67: … it is almost impossible to do that maam because they … become government employees and after they sign it and only government can … fire them….

TD68: Oooh … (laughs)

AS68: They feel like secure … they don’t have to do anything…

TD69: So it’s like a job for life really…
Those working in public schools have to supplement their income by working a second job. This usually means working in a private school or one-on-one lessons after public school lessons finish. Asian teachers give these private classes much more attention, according to Andee Sustanto, because the pay is better. There is little time left in a day for teachers to concern themselves with review or contemplation of the theories of learning despite recognition of the benefits. Teachers working in the private schools, however, have to ‘work well’ otherwise the boss can replace them. This mismatch between teacher education and execution was observed by both Vietnamese and Indonesian participants. This can be seen in the latter’s comment below:

I think most of our education now is based on Western way which is already proven to be ...to work ...but somehow what happened in our classes are just not like that at all.. (AS46)

5.1.4 Summary of findings Site One: Asian postgraduate students in Australia

Topics emerging from Asian postgraduate students’ responses to the interview questions were grouped into three main categories: images; effects; and Western educational discourses. Within these categories, responses fell into degree or type. These are summarised below.

Images

Asian postgraduates present day Western images of Asians ranged from appealing to pejorative on a continuum. Appealing images included the Asian as stylish, colourful, honest, generous, kind in their personal characteristics and hard-working, persevering, eager to learn, serious about work and stoic in their behaviour. Pejorative images included Asians seen by Westerners as passive, uncritical, unwilling/unable to show emotion, cliquey and mysterious (intended in a less than positive way). Asian postgraduates felt that the perception of a dirty, unhealthy physical environment, in which Asians live, contributed to images of them as unwholesome, particularly in the eyes of expatriate workers. Pejorative images construct Asians with ‘primitive ways of thinking’ minus the ‘same human aspects’. They underestimate Asian capability. The overall images, that Asian postgraduates perceived Westerners to have of them, were images of deficit and difference.
Past images were similar. Asian postgraduates perceived the West to see Asian women as subservient and beautiful. Asian men were brave, in charge and in the likeness of Jackie Chan. The over-riding image was one of conflict with the West. Western literature, media, film and art have reinforced these Orientalist images, according to Asian postgraduates, although some endorsed these images as true reflections of Asian society.

**Effects**

Few of the Asian postgraduates were aware of the theoretical discourse of Orientalism. They described the effects of Western perceptions of Asians as beneficial, deleterious or neither. Beneficial effects invoked positive mental and behavioural change in the Asian postgraduates. Deleterious effects were more confronting and identified the notion of fear in the lives of the Asian postgraduates, some of whom claimed to feel ‘disturbed’ by Western views of Asians.

Asian postgraduates did not elaborate greatly on the effect that being Asian had had on their lives. It was unclear if this was because it was a difficult question to reflect upon and articulate in a foreign language or because they had never been asked to identify how their Asian background contributes to their sense of Self. Responses inclined towards being descriptive rather than evaluative. Students spoke of respect, humility, politeness, patience, quietness, reluctance to question, as well as the need to remain close to the family unit. Many felt that their Asian background had coloured their evaluation of Self and Other, but did not explicitly pass judgement on this. There was a shared understanding of the deeply held sense of hierarchy in Asian culture and the impact of this.

Some Asian postgraduates claimed to have been affected by both Eastern and Western views of the world while others said they had been affected by neither. In these cases participants stated that they felt that people were ‘in essence’ the same and all of us human.
Western educational discourses

There was a general feeling that Western educational discourses had affected Asian postgraduates in some way. Some of this was appreciative. As English language teachers, Asian postgraduates had been encouraged to try out new approaches, procedures and techniques. However, some participants mentioned learning equally as much from Asian colleagues, peers and instructors. They praised many aspects of the Asian educational system. On the more negative side, participants were keen to point out the mismatch between Western educational theory and Asian uptake of Western pedagogy in schools.

The good teacher/learner

According to the Asian postgraduates, the “good teacher” was made up of certain personal traits, teacher knowledge, the ability to carry out teaching procedures and techniques and the recognition of the importance of giving to the students. A good teacher is someone who ‘possesses’ good communication skills (but not necessarily perfect language), dedication, humour and flexibility. He or she is responsive to learner needs, knows the subject area and the students and how much effort and progress is being made by the student. The teacher uses techniques and teaching strategies and allows the students a voice while encouraging independent learning. Good teachers also give feedback, encouragement and praise to students. The importance of personal characteristics seemed to slightly outweigh the importance attached to teacher strategies and other attributes.

Asian postgraduates saw the “good learner” as almost an equal mixture of ideal personality traits and good learning strategies (although slightly skewed towards an emphasis on learning strategies). Sociability and willingness to explore life were high on the list of ideal personality traits, alongside motivation, concentration and sound work ethic. Good learners are risk takers who take up opportunities to learn, are not afraid of making mistakes, are well prepared and organised and invest time in learning. They listen, obey, ask questions, criticise, consolidate, memorise, review, record and
learn in the way best suited to them. They make time for play as well as work and use their local community as well as the classroom as a resource.

“Asian” approaches to learning

Asian postgraduates identified three main areas of Western comment: rote learning/memorisation, passivity and critical thinking.

Most postgraduates observed that Asian students used reproductive approaches to learning but qualified this view with reasons for this. Firstly, memorisation is used as part of a repertoire of strategies. Secondly, memorisation is necessary for speakers of a second language not residing in the country of the target language where there is limited language stimulus. Thirdly, memorisation does not preclude understanding.

Most Asian postgraduates observed that Asian students are passive in classroom situations. Again they attributed this to several factors: firstly, the physical environment and numbers in public school systems; secondly, teaching approaches and constraints; thirdly, learner attributes and styles, such as command of the English language (if the subject is in the medium of English), student preparation, knowledge and ability in the different skills; fourthly, classroom atmosphere, etiquette, dynamics and issues of face; fifthly, cultural background and setting; and the indirect influences of Confucianism and Asian philosophies.

It was noted by most that there was a paucity of critical thinking in many Asian learning environments, largely due to cultural notions of hierarchy and task types. However, participants also identified learner maturity, level of education and subject area as factors determining critical thinking. Asian postgraduates who did not concur that Asian students were uncritical reported that familiarity with topic, classroom seating arrangements and relationships between students were crucial for critical discussion to take place. A recurring theme was the frequent intimation by Asian postgraduates that Asian learning styles were regarded by Westerners as deficit. This theme is taken up in Chapter 7.
5.2 Site Two: Vietnamese postgraduate students in Vietnam

Postgraduate students grouped together under this heading were homogenous in their ethnolinguistic background and nationality. All were Vietnamese. There was some consensus of opinion and experience but responses were also diverse. The range of perceptions and experiences is reported here.

As with 5.1, findings are divided into two broad groupings: Vietnamese perceptions of Western images of Asians which go beyond the classroom; and those perceptions which relate directly to teaching and learning.

5.2.1 Beyond the classroom: Perceived images of Asians

The images that Vietnamese postgraduates felt Westerners held of them and Asians were discussed in terms of present images, past images and images in Western literature, media, movies, art. These responses arose from main interview questions 1, 2 and 3.

5.2.1.1 Present images

Present images divided into appealing images or pejorative images. Details of each are contained in the following sections.

Appealing images

Vietnamese postgraduates reported that they thought Westerners see Asians as ‘friendly’, ‘nice, easy to talk to’ and ‘communicate with’. Sometimes Westerners see this friendliness as a little shallow, however, as iterated by Andrew, ‘I think that people in the West view us as friendly, but not showing true feeling’ (AN20).

Westerners attribute personal characteristics to one gender or another. Asian women, in particular, are viewed as ‘faithful’, ‘wanting to be stable’ and ‘loving children’. Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Westerners perceived women as ‘wanting to stay at home’. Tina, however, commented that she thought this image had been superceded by a more ‘liberal’ image (TI6). Several participants mentioned Asian women in euphemistic terms as having a reputation for ‘the better relationship with the foreigners’
while another positive behavioural image they felt that the West had of Asians was their capacity for hard work, especially the women. Una felt that the behaviour of Asian men is seen as ‘caring’ (UN9).

Some of the images that postgraduate Vietnamese students believed Westerners had of them were not obviously appealing or pejorative, and the researcher’s job was made quite difficult trying to decide where to put these comments. In the end it was decided that, in a 21st century Western context, such qualities may be construed as less than positive and that participants themselves saw these qualities as less than desirable or, at least, thought that Westerners saw them as less than desirable. For example, participants reported feeling that Westerners see Asians as ‘traditional’, ‘old fashioned’, not wanting to change, feeling safe and ‘secure in old things’, ‘conservative’ and ‘family oriented’. An over-riding image is one of the ‘mysterious’ or ‘curious’ Asian, according to Nina.

Tina pointed out that a lot of the images that the West has of the East arise from dominant images of Chinese people rather than Asians from other parts of Asia.

**Pejorative images**

Most Vietnamese postgraduates reported that they thought the West see Asians as ‘passive’, ‘not confident enough’, with behaviours which mean they are ‘unable to start conversations or relationships’, unable to ‘express themselves in public or with the family’. They felt that Westerners see Asian women, in particular, in this way. They are deemed ‘passive’, ‘inactive’, having no freedom and many ‘limitations’ leading to a need for support and protection. Tom iterated that Western men working in Asian countries believe they are there ‘to protect’, ‘to rescue’ or to ‘civilise’ the local people (TO7). The West views Asian men, on the other hand, as ‘dictators’.

Other perceived pejorative images included a general shared impression that Westerners see Asians as ‘less good’ and ‘inferior’. Hannah narrated her experiences in some detail:

> Something like, you know, inferior, not a superior ones … I have been working with some foreign teachers in my foreign centres and we usually get a break time where two groups of foreign teachers and Vietnamese teachers and we rarely planned together in conversations, just like two different worlds, and some of the foreign teachers, not all of them, some of
them are very nice, very friendly, most of the others usually make jokes or something about the Vietnamese people, the Vietnamese students before us, and somehow ... it offends, I mean, annoy the Vietnamese teachers (HA3)

This perceived notion of inferiority also extends to the cognitive capabilities of Asians. Some Vietnamese participants confided that they felt that Westerners see them as less intelligent and somewhat slow on the uptake when it came to jokes and humour. Hannah commented, 'when I talk to a Westerner … I always have the feeling that they ... think us, maybe me or Asians, not very fast, quick in thinking and we don’t have the sense of humour and when they say a jokes … usually try to explain back to me ’ (HA14).

5.2.1.2 Past images

Images, that the postgraduate Vietnamese students felt the West had of Asians in the past, were mostly pejorative and much the same as current images.

**Pejorative images**

Westerners saw Asians as passive, according to the Vietnamese postgraduates. In contrast, to this, however, Asian men were also seen as predatory and demanding while Asian women were obedient. Vera had a more Occidental view and thought that Westerners had a pejorative image of Asians as constantly involved in wars brought about by the colonial past or internal divisions within the country, such as the Vietnam War. As Nina iterated, ‘I think in the past maybe the Westerner will divide the people in two kinds, the people who follow the war and the people who follow the peace’ (NI17). A reference to Vietnam’s civil war, and the perceived legacy of US/Australia/UK/New Zealand involvement, is apparent in this comment. The poor economic status of Asian countries in the past was also given as a reason, by the Vietnamese postgraduates, for many negative Western images in the past and the reason why Westerners felt superior to Asians.

However, despite this tone of disapproval, there was the sense that the West had changed its perceptions of Asia since colonial days. This was due to rapid economic growth in the Asian region, greater contact between the West and the East and a
perceived increase in liberal attitudes in the East by those in the West. Valerie commented, however, that, while Westerners assumed Asia had changed and become more economically independent and prosperous since colonisation, they were often disappointed with what they found upon arrival in somewhere like Vietnam.

5.2.1.3 Western literature, media, movies, art

Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Asians are portrayed in a mixture of ways in Western literature, media, movies and art. Images are appealing, pejorative and ‘doubly inscribed’ (Bhabha, 1994, p.108). Asians are portrayed simultaneously as both ‘good’ and ‘bad’. These images and roles are detailed below.

Appealing images

According to many participants, Asian characters in films adjust to, and participate in, the circumstances in which they find themselves. They are ‘friendly’, ‘nice’, trustworthy and ‘less aggressive’ than their Western counterparts. Asian women are frequently given roles which portray them as sensual’ and strangely powerful. Asian men are cast in roles depicting them as ‘strong’ and good at martial arts or as super heroes.

Pejorative images

On the more negative side, Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Asians are often portrayed as ‘criminals’, ‘bad’, ‘corrupt’, ‘poor’, ‘weird’ and frequently Chinese. Women play roles in which Asians have no rights. The participant raising this point protested that this was a false image, however. They are depicted as ‘conservative’ and weak (especially the Chinese women). Asian men, on the other hand, are cast in roles which depict them as aggressive, having all the rights, looking down on women, having many relationships and lacking respect for women.

Double inscription images

Many participants identified the fact that there seemed to be a dual tension in the way that Westerners depicted Asians in the literature and arts in the past. Asian men were seen as ‘beautiful’, ‘courageous heroes’, ‘gentle’ and ‘good’ but at the same time
proficient in martial arts and Kung Fu, ‘cruel’ and inclined towards carrying out torture. Women, similarly, were cast as ‘cold blooded’ and lacking in individualism but at the same time ‘suffering’, and strangely ‘graceful’, in their weakness.

Some participants commented that Asian women were nearly always shown as Chinese Asians in films. They were portrayed as ‘reserved’, ‘mysterious’, ‘traditional’, ‘stay at home types’, ‘waiting for love and their man’. Many pointed out that Hong Kong Chinese are, in fact, much more social people than depicted in Western films. Paradoxically, most mainland Chinese are unable to watch many of the Western films in which Chinese characters are cast due to current censorship laws.

An interesting point raised by Andrew was that Western films always have stories which depict more evil than good in the world (two thirds bad, one third good) whereas Eastern or Asian films tend to focus on the good in the world and have films which show the world as one third bad but two thirds good (AN42,44).

5.2.2 Beyond the classroom: Effects of Orientalism, Western views and Asian backgrounds

Findings in this section emerged from main interview questions 4, 5 and 6. Vietnamese postgraduates examined their knowledge of Orientalist discourses. They then discussed the effect they believed perceived Western views of Asians and their own Asian backgrounds had exerted on them.

5.2.2.1 Orientalism

Few of the Vietnamese postgraduates were knowledgeable about the discourse of Orientalism, probably for reasons already outlined in 5.1. Hannah and Nina, however, displayed a basic understanding when they commented that Orientalism was fundamentally a comparison between the ‘encounters and behaviours’ (HA24) of ‘people living in the Orient ‘compared to the West’ (HA25). This was followed up with a belief that Orientalism professed ‘the speed of change’ to be slower in the Orient than the Occident (NI22). Hilda revealed the name of the private English language school in which she worked to be New Orientals (HI17). This name implied a replacement of the Orientalism discussed in cultural studies texts with a new, modified and more pleasing
version. This suggests, as indicated in Chapter 3, that Orientalism was not dismissed completely by those to whom it pertained.

5.2.2.2 Western views

When asked how perceived Western views of Asians had affected them, Vietnamese postgraduates mostly responded in their role as learners rather than teachers. While they felt that there had been beneficial effects, some effects could be described as deleterious.

**Beneficial effects**

Half of the Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Western educators had helped them to overcome their fear of speaking out in the classroom and asking questions. They had been inspired to foster a direct approach rather than being evasive. Perceived Western views had also been the catalyst for Asians being motivated to change their behaviour and overcome the stereotypes they felt the West had of them, according to Tina. She was obviously quite disturbed by the way, as she perceived it, Westerners regarded Asians:

> They think that the Asian quite a bit passive, so I try, whenever I contact with them, to be equal with them, to be as active as them and to show that my ability as Asian woman, Asian person is the same as Westerner. And I think some Westerner look down on Asians (TI2).

However, it seems that the constant pressure to operate in two worlds can be likened to straddling a river running through a canyon. It can present identity problems similar to those identified by Aspland (1999, p. 37). Nina commented that she was hoping to keep her feet permanently on one side of the river but found that her ‘tradition’ continued to keep her in limbo between the two. She provided the following effective metaphor, ‘The way I see myself … somehow I bounce back between the two rivers … somehow I would like to overcome this but tradition, you know, draws me back’ (NI25).

**Little or no effect**

Some participants appeared unaffected by perceived Western views of them. Vera commented that Western images of Asians had produced no effect on her at all. Tina
thought the previous generation of Asians had been affected by perceived Western images of Asians but that her generation was mostly unaffected. Tracy felt that it was ‘up to Westerners’ what they think and that Western images of Asians had no impact upon her. Asians and Westerners were just the same and she remained unaffected by any images that Westerners may have of Asians.

**Deleterious effects**

Participants talked about how they had come to feel ‘inferior’, ‘not appreciated’, looked down upon and incompetent. Andrew and Hannah felt that Westerners did not trust Asians and that they were seen as ‘poor’ ‘money seekers. This perpetuated the feeling of a need to ‘catch up’ with the West (VA52) and to obtain help from them as well as a fear of not being accepted by them.

**5.2.2.3 Asian backgrounds**

As mentioned in sub-section 5.1.2.3, it was felt that, in order to gain a rounded picture of influences at work on the Vietnamese postgraduates in the study, it was necessary to enquire what Eastern influences participants perceived there to have been as well. As far as Asianness had affected Vietnamese postgraduates, comments were similar to those of the onshore Asian postgraduates and were on a continuum from perceiving little or no effect to deleterious effects.

**Little or no effect**

Some participants did not overtly judge the effect that being Asian had exercised on their lives but simply described, in fairly neutral terms, a life in which, as women, they needed to be good at cooking, virgins until marriage and, whether female or male, restrained in talking back to their parents. Andrew confided that being Asian had affected him much more when he was younger. More recently he did not feel any different for being Asian. He thought himself quite ‘equal’ to everyone else.
Deleterious effects

Less positive influences ranged from the encouragement of character traits such as ‘shyness’ and ‘introversion’ to closed mindedness (it was apparent from the linguistic context that the participant saw shyness as a negative quality). The “Asian” expectation is that everyone ‘limits’ their ‘feelings’ and does not show emotions. Una reported feeling that she was never really herself because of this:

It’s not … real me, it’s kind of I have to ask my feeling to confirm that what people think of me. For example, if I have advice or have something heavy I cannot fix something, or I have something that is sad, I don’t let the other people know that I’m sad … it’s a fact of life in my behavior (UN33).

Being Asian had meant that she was expected to take on ‘caring’ roles. She felt that this was not the situation for Western women. Moving away from parents, similarly, was not possible in many Vietnamese contexts so job prospects were limited. Hilda blamed poor schooling in Vietnam on the influence of Asian values on the education system. Tom confided, vehemently, that he was ‘anti-Asian’, ‘anti-Vietnam’, not traditional in any way and unaffected by Asian values. The interviewer probed more carefully for the reasons for these strong feelings and he replied:

TO46: I’ve got several reasons … the first one is politics. I don’t like the politics that is working here.

TD47: Okay.

TO47: And the second one … is that I do hate it towards the neighbours. They live very near to each other, so we’ve got lots of quarrels and troubles from the neighbours.

Such comments were difficult to assign directly to Asian culture or values unless he was referring indirectly to underlying Asian passivity in politics or uncontested notions of Vietnamese collectivism. More likely he was disgruntled with the political and economic situation in Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 2, The Communist Party of Vietnam (CVP) embraced “doi moi” or “economic renovation” in 1986 (Dung Hue Doan, 2005) which meant renewed ties with the World Bank, ASEAN, Europe and China. In the last ten years Vietnam has moved towards greater economic
interdependence, adjusted its foreign relations to reflect the economic and political situation in South East Asia and attempted to resume relations with the world financial system. For some people in Vietnam things are not happening quickly enough, however, and Communist bureaucracy can resurrect old lesions between people with Northern Vietnamese and Southern Vietnamese ideologies.

5.2.3 Western educational discourses, the “good teacher/learner” and “Asian” approaches to learning

Findings in this section emerged from main interview questions 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. As in Site One, this part begins with Vietnamese postgraduates’ thoughts on Western educational theory and practice, followed by their constructions of a “good teacher/learner”. The final part reports Vietnamese participants’ responses to the literature on Asian approaches to learning.

5.2.3.1 Western educational discourses

There appeared to be mixed feelings towards Western educational theory and practices. Vietnamese postgraduates talked about ‘good relationships’ with students, inspiration to search for new teaching styles and good/helpful approaches to teaching. Hannah was unhappy about the prevailing focus on grammar teaching in Vietnamese classrooms. She was keen to emphasise that she did not teach in this way because students found it ‘boring’. She quoted her students as saying, “I feel very free when I come into this [class]” (HA41).

However, Vietnamese postgraduates also shared the view that there was pressure to teach in ways dictated to them by outside bodies. Although they appreciated the new style of ‘active’ teaching being proposed by educational theorists in the West, they found it difficult to execute in Vietnamese educational settings. They felt that textbooks advocating a Communicative Approach fall short of being applicable to Vietnamese high school settings for a number of reasons: firstly Vietnamese students are too tired and lethargic to participate in the activities; secondly Vietnamese students are ‘antisocial’; and thirdly Vietnamese students are constrained by the desire to be ‘humble’ and not ‘show off’. Tina felt that Western educational theory remained just
that in Vietnam, ‘theory’. Teachers were unable to apply it. Tom confirmed this by stating that he just did what he thought was right.

5.2.3.2 The “good teacher”

As in the findings reported for Site One, comments about good teaching could be grouped together under four super-ordinate headings denoting emergent themes: teacher being, teacher knowing, teacher giving and teacher doing. Although there were many instances when this categorisation was blurred, participants’ comments fell fairly evenly into these categories.

**Teacher being**

In terms of “teacher being” Vietnamese postgraduate participants mentioned the importance of teacher ‘self-confidence’, ‘competence’ and humour for effective teaching. Several participants felt that a good teacher should show empathy with his or her students, have (positive) feelings for them and ‘care enough about each’ of them. Strictness was also a requirement of a good teacher, according to some. Teachers need to have ‘principles’ and be ‘consistent’, ‘fixed’ but at the same time adapt to different groups of students such as ‘moody’ teenagers. They need to be ‘inclusive’ not just with the extrovert students but with ‘the quiet’ and ‘not very sociable students’. Less competent teachers ‘tend to ignore [students] or neglect them and answer the questions … in a very negative way’, according to Tom (TO61).

**Teacher knowing**

There was a shared understanding by participants that good teachers also need to “know”, not only their subject but their students’ needs, level and learning styles:

I think a good teacher should … have good knowledge in the area he is teaching … he also should have … good teaching style, good, like, manner of a teacher. And he should knows the learner needs (TI43),

Of course the methodology that the teachers use to know that the appropriate level of student… We are in the class but maybe we have a different way of learning, a different
way of thinking about lesson, and I think the good teacher is someone who knows what we need (UN44).

**Teacher doing**

Good teaching practice was identified by participants as the provision of ‘enjoyable activities’, a ‘good teaching style’ and manner and adaptation of the syllabus to the group and circumstances. Hannah narrated:

I have some teenager classes and they are very moody. Sometime they want to cry, sometime they want to sit, stay and read, sometime they just want to listen all the time, sometime they want to speak with their friends…. Sometime I have two classes for same subject in one week, and the syllabus from the first class I need to do A and B, and sometime I switch it, I say, “We’ll do A and C today”, B and D for the second one, because I fear that the student will have more motivations for A and C rather than A and B (HA44).

One facet of a good teacher, identified by several participants, was the ability to make students feel ‘comfortable’ and in ‘love’ with the teacher. As Nina commented, ‘I think, in Vietnam, if the student love the teacher they will like learning’ (NI31). The good teacher ‘builds a good relationship’ with the students and does not remain ‘mysterious’. Una observed that she could not learn from the ‘mysterious’ ‘Vietnamese’ teachers, especially ‘the old ones’ as she was ‘scared’ of them (UN43).

**Teacher giving**

The good teacher was reported as ‘giving’ encouragement to students and providing strategies to help them study independently and teach themselves. They have a role in helping students to avoid the dangers that can arise in life outside the classroom. As Andrew suggested, the teacher has a responsibility to teach students the right strategies (both inside the classroom and outside) and ‘the right way’ to get what they want (AN91). They also have a duty to help students ‘avoid some of the evil’ (AN91) that might be present in the community. This idea is in line with the Vietnamese idea of teacher as moral guide (Constitution of Vietnam, n.d.; Duong Thieu Thong, 2002; Education Law of Vietnam, n.d.). A good teacher gives care and attention to each student, according to Tina. She added, ‘the teacher should show that … he or she should
... care enough about each of her students’ (TI43). This notion of ‘care’ reflects the Vietnamese educational principle of ‘care orientation’ (Le, Howard, Nguyen & Lilleleht, 2005) highlighted in Chapter 2.

5.2.3.3 The “good learner”

The characteristics of a good learner, according to Vietnamese postgraduate participants in the study, again mostly fell under two headings: personality traits and learning strategies. Table 5.3 summarises and dichotomises the responses in the full knowledge, as mentioned earlier, that the two categories are not mutually exclusive nor neatly dichotomous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits (innate)</th>
<th>Strategies (tactics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>gets knowledge themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sociable</td>
<td>goes ahead, does not wait in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extrovert</td>
<td>knows how to get started, creates own way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest – tells the teacher if something is wrong</td>
<td>studies and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent thinking</td>
<td>completes assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard working</td>
<td>believes in the teacher and has a good relationship with the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attentive in class</td>
<td>cooperates with the teacher and helps the teacher to motivate other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curious to discover (even outside class)</td>
<td>may disagree with the teacher (does not act like a puppet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willing to learn (not just for parents)</td>
<td>asks questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devoted to learning not just scores</td>
<td>never does anything against humanity i.e. for money. Knows when to stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loves to learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Offshore Vietnamese postgraduate students’ perspectives of the “good learner”

Table 5.3 indicates that Vietnamese postgraduate saw personal characteristics as equally as important as good learning strategies in the transition to good learning. They also mentioned many strategies which would be considered part of the repertoire of a “good learner” in educational practice in the West. There was little mention of strategies more traditionally associated with Asian learning styles, such as memorisation, obedience and hard work, which was surprising for the researcher. The comment regarding the need for a learner to refrain from going against humanity reflected the importance of ethics, moral qualities and ideology central to the Vietnamese education system (The
Education Law, cited in Phan Le Ha, 2008, p. 8) and the focus on human relationships interwoven into educational principles both past and present.

5.2.3.4 “Asian” approaches to learning

As with data from Site One, participants’ comments fell into three main overlapping areas: rote-learning/memorisation; learner passivity and critical thinking skills. For ease of reporting, findings in the three areas will be discussed separately. Within each area participants either agreed that this was a common strategy, agreed but with certain reservations or disagreed entirely.

Rote-learning/memorisation

Most participants felt that memorisation and rote-learning were learning strategies endorsed in the Vietnamese educational system. Teachers encouraged these strategies by awarding higher marks to students who submitted exams or assignments that reproduced their input ‘word for word’. They designed tests that created rote learners. Una attributed this strategy to the influence of Confucius:

Confucianism … just like children where parent ask them, here you have to wake up, for example, in school time about 6:30, you have to wake up at five, to wake up very early in the morning … your mind is very fresh so it’s easier to remember things …we are not very creative or just try to remember things more than have a critical thinking (UN51).

Tracy felt that this strategy was sanctioned largely because Vietnamese teachers were accustomed to this teaching style and fearful of change. ‘Policy makers’, ‘the system’ and teachers were all intent on forcing ‘students to learn by heart’. It was noted by Nina, however, that Vietnamese students’ styles changed if they lived abroad in places like the United States or Australia. Vietnamese students, still resident in Vietnam, ‘refer what the teacher tells them to do, like rote learning’ (NI35). Participants who agreed that rote-learning and memorisation were still very common learning styles in Vietnam attributed this to de-motivated students, ‘inactive’ teachers and creativity hindered by testing.

Other Vietnamese postgraduates felt that the image of Asian learners as rote-learners was somewhat inaccurate. A common understanding was that students relied very much
on this strategy at primary school level but much less so at higher education level. Amounts of memorisation required varied with the subject, they felt. Subjects such as Communist ideology were taught in a way which relies on rote-learning by very strict teachers who enforce this practice. Many Vietnamese postgraduates felt that the amount of rote-learning was dependent upon the aptitude and abilities of the student.

Tom put rote learning down to the age and amount of money students possess. If they are older and wealthier they are less inclined to rely on rote-learning he believed:

> Because my students are teenagers and they have come from the wealthy families, so they’ve got lots of experience from travelling around, moving from country to country so they are very independent thinkers, so they are not, very traditional Vietnamese learners ...
> (TO64)

**Passivity**

Almost half of the Vietnamese postgraduates commented that they had found their Asian students to be passive in lessons. One participant felt that students had been particularly passive when she was a student in previous years. Participants attributed this “passivity” to four main causes: student ability (especially language ability), student laziness, funding (personal or government) and didactic teaching styles. Hannah also linked passivity with ‘other social problems’ as illustrated below:

> They don’t have the environment to show it. We cannot provide them with the correct situation for them to do the right way. It’s also because of the financial problems. Also, we don’t have enough school for them so we cannot split the classes into smaller groups. Usually high school now still have 50, 30, even with the gifted class we have 35 students. I was part of a class like that and I can see that. So it connects to other social [problems] ...
> (HA59)

Some Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Vietnamese learners were only passive to a certain extent. Vera was very specific and stated that about half of her students were passive in her classes and this was because they were ‘a bit shy’. Valerie felt that students were quite passive orally but very ‘active’ when responses were written down. There was also a feeling that this “passivity” was changing with the new generation.
Vietnamese postgraduates who maintained that Vietnamese students were not passive
gave several reasons for this viewpoint. Firstly, they argued that students were not
innately passive but had been trained to be like this by their teachers. Secondly, they
observed that Vietnamese people do not initiate conversation in all situations:

Vietnamese we don’t have the kind of custom to say … good morning or ask where are you
going or just care about what you are doing at the moment, so whenever we say how are
you. So we know that we have to say something but that’s not our … language habit. So
on the surface I think that, one of the comment is correct but we are not … when a teacher
first time come into class, we are not have that kind of livelier atmosphere. But I think
when the teacher … have the appropriate topic or they just motivate at the right time …
easy to cooperate, it’s not like a passive (UN47).

Similarly, Andrew commented that Vietnamese people keep their feelings and emotions
to themselves and try to find other ways to express themselves. Classroom behaviour is
a subset of their behaviour outside the classroom. He claimed that Asian characteristics
were not particularly Asian but ‘situation bound’, just as Western behaviours arise from
Western contexts and ‘Western people … adopt Western styles’ (AN105).

**Critical thinking**

Many Vietnamese postgraduates felt that research portraying Asian students as fairly
uncritical in their approach to learning was accurate. Reasons for this fell into two
categories: outside influences and inside influences. Asian educational background and
family upbringing constituted the outside influences. Student personal characteristics
comprised the inside influences. Participants commented that students in classes in Asia
(and Vietnam in particular) were taught to ‘listen’ and ‘obey’ by their teachers. Critical
thinking was not only neglected but teachers actively discouraged any kind of
questioning or critical thinking by giving low marks if assignment work did not
reproduce their input word for word. As a result, about 70% of Vietnamese students
handed teachers back their own words, according to Hilda:

Elementary school, the teacher give them everything … they want them to follow exactly
the right way. They don’t want them to do anything different…. If there is something
creative outside of the form, then maybe they receive very low score on that (HI42).
Any natural inclination towards speculative or analytic thinking is hindered by Asian teachers, according to several participants. So much time is spent on memorising that there is little time left for higher order thinking skills. Learners are intimidated by their teachers or they ‘over respect’ them, according to Hannah. Vietnamese parents socialise children about the inappropriateness of criticism from a very early age. It is ‘in [their] blood’ not to criticise anyone, especially within the family but to ‘think… good about someone’ (TI58). Andrew and Una felt that any reluctance on the part of Asian learners to think critically was down to their lack of sufficient knowledge or life experience. Vera thought Vietnamese students were just plain lazy.

A few more very pertinent points were made by Vietnamese postgraduates as follows. First of all, learning can be seen as analogous to driving a car. The learner driver needs to have memorised all the basic skills before he or she can be creative. Secondly, many Asian learners have learned to think critically but are reluctant to express their views. Thirdly, Vietnamese students have reduced the idea critical thinking to disagreeing with the teacher, in many Asian contexts. This is seen as inappropriate and rude by learners. Fourthly, Asian society is changing quickly in many instances. This pace means that young people no longer have the wisdom of the elders that might enable them to criticise constructively. Finally, the researcher noted that, paradoxically, Vietnamese participants who claimed that Vietnamese learners were unable or unwilling to think critically were, at the same time, very critical themselves as learners.

Some participants were unconvinced that all Asian students were uncritical in their approach, commenting that some were quite active in thinking even when others held back. Furthermore, Valerie felt that young people in Asian countries had become more critical due to the influence of Western movies and television. There was also an increased likelihood of working alongside foreign or expatriate workers.

Several other participants remained unconvinced that Asian students were less critical in their approach to learning than Western students, though. They believed that they were critical but unable to articulate this, partly because of language difficulties if the subject was in a second language and partly due to fear of consequences. Furthermore, they felt that Vietnamese learners involve themselves in higher order thinking and adapt to the
new situation if encouraged to do so by their teachers. Finally, Vera, Nina and Andrew argued that critical thinking and discussion is common outside the classroom in Vietnam, especially with friends.

The strong message coming through from participants was that, indeed, many of the approaches to learning associated with education in Asia are apparent to some extent. It is dangerous to see these approaches as innate traits of Asians, however, or practices not to be encouraged. They are much more likely to be ‘situation bound’ practices. There are many contributing factors to the perpetuation of these teaching and learning styles, namely physical environment, teacher confidence/qualities/abilities, student confidence/qualities/abilities and cultural expectations. The important thing to realise, they suggested, was that the situation is a dynamic one. Asian students have demonstrated a great capacity to adapt to new learning environments.

5.2.4 Summary of findings Site Two: Vietnamese postgraduate students in Vietnam

Topics which emerged from Asian postgraduate students’ responses to the interview questions were grouped into three main categories: images; effects; and Western educational discourses. Within these, responses fell into degree or type. These are summarised below.

Images

Vietnamese postgraduates reported present day images of Asians that ranged from appealing to pejorative. Images focused on personal characteristics as well as behaviours. Appealing images included Asians as easy to talk to and friendly. Some participants felt that this might be seen as shallow by Westerners, however. Asian women are seen as faithful and loving towards children, they felt. In terms of behaviour, Westerners see them as wanting to stay at home and as having better relationships with foreigners. Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Westerners see Asian men as caring. All felt that Westerners view Asians as hard working especially the women. Pejorative images were mainly behaviours rather than characteristics. Participants imagined those in the West to perceive them as passive and unable to express themselves in public.
West imagines Asian women to lack personal freedom. They need protection from Western men. They see Asian men as dictators. Other perceived pejorative images included notions of cognitive inferiority and slow wittedness. Neutral images focused on Asians as traditional, old fashioned, family oriented and conservative. It was pointed out that when Westerners think of Asians, they mostly think of Chinese Asians.

Past images that the postgraduate Vietnamese students felt the West had of Asians were mostly pejorative or fairly neutral. They believed Westerners saw Asians as passive. Asian men were predatory, demanding, war like and living in poor economic conditions. Asian women were obedient to Asian men and fearful of Westerners. Overall, however, participants felt that the way the West perceived Asia had changed due to increased Asian economic growth, more travel and a perceived increase in liberalism in Asia as well as a greater understanding and awareness of the underpinnings of colonialism, domination and control. Vietnamese postgraduates believed that Asians were doubly inscribed in Western films, art and literature. On the one hand, they have been portrayed as less aggressive and more effeminate than Western men and, on the other, good at martial arts, corrupt, criminal and super hero material. Similarly Asian women have been depicted as weak and disempowered but at the same time sensual and strangely powerful.

**Effects**

The notion of Orientalism was not widely commented upon. Two Vietnamese participants had a basic understanding of Orientalism as it related to the binary of the Oriental and Occidental. Many participants said they had benefitted from Western teaching methodologies. They had used perceived Western views of Asians as motivation to overcome Asian stereotypes. Most Vietnamese postgraduates reported that the effect of Western views on them had been deleterious, however. Participants noted feelings of inferiority. They felt unappreciated, incompetent, untrusted and looked down upon. There was fear of non-acceptance by the West and images of backwardness. There was a shared experience of feeling disturbed by Western perceptions of Asians. Vietnamese postgraduates talked about a fatigue brought about by having to ‘bounce back between the two rivers’ (NI25). Some participants, on the
other hand, reported being little affected by Western perceptions of Asians and little interested in what the West thought. Others could see no difference between Eastern and Western constructions.

Much of the description of the effects of Asian backgrounds on participants remained fairly neutral in tone with women talking about cooking, marital traditions and constraints on open expression. Vietnamese postgraduates, however, also reported their Asianness to have generated shyness, introversion, closed mindedness and inability to express feelings in public. Vietnamese female participants voiced a lack of freedom to pursue jobs. Poor schooling was also attributed to the influence of Asian traditions and values. Sometimes effects were attributed to Asian cultural backgrounds where, in fact, they might be seen more as products of the Vietnamese CPA’s approach to government.

**Western educational discourses**

Responses ranged from positive appreciation to scepticism. Positives included Western educational discourses as motivators for development of better pedagogy and relations with learners. Less positive was the pressure that postgraduates felt to teach in ways prescribed by the West in contexts that are not congruent with these teaching approaches. In such instances, participants claimed that Western educational theory was not reflected in educational practice in Vietnam.

**The “good teacher/learner”**

Vietnamese postgraduates assessed the “good teacher” according to “being”, “knowing”, “doing” and “giving”. In terms of “being”, good teachers are self-confident, competent, principled, inclusive, firm, consistent but flexible, empathic with the students and have a sense of humour. Good teachers also know both their subject and their students. As far as “doing” was concerned, Vietnamese postgraduates deemed good teachers to be those who provide engaging and fun activities and adapt to the group with a good teaching style. A shared understanding was that good teachers make an effort to ensure that students feel comfortable and ‘in love’ with the teacher. They build a good teacher/student relationship rather than remaining ‘mysterious’. The good
teacher as a “giver” provides encouragement and strategies for learning independently and avoiding the dangers in life.

Vietnamese postgraduates see the “good learner” as constituted equally by ideal personal traits and effective learning strategies (although slightly skewed towards an emphasis on personal traits). Personal traits included sociability, friendliness, extroversion, honesty, independence, work ethic, attentiveness, curiosity, a willingness to learn and devotion to learning. Effective strategies included: showing initiative and independence; practising; studying; completing assigned work; believing in the teacher and the teaching style; cooperation with the teacher; assisting the teacher to keep classmates motivated; having a good relationship with the teacher; and questioning the teacher when necessary. The good learner also refrains from doing anything against humanity in line with ethics, moral qualities and ideology central to the Vietnamese education system (The Education Law, cited in Phan Le Ha, 2008, p. 8). He or she does not better him or herself at someone else’s expense.

“Asian” approaches to learning

Vietnamese postgraduates identified the presence of rote learning/memorisation, passivity and critical thinking in teaching and learning in Asia. Consensus was that Asian students were often reproductive learners. This was qualified by the reasons for this. Firstly, a reproductive learning style is encouraged by policy-makers and the Vietnamese “system”. Secondly, Vietnamese teachers design tasks to be reproductive because they are fearful of using any other approach and are quite inactive. Thirdly, Confucianism supports and promotes rote learning. Fourthly, rote learning is much more common at primary school level than higher education level and could also be linked to the subject area (i.e. the subject of Communist ideology), student aptitude or ability. Participants noted that a rote approach to learning was also much less common with older, more affluent learners, perhaps due to their increased confidence and their experience in private educational establishments in Vietnam and overseas.

There was not consensus about passivity in Asian classrooms. About half of the Vietnamese postgraduates felt that passivity was an issue and a small proportion felt
that it was not. Those that did agree that Asian approaches to learning can be quite passive, in terms of oral contributions rather than written contributions, attributed this ‘passivity’ to student ability (especially language ability), student apathy, funding (personal or government), didactic teaching style, cultural code and student personality. The feeling was that passivity in classrooms is linked to other social scenarios that are slowly changing.

There were convergent views on the inclination for Asian students to be critical in their approach to learning. Vietnamese participants’ reasons for lack of critical thinking in the classroom divided into outside influences and inside influences. Outside influences were the education system and family. Vietnamese teachers actively discourage questioning or critique and leave no time in the syllabus for such activities. Moreover, Vietnamese family members socialise children to see criticism as inappropriate from an early age. Inside influences consist of lack of knowledge or life experience and laziness on the part of the learner. Many of the Vietnamese postgraduates felt that reproductive, rather than speculative or analytic, thinking was necessary before higher order tasks could be attempted. They also felt that the meaning of “critical thinking” may have been misconstrued in Vietnam and reduced down to meaning ‘publicly disagreeing with the teacher’. This is seen as rude and antagonistic behaviour in most cultures.

Some Vietnamese postgraduates did not believe Asian learners were uncritical in their approach to learning. They felt that learners were reticent about articulating opinions but this was not an indication that they were not involved in critical thought, especially where courses are conducted through the medium of a second language. They argued that critical thinking and discussion may be determined by context and that such exchanges often take place outside the classroom. They also felt that young Asians were changing in this regard. They are becoming more critical and outspoken after being exposed to Western media, film and Western expatriate work places. This characteristic was in evidence in the interviews conducted for this study.

5.3 Cross-site observations

This case study did not set out to compare participants’ responses and views across ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds. The methodology of the study does not lend
itself to such an analysis. The participants at the two sites were not comparable. Site One postgraduates and lecturers were diverse (Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian, Saudi Arabian, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Japanese, Bangladeshi, Malaysian/Australian, British/Australian, Zimbabwean/Australian, second generation Italian/Australian and sixth or seventh generation Australian). Site Two postgraduates were homogenous (all Vietnamese). The Vietnamese group was also a subset of the Asian group in terms of Asianness. The diversity of backgrounds within the onshore group, however, allowed for multiple view points within the group termed “Asians” to be highlighted. Groups of postgraduates naturally fell into those who had never left their Asian country and those who had, providing interesting complementary perspectives. Where noticeable or remarkable differences or similarities emerged, which added to the corpus of knowledge required to answer the research questions, these are outlined below.

Images

Both the Asian onshore postgraduates and the Vietnamese offshore postgraduates felt that Westerners saw Asians in a positive light. They perceived Westerners to see Asians as having an easy disposition towards conversation, stylish, kind, generous, honest and friendly. There were more appealing images evoked by the onshore Asian postgraduates than the offshore Vietnamese postgraduates, however. Positive comments from the latter were tempered with suggestions that the West sometimes saw appealing images of Asians as shallow.

Vietnamese participants perceived the West to see Asian women as faithful, loving towards children and homely. Moreover, they believed the West saw Asian women as wanting relationships with more liberal foreign men. In this sense, foreign men took the role of protectors. Asian men, on the other hand, according to Vietnamese participants, were seen by the West as ‘caring’ but dictatorial (an image akin to that of many Japanese characterisations of men such as in the motion picture ‘Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence’ (Thomas & Oshima, 1983)). Unlike the Vietnamese postgraduates, Asian onshore postgraduates offered little in the way of current gender specific pictures they imagined the West to hold. Both groups identified an image of Asians of both genders as passive, uncritical, unable or unwilling to express themselves in public and
cognitively inferior to Westerners. The Vietnamese participants offered more dispassionate images than the Asian postgraduates, overall. The latter were more drawn towards the idea of ‘difference’ between East and West. Onshore Asian postgraduates also felt that when they were in Australia, they were seen as ‘cliquey’ (a negative trait) and ‘mysterious’ (unclear if this was considered positive or negative in this context).

Past images perceived by the Asian postgraduates onshore comprised Westerners’ visualisations of Asian women as beautiful and subservient (no indication was given as to the value judgement placed on this word). The Vietnamese postgraduates suggested, similarly, that in the past Asian women would have been seen as obedient but also fearful of Westerners. The Vietnamese participants felt that the West saw Asian men as predatory, war-like and demanding. The onshore Asian participants had a slightly gently perception that Westerners would have seen Asian men as brave, in charge and in the likeness of Jackie Chan (violent but humorous and more like slapstick comedy).

The offshore Vietnamese postgraduates’ comments suggested a ‘double inscription’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 108) by the West. The latter saw Asian men as less aggressive than Western men (and caring, super heroes) but, at the same time, corrupt and criminal. Asian women, they felt were perceived as weak and disempowered but, at the same time, strong, powerful and sensual.

One area in which the two groups of postgraduates differed markedly was in their responses to these perceived images. Asian postgraduates onshore suggested that Orientalist images and notions of difference portrayed in Western media, literature, film and art were still being perpetuated in Western social discourses but were, indeed, accurate representations of Asian society. In contrast, offshore Vietnamese postgraduates felt that the West’s image of Asia is changing, perhaps due to increased globalisation and Asia’s improved economic status.

**Effects**

Neither the Asian postgraduates nor the Vietnamese postgraduates were very familiar with Orientalism or the works of Edward Said. Moreover, a few participants believed they had been unaffected by the West’s perceptions of Asia. Most onshore Asian
postgraduates and Vietnamese offshore postgraduates considered their perceptions of how they were viewed by Westerners to have exerted an influence on their lives, however. There was consensus on the benefits of Western educational ‘expertise’ and ‘knowledge’. An understanding of this discourse enabled critique of Asian educational stereotypes. Engaging with Western educational discourse, however, made some Asian postgraduates feel ‘disturbed by’ or ‘fearful of’ Western expectations in teaching and learning. This was particularly apparent in the Vietnamese responses. They identified feelings of inferiority, incompetence, untrustworthiness, non-acceptance and backwardness. In particular, many Vietnamese participants felt fatigued by the task of occupying two worlds.

Asian postgraduates did not expand upon the effects of their own Asian backgrounds on their perceptions of Self. Responses tended to be descriptive in nature rather than evaluative. Asian postgraduates described the impacts of their Asian upbringing in terms of heightened awareness of the need for respect, humility, politeness, patience and quietness. They talked about a general hesitancy to ask questions or leave the family unit. Descriptions were not accompanied by judgements or reflections on these socio-cultural codes. Many Asian postgraduates felt that their Asian background had coloured their evaluation of Self and Other. There was a shared understanding of the deeply held sense of hierarchy in Asian culture and the impact of this on Asians.

The Vietnamese postgraduates were more judgemental when describing the effects of being Asian. Female participants detailed the importance of cooking, the adherence to marital traditions and restrictions on open expression in fairly neutral tones but, as a group, the Vietnamese postgraduates voiced indignation about the shyness, introversion, closed-mindedness and taboos on public expression they felt had been nurtured in their Asian upbringing. One participant mourned the loss of individual identity and the Asian acceptance of ‘limits’ on feelings. Another felt she had never really been herself. Lack of freedom for women to pursue what they wanted in life, and substandard education systems, were also part of the more negative stance taken by the Vietnamese participants about the influence of their Asian background on their lives.
Western educational discourses

Postgraduates at both sites described learning a lot from the West in terms of new learning theories and teaching methodologies. The consensus was that a good teacher is flexible, knowledgeable about both subject and student, gives positive encouraging feedback, provides strategies to enable independent learning and has a sense of humour. Both groups concurred that Western educational practices and principles often did not fit with Asian classrooms, however, particularly those in the public system. In these scenarios, theory often did not transform into practice.

Differences arose between the Asian onshore postgraduates and the Vietnamese offshore postgraduates when it came to appreciating the pedagogical advice of their Asian peers. The onshore Asian postgraduates were more inclined to value input to teaching and learning provided by their own Asian countrymen and women than the Vietnamese postgraduates. The Vietnamese postgraduates also referred more to the pressures of teaching in ways prescribed by the West.

The “good teacher/learner”

Postgraduates from both sites described good teaching as a combination of “being”, “knowing”, “doing” and “giving”. They emphasised teacher personal characteristics slightly more than teaching strategies. The Vietnamese responses skewed more towards the importance of teacher “being”. They underscored the importance of teacher effort in making the students ‘love’ him or her (it was unclear if ‘love’ equated with ‘respect’ in this instance). They felt it was important to cultivate a strong and open teacher/student relationship and foster teacher empathy. There needed to be a philosophy of inclusivity and responsibility for guidance not only in formal studies, but in life generally.

The good learner was observed, by both the Asian postgraduates onshore, and the Vietnamese postgraduates offshore, to be almost equally constituted from ‘ideal’ personality traits and sound learning strategies. The onshore Asian postgraduates, however, appeared to emphasise learning strategies slightly more than the Vietnamese postgraduates.
“Asian” approaches to learning

Views about the presence of memorisation in learning in Asian contexts were congruent across the two sites amongst the postgraduates. All felt that an Asian approach to learning incorporated a reproductive style and that this style could be linked to subject area and level of schooling. There was also some disparity in responses between the two groups though. The Asian onshore participants felt that reproductive learning approaches often arose from students’ lack of ability in the second language. Furthermore, they felt that memorisation did not take place in a meaning vacuum. Vietnamese postgraduates attributed a rote approach to factors such as student aptitude and ability, socio-economic status, public education systems (as opposed to private education systems) and the influence of Confucius.

Postgraduates from the onshore site observed, albeit with reservations, that Asian students often had, what might be perceived as, a “passive” approach to classroom learning. They attributed this to constrictions on the physical environment, teaching approaches, learner attributes, foreign language proficiency, lack of diligence in preparing for lessons, low level knowledge and ability, classroom dynamics and cultural background. The Vietnamese postgraduates were less convinced of this observation. Around half had found Asian students to be passive in the classroom. Reasons they gave for this were similar to those offered by the Asian postgraduates except that they were a little less generous, citing student laziness as a factor. There was also an understanding that student passivity could not be isolated from other social problems in Asia, especially in Vietnam. A considerable number said they had not found their Asian students to be passive.

Both the Asian postgraduates onshore and the Vietnamese postgraduates offshore concurred with research stating that Asian students took a fairly uncritical approach to learning. Both groups qualified this by attributing this style to cultural, educational and familial ideas about social hierarchy as well as low levels of education and knowledge in learners. Onshore postgraduates identified classroom task types, learner maturity, the nature of subject matter and fear of reprisals as factors in determining levels of critical
thinking. Offshore Vietnamese postgraduates once again were more cynical and identified learner laziness as a key component, as well as the teachings of Confucius.

There were participants in both groups who did not feel that Asians were always uncritical in their approach to learning. Onshore postgraduates felt that critical thinking did take place providing the topic was ‘well-known’ to the students, groups were small and relationships within the group were conducive. Similarly, Vietnamese postgraduates stated that the problem did not lie with the thinking but more the articulation of that thinking (especially in subjects not taught in the first language). They felt that some uncritical, reproductive work was necessary as a foundation to higher order learning. They also questioned the emerging, reduced interpretation of the phrase ‘critical thinking’ to mean disagreement with or criticism of the teacher’s ideas in Vietnam. Overall, there was a general air of ‘deficit’ in Asian approaches to learning in postgraduates from both sites. The Vietnamese postgraduates seemed more optimistic than the onshore Asian postgraduates, however, that questioning, and informed criticism is on the increase in Asia. This was attributed to factors such as exposure to Western media, Western styles of study, more travel and increasing numbers of expatriate workers.

5.4 Conclusion

Chapter 5 examined the findings from interviews with ten Asian postgraduate students from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds and countries within Asia and studying onshore in Australia and ten Vietnamese postgraduate students studying offshore in Vietnam. All were enrolled in the MA Applied linguistics. All were English language teachers as well as postgraduates on the course. Chapter Six examines the findings from interviews conducted with six lecturers who teach the MA Applied linguistics onshore in Australia (whilst conducting fly-in/fly-out visits offshore in Vietnam) and three Vietnamese lecturers who teach the same program offshore in Vietnam.
6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the case study findings pertaining to the lecturers of Asian postgraduate students who were enrolled in the MA Applied Linguistics course, onshore in Australia, or offshore in Vietnam. The findings have been used to create theory about how lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam, as well as to investigate the possible impact of Orientalist discourses, Eastern constructions of the “Asian”, Western and Eastern educational discourses on movement towards the Third Space.

As with Chapter 5, Chapter 6 begins with two main sections which report findings at Site One: Australia and Site Two: Vietnam, respectively. Each of the sections is organised according to the interview questions and categories and sub-categories outlined in Table 6.1. The third section provides cross-site observations.
### Table 6.1: The organisation of the findings in Chapter 6

#### 6.1 Site One: Onshore lecturers of Asian postgraduate students

This section reports findings from the six lecturers who teach the MA Applied Linguistics onshore in Australia, and do fly in/fly out work in Vietnam. They are referred to as onshore lecturers throughout the thesis despite the fact that they lecture to the Vietnamese students offshore in a fly-in/fly-out capacity. The majority of their work is done onshore. They have not been referred to as Australian lecturers because, as outlined in Chapter 4, four of the onshore lecturers are first generation migrants. One migrated from Malaysia, another from Zimbabwe and two from the UK. One is a second generation migrant whose parents came from Italy. Only the sixth lecturer is a sixth or seventh generation Australian. Many of the perceptions they discuss are their
own perceptions but as many again are the perceptions they felt were present in the Australian public and are not to be confused with onshore lecturer views. All of the lecturers were work colleagues of the researcher and, as such, the researcher was aware that they may be guilty of desirability response biases. However, the researcher countered this with the fact that the lecturers, professors and associate professors were well educated, critical thinking adults who were more likely to critique than to conform.

As reflected in the guiding questions, the findings fall into onshore lecturers’ perceptions of Western images of Asians in general, and those perceptions which relate directly to teaching and learning. The former findings relate tangentially to the main research question and were vital to an understanding of wider issues in education. The latter findings explicitly address onshore lecturers’ perceptions of Western images of Asian teaching and learning.

6.1.1 Beyond the classroom: Perceived images of Asians

These responses arose from main interview questions 1, 2 and 3. Most onshore lecturers highlighted the complexity of the question of “images”. They commented that images of Asians varied according to the speaker and to whom they were speaking. Images of Singaporeans, for example, differed greatly from those of Indonesians. Australians see the former as ‘contemporary’ and ‘dynamic’ and the latter as ‘developing’, without ‘a particularly high standard of living, or education’ (GE6). Onshore lecturers felt the Chinese would be described as having a historic culture. Lecturers felt that images may differ between younger Australians and older Australians. One onshore lecturer, with the pseudonym George, outlined that images held by the Australian public may be filtered through the ‘prism’ of conflict, wars, enemies or allies. The Yellow Peril of the Japanese, the Communist hordes of China, The White Australia Policy, the Vietnam War, fear fomented by One Nation politician Pauline Hansen and her racist policies (ex-Prime Minister John Howard was also named in this list), and the writings of historian Geoffrey Blaney, all provided the backdrop for the Australian public’s images of Australia’s Asian neighbours, according to the lecturer with the pseudonym, Isaias. People working in education perhaps saw Asians through the prism of the Colombo Plan, while younger lay people might see Asians much more through the prism of
migration and ‘boat people’, suggested Kylie (KY7). Images of Asians are also conceived through the prism of people’s experiences, according to several onshore lecturers:

> What brings out the positive stereotyping is when I’m happy with an incident or an encounter which is positive then I see all the things that are positive but if … I’ve got a negative encounter … (TA32) with the person then all the negatives will come up (TA33).

Mark and Kylie, who had migrated from Britain, felt Asians are seen differently by the public, depending upon the stand point of the speaker. People from the United Kingdom see Asians as those people emanating from South Asia, namely India and Pakistan and may embrace notions of the “exotic” and “different” Far East. Australians, on the other hand, ‘are blind’ to Asians from the Middle East, Turkey, Iran or Israel, according to the same lecturer. They see Asians as primarily from the South East Asian region or China. Almost all of the onshore lecturers shared the view that the question, “What is Asianness?” needs to be asked. The Malaysian/Chinese lecturer, Tania, commented that, although she was seen as Chinese in Australia, she could hardly speak her home language, Cantonese, at all. The majority of onshore lecturers shared a common agreement that there were dominant public perceptions of Asians which were not congruent with what, as academics, the lecturers knew to be true from the research and their own experiences. These images are summarised below as present images, past images, images suggested by literature, media, movies and art and changing images.

### 6.1.1.1 Present images, past images, images in literature, media, movies and art

Onshore lecturers’ perceptions of present and past images of Asians fell mostly (but not neatly) into two main discourses: appealing (or neutral) images of Asians and pejorative images of Asians. Each is discussed in the sections to follow.

**Appealing images**

Appealing Western images of Asians in the Australian public, observed by the onshore lecturers, mostly centred on Asian abilities as students and scholars, as well as workers. There was consensus on the popular public image of Asians as ‘intelligent’, ‘good at stuff’ (KY7), ‘diligent’, ‘hard working’ (RA5, 11) (especially at school) and ‘coming
top’ of the class (KY7). Onshore lecturers felt that Asians were respected for this. Such images often meant that Asians were the focus of many jokes by other children and the media, however. Similarly, past images, thought by onshore lecturers to be prevalent in Western discourses, were often conjured up through literature, film, media, artworks and travel books. The latter social discourses represented Asians as exotic and interesting. Recurring characters and themes were Ginger Ted in Singapore and the adventures of Robert Louis Stephenson in the South Sea Islands, claimed Mark.

It was difficult to place some images described by participants on the appealing/pejorative continuum, however. Words like ‘control’, which were used to describe images of Asians, could be construed as both positive and negative, depending upon the situation or speakers’ world views. The researcher had difficulty allocating these descriptions to either category and hence they were categorised as neutral images which were open to interpretation by the reader. For example, onshore lecturers spoke of public images of Asian parents as being very controlling (no doubt influenced by the publication of Amy Chua’s, The battle hymn of the tiger mother (2011),’leaving their children no opportunities for choice. Isaias and George felt this scenario was no different for Jewish or Italian children in their experience. This could be seen as a positive image in many communities but would probably be viewed as less than positive, at least in theory, by many Anglo/Celtic parents.

**Pejorative images**

The bulk of the images of Asians, thought by onshore lecturers to be prevalent amongst Australians and Westerners generally, could be categorised as pejorative. The negativity of these images was not left to researcher interpretation in many cases, as participants fore-grounded their comments with statements indicating that the images they were describing were negative ones. As emphasised at the beginning of the chapter, these images are not to be confused with images that onshore lecturers themselves held of Asians. The pejorative images that onshore lecturers described as prevalent in the public imagination, in Australia and other parts of the Western World, were discussed in terms of migration, employment, education, social status, personal appearance and personal characteristics.
Migration/employment

Many of the onshore lecturers shared a common understanding that people in the Australian public harboured images of Asians as illegal foreigners or ‘boat people’ who were eager to get to Australia’s shores to take jobs from those already living here.

Education/social status

Onshore lecturers believed that the Australian public view Asians as rote learners, lacking higher order thinking skills and creativity. They felt that the public merges images of Asian character with perceived learning styles. Furthermore, images summon portrayals of Asians: lacking ‘sophistication’; emerging from ‘overpopulated, crammed’ environments (GE11); being ‘houseboys’ with pigtails (GE37); or ‘coolies’ in rice paddies struggling to eke out a living (GE10).

Personal appearances/characteristics

Onshore lecturers identified images of Asians that they had encountered in the general public which focused on physical characteristics such as eye shape. They claimed that these physical characteristics perpetuated certain character images as shown below:

… certain features of the face, … the roundish Asian face, the brown eyes, the kind of eyes which are more… I suppose Australians would call them, slopes or… slanty eyes… there’s a particular look about Asians and those Asians tend to be regarded as being inscrutable, passive, quieter … possibly, not straight talking …. (MA6).

The lecturers felt that the Australian public perceives Asian men as driven to earn money and contribute to their country’s economy. This wealth and dynamism is ‘not necessarily always seen in a positive way’, however, according to the onshore lecturer with the pseudonym Raeleen (RA11). Women, in contrast, are often seen as ‘subservient’ (RA10, 11), ‘quiet’, ‘passive’, ‘pliant’ and ‘non-participatory’ (RA10).

Raeleen felt that the quiet, inscrutable Asian was no longer in the common consciousness (RA22), however. Mark’s comments contrasted with this view and he pointed out that until fairly recently, literature and film portrayed Asian men as “Fu
Man Choo” type characters, concentration camp leaders and bosses of opium dens (MA28). Asian characters had ‘bit parts’ in movies or, as Tania pointed out, were invisible altogether in Australian advertisements, literature or television (TA22). The absence of Asian characters in popular media reflected the fact that, until post White Australia Policy, Asians were rarely encountered in the local community by the majority of Australians. This situation can also be seen today in some social circles, according to George. Isaias confided, ‘I didn’t have much exposure I don’t think [to] to Asian people outside the classroom’ (IS33). The lack of contact with Asians perhaps has led to the development of an all-purpose Other, a “strange” (TA15) group of people to be feared.

6.1.1.2 Changing images

The most recurring image of Asians offered by the onshore lecturers was that of the changing Asian. There was a feeling that Asians coming to live in Australia had ‘blended’ with the Australian population and were no longer so separate. The lecturers felt that, paradoxically, Australians had accepted Asians in Australia for the very same reasons for which Asians are criticised: not asking any questions and getting on with what they are doing. Lecturers felt that the Australian public has now turned its attention from ethnolinguistic background or culture to religion. The new Other is a subset of the old Other, namely the Muslims, according to Kylie. With more Asians in the Australian population, there has been a growing ‘awareness’ and understanding with ‘greater recognition of variety’ amongst Asian countries, the same lecturer suggested (KY17). Globalisation has meant ‘less absolute stereotyping’, with Asians no longer seen as ‘mysterious’ and more positive images, according to George (GE7). As he put it, in the past the Australian public rarely saw Asians on television. Nowadays prominent chain stores use Asian models in their catalogues or Asian actors in their television advertising campaigns. Leading television channels employ Asians as news readers. Although there is still a tendency to view Asian actors in the image of Jackie Chan, ‘lightweight’, ‘fast paced’ and ‘humorous’, more recent Asian movies such as Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Li-Kong, Kong, Lee & Lee, 2000) have helped to nuance these images a little, according to Isaias (IS17), The movies are still predominately Chinese, however.
Korhonen’s (1994) depiction of Australia’s relationship with Asia coincides with lecturers’ observations of a changing, more dynamic image of Asians. Nonetheless he believes that images of Asians as hard working, intelligent and unquestioning but at the same time passive, subservient and inscrutable, still prevail. The term “Asian”, he suggests, in the eyes of most of the Australian public, does not usually reflect the Orientalist geographical boundaries described in Chapter 3 or the Pan-Asian ideology of the early 19th century that saw Asia stretching from Arabia to Japan (the original Asia also included the Eastern Mediterranean countries.). Australians see Asia as, what was once called, the Far East or Extreme Orient. Images of Asians originating from India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, or what used to be termed the “near East” by the British, are less than positive, because of their connections with Islam. Even in South East Asia, Indonesians are viewed with suspicion because they are Muslims (and even more so since the Bali bombings) (Korhonen, 1994).

6.1.2 Beyond the classroom: effects of Orientalism and Western views

Findings in this section emerged from main interview questions 4, 5 and 6. Onshore lecturers discussed their understandings of Orientalism. They then discussed the effect they believed perceived Western views of Asians had exerted on them.

6.1.2.1 Orientalism

Not surprisingly for Applied Linguistics experts, 4 out of the 6 onshore lecturers were familiar, at least at a basic level, with the work of Edward Said and Orientalism. Kylie claimed to have a basic hold on the concepts behind Orientalism but was unsure of the detail (KY19). Isaias felt fairly informed about this area of cultural studies because he had researched parallel themes in his own doctorate on African-Western discourses and identity. He commented:

I have studied it a bit for my own study. I was looking at images of ... stereotypes of Africans as well, in African culture, and just the word ‘Africa’, or the word ‘African’, and all the stereotypes that are engendered by that, … I used some of Said’s ideas for that, because I think his ideas of a Western discourse constructing their own identity from a difference of identity with the Other, which in Said’s case was the Orient… (IS24)... apply to any ... any culture which is different to Western culture, whatever that means … I mean ... that’s complex in itself (IS25).
Tania claimed to have some knowledge of the area mainly because of the cross cultural units of study she had delivered on various courses. She believed stereotyping to be ‘natural’, inevitable and unavoidable and only entrenched by the experiences the stereotyper goes on to have (TA32-33). For example, if a group of people have a positive stereotype of another group and they have a positive encounter with that group then the positive stereotype will prevail. If the encounter is negative (even just one) a negative stereotype will be perpetuated. The negative encounter does not have to be first hand but can be experienced through the media.

Mark claimed to have become very aware of the ideas behind Orientalism because he had ‘dug into it’ and ‘tried to reflect upon how people have constructed “The Asian”’ (MA11). His focus was mostly on what he termed ‘low-brow’ literature or popular culture images of ‘Orientals’. Where ‘high-brow’ and ‘low-brow’ culture often intersected, however, was in the image of the Asian as ‘exotic’, ‘mysterious’ and ‘sensual’. These Orientalist images, he claimed, had profoundly impacted upon him. Other onshore lecturers responded similarly but described the amount of influence rather than the nature of the influence.

6.1.2.2 Western views

Onshore lecturers described themselves as being either greatly affected by Western views of Asians beyond the classroom or hardly affected by them. The next sections describe these responses in more detail.

**Greatly affected**

Most participants stated that they had been very affected by Western views of Asians, either as an Asian arriving in Australia, a teacher of Asian students, a spouse of an Asian or just as a citizen of the world. As a Malaysian first arriving to settle in Australia, Tania described how she had spent the first few years of her time in Australia fearful that Australians might think she was taking unemployment benefits and eager to show that she was not. More recently, however, she felt that Western views about her had helped clarify her Asian identity. This was almost a reverse Orientalism or Occidentalist perspective:
If anything it has clarified my Asianness by living here … There are the elements that I’m really proud of that I like to keep … like the fact that you know I am Asian, I like that idea … at the same time I think I have a lot more respect for the people around me … you know. I think more and more the stereotype of the Anglos has sort of left me … I don’t know whether it is because I’ve lived here a long time or it is because of age or it is because of a generally positive experience here … What is Asianness? (TA63)

Isaias remarked how he had felt it necessary to ‘dramatically adjust’ his teaching methodology from his French students to his Asian students when he first arrived in Australia (IS28). He added that this may also have been a student age factor. He recalled being struck by a common view, amongst the teaching fraternity, that Asians could not (or would not) think critically or express themselves. On a more ominous note, George, the lecturer with the Asian spouse, recollected his children being subject to some prejudice at school. This was rarely an issue for him in an academic context. As he pointed out, people tend to ‘surround themselves with like-minded people’ (GE55). His Malaysian wife had also been discriminated against and alienated back in Malaysia due to her Eurasian heritage (Indian, French and Irish), he said. She was forced to carry a red card indicating that she was not a Malaysian citizen. He claimed all of these experiences with his family and his wife’s family (in Malaysia), plus travel to Asia, had affected him greatly (GE44-55).

Mark reported feeling deeply affected by Western views of Asians, particularly since the events of 9/11. He felt that there was an ongoing ‘anxiety’ (MA12) about Asians, not necessarily in his own social spheres, but in the general public. Asians are seen as ‘slightly threatening’ since the rhetoric of the crusades aired by American President George Bush after 9/11. Such a situation is ‘less charged’ in Australia, perhaps, because there seems to be slightly more understanding about ‘the diversity’ of Asia in terms of practices and religions. None the less, Australia’s history of war with Japan has tended to construct the Japanese (and the Chinese by association) as ‘threatening’ for certain sectors of the Australian community. Curiously, no lecturers referred to the impact of the Vietnam War on the Australian public. This may have been because only George and Raeleen were in Australia at the time this was taking place and they were children or teenagers then. Also, for the most part, the North Vietnamese were probably not seen as potential invaders of Australia, unlike the Japanese. More recently, events connected
with immigration have caused the same unease for many in the Australian public as seen in the quote below:

How has it affected me? You live in a world where there’s anxiety about people from Asia … they’re threatening … they could overwhelm you in terms of population. I mean we’ve got boat people out there at the moment from Sri-Lanka and Australians are getting ridiculously anxious about minor numbers of people coming across on boats to a country which is huge so it affects me …(MA12)

Even in more academic environments, such as tertiary institutions, Mark felt that Asians were seen as ‘different’ (MA12):

I mean it affects me at work because I work with colleagues who tend to think that Asians have got some kind of thing about them which is different and needs kind of pressing into a more Western mold in terms of study skills and all that kind of stuff and … in terms of other stuff… there’s another side to it…(MA12)

Finally, it was felt, again by Mark, that the notion of “multiculturalism” was somewhat shallow. Australians are ‘open’ to things like Asian food and other aspects of Asian culture but perhaps not embracing multiculturalism at a ‘deeper’ level (MA12). Comments were in line with what has been referred to as a ‘tourist approach’ to multiculturalism by(Derman-Sparks & Edwards (2010).

**Little or not affected**

Only one of the six onshore lecturers from Site One initially claimed to have been unaffected by Western views of Asians and that was Kylie. She later qualified this by adding that if she had been affected it was not consciously but subconsciously. Her experience as a migrant from the United Kingdom and her vast TESOL teaching experience with students from all cultures, linguistic backgrounds and walks of life, had led her to believe that it is impossible to make cultural generalisations about groups of people. She added:

Because of the job that I had of teaching English to people from a whole range of different cultures, from the age of 20, I met people from a whole range of diverse backgrounds, and without any kind of theoretical understanding, or reading, just formed a view from experience basically I think, initially (KY21)…The view was that you can’t make
generalisations about people [laughs] from any specific culture, because there was so many differences. I mean, of course there are certain cultural characteristics that you might expect. For example, I ... would encounter men from South America, who were very macho in that sense of the word of the way they treated women, so you might expect a tendency of men from that part of the world to behave in a certain way, but it was so often contradicted by experience of individuals, that it didn’t seem a very useful way of informing anything I did. And it was the same with China… from Japan. I taught a lot of Japanese students in the UK, and they were all so different to each other (KY22).

What she felt could be generalised, however, was the ‘external conditions’ or context in which these students found themselves. She gave the example of Japanese students working 15 hour days in banks back in Japan. They were ‘permanently exhausted’ by the time they got to lessons (KY22). Aside from such commonalities, the students were all ‘very different as people’, she felt (KY22).

Raeleen felt she had succumbed to the influence of Western views of Asians more when she was ‘younger and less experienced’ (RA39). She had worked in a primary school in Australia that was 96% Asian but saw her Asian and non-Asian students as ‘all kids together first’. This carried over to Aboriginal, Greek or Macedonian children as well. She claimed she did not define the children by their cultural background. Of greater import for bringing people together, or setting them apart, are things such as social class, parents’ employment contexts and students’ shared experiences of parents working long hours. Furthermore, an even bigger influence was religious persuasion. She recounted how she had been warned against fraternising with Catholics when she was younger:

> We were aware that there were different, but actually our greatest difference was not cultural, it was religious. [Laughs] We didn't talk to the Catholics next door, because you didn't. Don’t ask me why. [Laughs] I don’t know. But that was the big difference, not your cultural background (RA41).

### 6.1.2.3 Effects of Orientalism and Western views of Asians on teaching and preparation of lectures for Vietnam

Responses in this section arose from interview question 7. Onshore lecturers’ claimed to make either very little or no modification at all to accommodate Asianness in the
materials and their delivery in the offshore Vietnamese context. These responses contrasted with those reported by Seah and Edwards (2006) in Chapter 3, in which one FIFO teacher in their case study reported being especially keen to incorporate examples taken from the Asian context into her teaching in order to promote student knowledge building. The findings of Seah et al’s study also diverge from the findings of Dunn and Wallace (2006b) (also described in Chapter 3) in which lecturers on transnational programmes described adapting their materials to the local context. These same lecturers did not report changing their teaching and learning styles or their assessment practices, however, a finding in line with findings of this current study. The majority of lecturers in the current study reported modifications to delivery and materials which were not culture or nationality specific, however. For example, they adjusted their approach and materials to each new group of students they encountered or situations where students were exhausted after a day’s work or external factors such as erratic electricity supplies. As Kylie commented:

So again it wasn’t so much geared towards Asianness, but towards the circumstances in which they were operating. So for example, you’d take into account the fact that they were working 14 hours a day, and then coming along to the classes, or that they had this intensive 40 hour week, so you take that into account, that they, in lunch breaks, would have a little sleep, or they’d go home, and do the housework, or whatever. Or, that an assignment was late, because the electricity was down, you know. So it’s the external environment that you would take into account in the programme (KY29).

In line with suggestions by Gribble and Ziguras (2005) in Chapter 3, that the intensive nature of offshore teaching was the biggest challenge to academics, all participants mentioned adapting their teaching to different class sizes and to different modes of delivery. For example, numbers of postgraduate students in classes at the Vietnam site range from 40 to 55. Onshore numbers for the same units are 15 at most. Large numbers necessitate the use of a very large room in Vietnam. The room commonly used is a theatre room with a built in stage and hand held microphone. The cavernous nature of the room affects the acoustics of what is delivered.

The lecturers deliver to homogenous groups of Vietnamese speakers who have no need to communicate with each other in English. Adapting to teaching a monocultural group
rather than a multicultural group requires some modification, therefore. George claimed that he cut down communicative activities or task based work. Furthermore, lecturers delivered the unit in intensive mode offshore over one week of half day sessions. This creates a situation where lecture mode is the most efficient option. In contrast, onshore sessions span 13 or 14 weeks, allowing plenty of time for discussion and revision. As George pointed out, an intensive mode:

requires changes to the sorts of things that you would do, so it becomes less, activity based, problem solving, student flow, ... and more exposition, directed stuff (GE64)

Isaias mentioned the students’ use of laptops as important in determining modes and types of delivery. When the course first began eight years earlier, few students were using laptops but now it was usual for the lecturer to be confronted by the backs of about 40 laptop screens:

The size of the room and the number of students in there … The fact that all the students, or most of the students, have got laptops ... has another effect on my teaching ... but that’s only recent. That’s really developed over the past, say, year or two, because before that when I used to go to Vietnam, there weren’t any laptops … so I need to have strategies to deal with that, and the fact that they’ve got all the material of the unit on their laptop there in front of you … but that’s just a construct of the course, the teaching … not really [culture] (IS44).

Several other lecturers declared that they did not change the material in any way from that delivered in the same units onshore. Reasons for this were many. Firstly, Mark felt that changing, and especially simplifying, the material would be ‘condescending’ for the Vietnamese postgraduate students (MA29). He claimed to make a ‘conscious’ effort to keep everything the same. The only adaptations that were made were in the type of delivery. This again related to the intensive nature of the course. Sessions are conducted back to back during the week of face-to-face contact, with no time for students to properly digest points as they come up. Mark also claimed to establish closer personal relationships with the students more quickly as it was his only opportunity to do so, a finding in contrast with Gribble and Ziguras’s findings (2005, p. 213) (outlined in Chapter 3) that many transnational academics report feeling that interaction with their offshore students is ‘superficial’. He said he devoted more time to assessment details
and ground rules due to the fly-in/fly-out nature of the delivery. He also allocated more time for lecturer repetition and more opportunities for questions, recognising that the postgraduates were not studying in their first language:

I guess I spend probably a little more time with the students than I would normally on explaining the assignments but again that’s partly because I’m aware that I’ve got a limited period of time and they need to understand what I’m talking about but also because I’m aware that they’ve invested … a much greater proportion of their income in it and there are expectations about what’s going to happen with their degree…they’ve put a huge investment into the course and much as they have come there for the intellectual experience they are there to get the qualification (MA34).

Tania said that she had not adjusted onshore material to the Vietnamese context because it was her ‘first time’ to teach it and, in the interest of standardisation, she was fearful of changing what had been given to her to teach (TA87). Besides this, three and a half hour lectures and discussion left her too tired to alter anything. She claimed that any adaptations she made to offshore delivery were again down to the intense nature of the course and not the cultural and ethnic background of the students.

Some lecturers reported that although they did not adjust their material to the offshore situation in Vietnam, they did adjust their approach when teaching Asian students in general. George claimed that he had experienced minimal success with ‘active participation’ approaches and students from Asian backgrounds, even on the Australian campus (GE71). He found it difficult to get Asian students to critique and he felt students thought it was disrespectful to call out answers or questions:

I realised they … were used to passive [type of learning]… (GE70)… And so I had to abandon the kind of activities that I would have used, with a group of Australian postgraduate students, who were far more used to a different mode of delivery (GE71).

Of course, these comments may reflect the expertise of the lecturer in dealing with multilingual groups in a student-centred way. This particular lecturer was not used to such groups as his experience was in mainstream education rather than applied linguistics and he had never taught English as an additional language.
Raeleen claimed that she always took into account the background of postgraduate students in her classes. She made a point of discussing their different teaching contexts. She tried to avoid being didactic about what is ‘right’ or pushing the idea of only ‘one way’ to teach but she was still mindful of ‘our practices according to theory’ (RA47). She felt it was important to ‘take account of contemporary theory and literature’ (RA47). A balance needs to be found between the different views in her opinion.

When asked about supplementary materials for the Vietnamese or Asian context, no material was forthcoming. Lecturers were adamant that they only used material supplied on the CD from a central source, as if to do otherwise would cause them to be reprimanded by the Head of School and governing bodies such as TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act, 2011). These materials are identical to those used for the same units onshore. Adaptations between the onshore and offshore scenario seemed to take place only at a delivery level. Kylie claimed that she accommodated her Vietnamese postgraduate students, and their different teaching environments, by allowing more choice in research topics and essay titles, as well as the freedom to choose their own topics from local issues (KY30, 25).

Overall, lecturer adaptation of delivery to different contexts was not made on cultural considerations but more on constraints of time and student numbers. Kylie pointed out that, ultimately teachers need to be ‘true’ to their ‘own beliefs about how people learn’ (KY33). She added that learners respond to many different approaches to teaching. The most ‘didactic’ of lecturers, who comes across as ‘the expert’, may be the most popular in the end (KY33).

6.1.3 Western educational discourses, the “good teacher/learner” and “Asian” approaches to learning

This section moves discussion more closely towards onshore lecturers’ perceptions of teaching and learning. Findings emerged from main interview questions 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.
6.1.3.1 Western educational discourses

Western educational theories and discourses had affected about half of the onshore lecturers in the study at some point. The nature of the influence differed considerably, however. Some participants felt they had fully embraced these discourses over a prolonged period of time while others felt they had been enamoured with the discourses only briefly and had spent the rest of their time involved in critique. For example, Kylie narrated how she was not ‘an original thinker about methodologies, and pedagogies, at all’. When she first started teaching, she had just taught ‘the way’ she ‘had been taught’ (KY48) without thinking to question. It was only when she witnessed what she thought were the ‘effects’ of these approaches on her students that she reconsidered following one particular approach to the exclusion of all others. She became increasingly convinced of the fact that no approach is ‘the answer’ with all having an ‘element of truth’ (KY48).

Raeleen reported being ‘informed’ by the ‘theory’ in her teaching and research but being initially unaware of particular approaches endorsed by educators in the field until she attended higher degree supervision with a leading researcher in task-based learning (RA55). Without knowing it, her approach seemed to be much in line with this approach to teaching even though she thought she was just responding to ‘the needs of the students’. She pointed out:

It’s actually interesting that, … as a language person, I didn't realise that the way that I approached language teaching was from a very task-based kind of view until I actually was supervised by XXXX and realised, “Oh, but that's what I do!” … look at the needs of the learners ... and approach it that way… theory has really informed, not just my teaching but my … research (RA55).

Tania, the Malaysian/Australian lecturer, talked about receiving Western educational discourses almost as an epiphany. She spoke at length about the great insights she had received after learning about the ideas behind constructivism in educational theory. Having done her first education degree in Malaysia, she came to Australia and completed a Graduate Diploma, a Master’s degree in Education and a PhD with a focus on Applied Linguistics. She said, ‘…I am so much … into constructivism now that …it’s almost second nature to consider the students first
…’ (TA108). She went on to add, ‘ … I am really quite changed in the way I regard my students and in the way that I approach my subject or whatever I’m supposed to be teaching … (TA109) and ‘ it’s only after coming here… through a process of osmosis you get … to that sort of way of thinking …’ (TA110).

Her personal conviction, that the theory she has learned since being in Australia is beneficial to teaching and learning, was reflected in her comments about the Vietnamese postgraduates/English language teachers she has taught in Vietnam:

It became very clear you know ….on the one hand they say ‘Oh we are into CLT’ but actually when they describe the steps that they take with … their teaching it’s not at all communicative …it’s really …very teacher fronted … (TA108)… now when I look at the way it [English language] is being taught in Vietnam or here …how teachers describe their teaching I think …you’re not respecting your students at all …(TA110).

Other onshore lecturers felt they had been a little less influenced by educational theory in their careers as teachers and lecturers or had taken a more synthesised approach. In Isaias’s case, this was because the theory available to be learned happened to have emanated out of South Africa in the 1980s. This educational discourse was ‘abominable’ (IS70), he maintained. George had completed an Arts degree before his education degree. He described how he developed ‘a kind of synthesis[ed] view about …how learning can occur …in different contexts’ (GE92). The minimum requirement, he felt, was the need for teacher ‘enthusiasm’. He explained, ‘I’m always hopeful that I can maximise learning through careful consideration of what I’m doing, and how I’m doing it’ (GE92).

6.1.3.2 The “good teacher”

Several onshore lecturers shared a common belief that it is impossible to say exactly what constitutes a “good teacher”. There are ‘different types of good teachers’ (KY50). George felt that some teachers were too ‘precious’ about how much impact teaching actually has on learning (GE100). The role of the good teacher is to simply ‘support learning efforts’ and ‘add value to the process’ (GE100). A good teacher could be someone who is completely ‘didactic’ or ‘powerful’ with a ‘strong personality’ or someone who is just an ‘interesting character’ (KY50). It all depends on the perceptions
of the individual learner. As Raeleen added, ‘There’s no actually right way and there’s no ... there’s no best way. It’s about who the learners are and who the teachers are and what resources are available’ (RA56).

Onshore lecturers made some concessions to the fact that “good teachers” might possess certain traits and that these traits fell into the categories of “teacher being”, “teacher doing” and “teacher giving”, however. Raeleen felt that it was important for the teacher to have a ‘good relationship’ with students and with this in place ‘it doesn’t really matter the rest of what goes on’ (RA56). The teacher should enable students to leave the lesson feeling good and under the impression that the teacher ‘genuinely care[s]’. In addition, the teacher needs to be receptive to different viewpoints he or she may come across. This requires deconstruction of Self and Other. Many of the lecturers felt that it was possible to define a “good teacher” as ‘inspiring’, ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘a good listener’ (listening to others and also monitoring what he or she says in the lesson). An effective teacher also shows respect for the students, a personal interest in the students and is, ideally, someone who is also in the process of learning.

In terms of “doing”, there was consensus that the teacher should find out what the students know. Kylie talked about working ‘backwards’, ‘identifying areas of need’ and then working ‘to assist the students in a way that suits them’ (KY50). The “good teacher”, ‘fosters enthusiasm’, creating ‘a space for enthusiastic learning’, ‘keeps work simple’ (IS75) and ‘learner friendly’ (GE95), ‘makes a topic interesting’ (IS75) and is keen to maintain engagement with the students. Such teaching requires thorough, ‘comprehensive’ planning (GE94) followed by ‘reviews’ and ‘revisits’ (GE94). Mark felt it was important for a teacher to ‘model thinking’, especially critical thinking. He was keen to qualify this statement by adding that ‘critical thinking’ did not mean ‘cut price’ formulaic thinking. It also did not entail learners doing endless exercises in books on how to identify ‘red herrings’ or how to spot when evidence has not been provided to back up viewpoints in newspaper articles (MA15). Critical thinking was informed critique. Good teaching allows students the opportunity ‘to leave [the lesson] feeling more aware of who they are personally’ (KY50) according to Kylie.
On the whole, lecturers identified “teacher doing” as characterising good teaching more than “teacher being”. “Teacher knowing” and “teacher giving” were rarely mentioned.

6.1.3.3 The “good learner”

The onshore lecturers’ perceptions of the “good learner” are listed under personal qualities and strategies in Table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “Good Learner”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality traits (innate)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learns from experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• internalises, adapts, applies new concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• capable of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• open and receptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• self-confident (without necessarily being an extrovert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• curious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: The “good learner” according to onshore lecturers

It is evident from the table that lecturers in this study considered learner tactics more important than learner personalities when considering what makes a “good learner”. Overall, however, there was a common understanding by most participants that, just as a “good teacher” is difficult to define, a “good learner” is equally so. As Raeleen suggested, ‘I don’t think there is actually one right or wrong way’ (RA57). Another lecturer replied to the question regarding the “good learner” in a puzzled way:

I don’t really know. A good learner? (IS84)... Because I’m not sure what the criteria for a good learner is ... “What do I like in a learner, or in a student?” I suppose I like engagement, I like someone to talk to me, to say the things that are happening, to ask me questions ... if they have difficulties, and then to show me that they are understanding what
they need to understand … that’s very superficial, and what’s going on in their mind, and I know this anyway from assessments that very often the people that engage with you a lot, and talk a lot, and ask difficult questions, or know the answers when you ask them in class; they are not always the ones that get the highest marks at all. Often it’s the opposite actually, and it’s the ones … because they’re struggling, or they don’t know how to learn, or they don’t know how to write, or whatever, that they are engaging so much in the class. When they go away … they’re absolutely lost. So it’s really hard to know what a good learner is, and how you measure that, and who’s doing the measuring (IS86).

George observed that good learning was ‘not about attending lectures’ and that any definition needed to take into account the person involved and his or her particular learning approach (GE101). This view was corroborated by all the onshore lecturers.

6.1.3.4 “Asian” approaches to learning

Onshore lecturers in this study shared a common mistrust of the idea that Asian learners could be characterised as having a particular learning style. When credibility was given to the idea that Asian students were quite passive in class, onshore lecturers qualified this observation by attributing this behavior to approaches to teaching often encountered in Asian contexts. Tania claimed that Asian teachers ‘were badly trained’ and ‘not really giving their students the best’ they could (TA160) because they had huge gaps in their knowledge. According to her, Malaysian teachers find themselves constrained by the syllabus, and resort to encouraging private tuition for students who want to interact and learn. The fact that teachers are badly paid, and little respected, gives added incentive to neglect good practice in the scheduled lesson and offer private tuition for a fee afterwards:

In Malaysia … today most of the teachers are really not interested in teaching … they are in it as a sort of a business thing so they don’t really teach in class what they do is they go to class, they have to dish up what they are supposed to dish up and then they say, “if you really want to learn you come to tuition classes with me after school” (TA161).

She observed that it is commonly thought that teachers in Asia are treated with more reverence and respect than teachers in Australia. However, her experience was the opposite. She claimed that, ‘nobody really respects the teacher’ in Malaysia while ‘here [in Australia] …all teachers are respected’, although she was prepared to admit that this
could be an urban/rural divide in Malaysia, with students in the Kampons being much more respectful than those in the cities (TA172). Comments such as these led the researcher to reflect that perhaps it was also a generational and social class phenomenon, with wealthy children, who may be from one child families in places like China, having more of a sense of entitlement than previously.

Raeleen shared that she had observed pre-dispositions towards certain learning styles in her experience as a teacher of Asian students (and indeed Australian indigenous students) but felt that stereotypes exist for a reason (RA62). This comment contrasted with her earlier comments that she did not notice any differences between her ‘kids’, causing the researcher to consider the trustworthiness of these comments. Approaches to learning revolve around ‘your experiences’ and ‘who you are as an individual’ (RA63), as well as contexts (RA62), she added.

More extreme views were shared by other onshore lecturers. Kylie felt that the idea of “an Asian learner” was absurd:

I think they are blanket statements, and ... it’s not possible for them to be true first of all, because attributing to an entire continent, and a half, a particular way of learning, I think is problematic, given that there are so many individual countries, even within that large grouping, and each individual country has its own education system, and it’s true that people might be taught to learn in a particular way within their education system, but even there you’ve got a continent broken down into countries, countries broken down into regions, regions broken down into different educational systems, private, public, primary, secondary. So I don’t think it’s possible to just talk about the Asian learner. In fact, I cringe when people say, “Well, Asian learners are …” (KY54)

Isaias added that he would question the value of any findings on so-called “Asian learning styles”, even if the methods and conclusions were dependable and acceptable.

**Rote-learning/memorisation**

Onshore lecturers shared the view that a memorisation style was the result of adaptation to contexts in which Asian students found themselves. For example, learners of Chinese language have to memorise a lot in order to gain mastery of
the language and even then full mastery is not within their grasp (IS95). Isaias queried the idea that memorisation is inherently flawed as a study technique (IS95). Tania took up this train of thought. She felt that memorisation did not preclude understanding, in her experience of Asian students (TA126, 127). Memorisation as a study technique ‘has been practical for thousands of years’ with neurolinguistic research now attesting to the fact that people form habit first and then make sense of it all later. She concluded, ‘it can’t be that they’ve got it wrong’ (TA127).

**Passivity**

Similarly, onshore lecturers suggested that criticism of passivity in Asian students is based on a fixed idea of learning styles which do not take into account the fact that styles can be dynamic. They may change with each new context, situation, subject or teacher, they stated. Mark felt that ‘an “Asian learner” could easily become a “Western learner” and vice versa’. Furthermore, none of ‘these things are rusted on’. Students are not ‘stuck with it’ (MA20). In his experience, ‘mainstream 80s dogma’ depicting Asian learners as ‘passive’, ‘deferent to authority’, ‘uncritical’ and ‘rote’ in their approach, did not reflect his experiences with Asian students in his classes. He added that he had found few differences between ‘Aussie’ students and Asian students (although many of his Australian students were from families of Asian extraction). In fact, he remarked that he had found Vietnamese postgraduate students in classes on the MA Applied Linguistics programme run in Vietnam very interactive. Students asked more questions than most students onshore.

**Critical thinking**

Onshore lecturers’ views about Asian students and critical thinking were congruent. They did not believe that memorisation was over utilised. In their experience students came forward and spoke up. There was not a propensity towards an uncritical approach. Despite this consensus, however, their remarks seemed to form a contradiction on many occasions. For example, on the one hand, George disputed notions that Asian students were uncritical and inclined towards rote learning and on the other hand, he attributed a
non-critical style to Asian cultural influences such as reverence and respect. Furthermore, having just denied any truth in the notion of an “Asian learning style”, he then went on to suggest that teachers receiving Asian students change their teaching styles to suit Asian students (GE107-109). He was also keen to emphasise that Asians were becoming more vocal and critical which was helpful for any teacher needing feedback during lessons.

In a similar fashion, Tania decried the idea that Asian learners are uncritical in their approach to learning but then ascribed a lack of a critical approach to considerations of hierarchy, lack of encouragement by Asian teachers, student laziness and reluctance on the part of Asian students to take the responsibility for being wrong. She added that she found Australian students to be little different, however. They were just more adept at masking their ignorance and minimalising their loss of face with humour. A shared view amongst onshore lecturers was that Asian approaches to learning could also be assigned to lack of knowledge, student and parent status and cultural norms discouraging questioning Asian socialisation practices.

Mark also denied the existence of an Asian learning style but went on to justify and suggest reasons for Asian approaches to learning:

But I do think that… there’s a kind of problem at the moment in that Asian education systems because of the pressure of jobs and because of the pressures of globalisation … are becoming more entrenched as factories just as they are in the West and, and I think, that’s where the danger is…you can’t get rid of the idea that there’s an Asian learner unless… you destroy the way education systems work in Asia… the way Korean kids have to go to school at seven in the morning and fall asleep at twelve o’clock at night… just listening to the teachers (MA20).

Confucius was mentioned as an influence on learning style, as well as the effect of the Chinese civil service exams. Many Asian students enrol in courses outside their home environment. They see this as a way of escaping their social background, improving their situation and getting ahead quickly. Mark gave this as justification for some learning approaches. Overall, there was a sense of the need to change the political setting before any changes in educational settings could be effective.
6.1.4 Summary of findings Site One: Onshore lecturers of Asian postgraduate students

Onshore lecturers of the Asian postgraduates saw transnational education as complex and requiring some consideration and reflection. As far as images of Asians were concerned, they reported feeling that these were, on the whole, more dynamic now, with many of the stereotypes being critiqued and more positive images replacing them. They felt that these changes in perception are not taking place equally across all layers of society, however. This is a view in line with the opinions of leading Asian academics in a televised forum (McEvoy, 2013) discussed further in Chapter 7. While Asians are cast positively as industrious and clever, they are still perceived by the Australian public as submissive and socially maladjusted.

The majority of onshore lecturers claimed to have been affected by Western views of Asians in their roles as teachers of Asian students, as spouses of Asians and in their daily lives. They felt that the notion of “multiculturalism” in Australia is superficial and at a surface level. It is focussed on things like Asian food. It constitutes a ‘tourist approach’ to multiculturalism (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Moreover, onshore lecturers reported a feeling of ongoing ‘anxiety’ in the general public about Asians.

In the area of teaching and learning, a sizeable proportion of the lecturers claimed to have been affected by Western educational theories and discourses. The type of influence varied from short-term acceptance, to critique, to wholesale acceptance. Some claimed they had developed a more synthesised approach to teaching in response to their encounters with Western educational theory. Notions of the “good teacher” focused mostly around the idea of the teacher as a “doer” but, overall, the onshore lecturers felt that definitions of “good teaching” were elusive. Similarly, they felt that notions of a “good learner” were equally hard to articulate. Success comes down to the individual and a customised approach to learning. They identified tactics used by learners as markers of good learning approaches slightly more often than personal characteristics.

Onshore lecturers mostly refuted the existence of an “Asian learning style”, reliant upon on memorisation, passive acceptance and an uncritical approach. They felt that images of Asian students were based on a static view of learning. Follow up remarks were not
always consistent with this view, however. Approaches to learning in Asia were attributed to the local context, political setting, social background, situation, context and teacher.

Onshore lecturer adjustment to delivery, content and format of materials used offshore for the MA Applied Linguistics course, was minimal. Constraints arising from large numbers, the intense nature of delivery and the profiles of the learners (all mature-aged English language teachers often holding down at least two jobs and providing for families) affected their teaching more than cultural considerations. Changes to delivery were made to address these constraints but materials and assessments largely remained identical to those used onshore in the interests of standardisation, they claimed.

6.2 Site Two: Offshore Vietnamese lecturers of Vietnamese postgraduate students

This section reports findings from three Vietnamese lecturers who teach the MA Applied Linguistics entirely offshore in Vietnam (note that one of the lecturers in the study no longer teaches on the course). Again they address their own personal perceptions as well as perceptions they believe are held in the wider Vietnamese public.

As with Site One, findings at Site Two fall into the broad groupings of Vietnamese lecturers’ perceptions of Western images of Asians which go beyond the classroom and those perceptions which relate directly to teaching and learning.

6.2.1 Beyond the classroom: Perceived images of Asians

In response to main interview questions 1, 2 and 3, Vietnamese lecturers spoke of images of Asians that they felt were current as well as images they imagined prevailed in the past. They also described images promoted by Western literature, media, movies and art and changing images.

6.2.1.1 Present images, past images, images in literature, media, movies and art

Vietnamese lecturers’ perceptions of present images of Asians fell mostly into two main discourses: appealing (or neutral) images of Asians and pejorative images of Asians. Each is discussed in the sections to follow.
**Appealing images**

Vietnamese lecturers perceived the West as viewing Asians in a very appealing light. As one lecturer, given the pseudonym David, commented, the West sees Vietnamese people as, ‘people they can work with … to develop things together, to some extent… they can building trust’ (DE8). Other current images were of Asians as ‘disciplined’, good at following instructions, compliant, good at writing and reading, ‘open’, ‘friendly’, ‘smiling’ and responsive to tourist requests for information (HE 10,11).

They felt images perpetuated in Western media, or literature, were of Asian heroes such as Gandhi, the Dalai Lama and Ho Chi Minh. They observed that Asian men are portrayed in roles which depict them as authority figures or courageous, loyal to king, family and parents. Popular images of Asian women, they maintained, have focused on Asian women’s religious nature, their lack of dominance, their confinement to the house (which, along with lack of dominance, could also be included in the negative images outlined below). There has also been a perpetuation of Asian women as committed to family responsibilities and loyalty to family and husband. There was a common understanding that the West sees Asians as hard-working.

**Pejorative images**

A widespread Western perception of Asians, according to the Vietnamese lecturers, was a lack of initiative or creativity, a reluctance to participate and make suggestions for change, complacency and, in terms of scholarliness, weakness in the areas of listening and speaking. Similarly, communication with Asians was not deemed to be ‘straight forward’ (PH1-4), either in the past or now. Asians have been regarded as ‘more reserved’ (PH4). Vietnamese lecturers felt that Westerners had discriminated against Asians in the past. The latter felt the West perceived Asians to possess “different” levels of intelligence, education and society. This was coloured by images of developing countries and war. One Vietnamese lecturer, Phyllis, felt that, even now, Asian men were seen as perpetuators of family violence in Western popular literature, film and television. She felt aggrieved that Asians were mostly seen as rural, ‘working with their hands’ and not with technology or in intellectual pursuits (PH6-7).
6.2.1.2 Changing images

Vietnamese lecturers noted that, with the rise of globalisation; there is increasing interaction between countries. This has led to an ongoing re-interpretation of Western perspectives. For example, a Vietnamese lecturer, with the pseudonym of Henry, pointed out that Vietnamese reluctance to speak out can be traced back to a positive cultural more of ‘respect to their own people’ (HE10). Attitudes are changing, however, and there is greater understanding between cultures and across borders, he felt. This seems to involve Asians becoming more ‘Westernised in their daily life’ (PH4) with Asian women working outside the home, doing higher education studies and in some cases, being the bread winner for the family.

6.2.2 Beyond the classroom: Effects of Orientalism, Western views and Asian backgrounds

Findings in this section emerged from main interview questions 4, 5 and 6. Vietnamese lecturers discussed their understandings of Orientalism. They then discussed the effect they believed perceived Western views of Asians had exerted on them and the impact of their own Asian backgrounds.

6.2.2.1 Orientalism

Vietnamese lecturers were not, on the whole, familiar with the notion of Orientalism. Henry was the exception to this with his belief that Orientalism ‘was a way to get closer to Eastern culture’ (HE38).

6.2.2.2 Western views

All three Vietnamese lecturers claimed to have been affected by perceived Western views of Asians. Effects were downplayed by David who felt so comfortable in the L2 culture that he did not perceive much of an impact (DA12):

I don’t think it is big in my case, as I told you earlier. I used to study… and …work in Western societies longer than other people and I feel like, I understand them (DA37)….I’m not typical Asian because I’m, by my training, by my way … living things, I indulge in …Western thinking and cultures so that I don’t feel much case of difference (DA12).
David said he was in quite ‘an awkward situation’. He stated, ‘I am Asian but actually, you know, I learn, I am still in the West …’ (DA61). This ability to span two languages and two cultures, East and West, seemed to give him confidence and make him feel elevated amongst his colleagues and the Vietnamese public:

I don’t see … it as a difference, or something very difficult for me to understand a situation.
But ... I think … the ordinary people, they don’t have much contact with the people from the West, maybe they feel different (DA38).

Similarly, Henry commented that he thought ‘the distance of the gap is not too much’, having ‘been studying English for many years and been training in Australia for at least three times’ (HE44). Even so, he confided he had initially misread the cultural norms when he first arrived in Australia. Like his fellow countrymen he had been ‘not open’ or outgoing, not speaking out much or asking for help. His reasons for this were that he was happy mostly and he did not ‘want to go there to … cause trouble’ (HE44). Later, he had found Australians to be open and willing to help.

On a less positive note, Phyllis expressed irritation and annoyance with the fact that, from her standpoint, things had changed dramatically over the years in Asia and yet these changes seem to have gone unnoticed, and unremarked upon, by the West:

I don’t know whether it really affects to me, but their view should be changed because we, Asian people, are changing. When I read some books written by Western people or when I look at some photo collection or photo galleries met by the Western people, sometimes I don’t feel good just because they don’t change their perspective. Why? We are changing a lot. So some ideas, which were true in the past … are now changing, so the Western people also need to update their perspective to change their view about the Asian people, because now we are in the globalised age and we are changing a lot in order to be relevant, to be suitable in this big community (PH16).

6.2.2.3 Asian backgrounds

Vietnamese lecturers’ experiences of Asian culture varied. Responses ranged from being influenced considerably by Asian culture to being hardly affected. ‘Asian identity is there even though I live in the United States or in any other Western countries’ said Phyllis (PH24). She went on to describe listening to her parents before making
important decisions, dressing and behaving in an ‘Asian way’ and summed up by adding, ‘I still retain my Asian identity’ (PH25). Her Asian perspective allowed her to understand the students more easily, especially when it came to issues such as plagiarism or cheating, she claimed. From inside the culture of the students she was able to see that cheating was not intentional on their part but merely a lack of understanding of academic ownership.

Despite feeling more “Asian”, she reported a lack of conservatism typical of her countrymen and women. She had taken the best things on offer from the West, she suggested, such as open-mindedness, and left the rest behind.

Slightly less forthcoming about being Asian than Phyllis, Henry stated:

Actually I see myself as Asian of course, because my Asian part is bigger than the Western, because I studied there, I lived there in the U.S. and also in Australia for some years, but that is not big enough for me to totally [change myself] (HE48).

Despite feeling mostly Asian, he went on to distance himself from other Asians who had not travelled. He emphasised that his ‘way of doing is different from the people who have never been to another country’ (HE48). He felt that his background both facilitated and hindered developments in his life. Hard work was definitely encouraged and promoted by his background but, at the same time, he found it difficult to be ‘straight forward’ and express himself in public (HE51).

David, on the other hand, confided that he felt much more Western than Asian. Although he respected his origins, he also respected his Western education which had prepared him to ‘understand the people from the West’ without feeling any ‘obstacle’ (DA75). He reflected that, having learned a lot of knowledge and skills from mentors in Australia and the US, he now felt very false as an Asian. He complained that his Asianness, as with his colleague above, sometimes hindered him in terms of expressing himself and getting straight to the point. This caused him to ‘sneak around’ ‘for delicate reason[s]’ ‘for something sensitive’ rather than making himself ‘bluntly clear’ which would be deemed ‘rude’ (DA79). He explained this inability to change:
It’s not good. But that in our culture, how can we change? Though we know for sure, something is not good, but for the respect of other people, we don’t try to hurt them, to offend them even, we use terms or way of start things like that (DA79).

Vietnamese lecturers felt they were still in touch with their Asian backgrounds and subject to ingrained cultural mores and values. They remained empathetic to Asian traditions in varying degrees. All felt that the insights gained from being in the Third Space were valuable. This knowledge and expertise placed them into a special category both amongst their own kind and those in the second culture.

6.2.2.4 Effects of Orientalism and Western views of Asians on teaching and preparation of lectures for Vietnam

Other positive effects of Western views of Asians were expressed in terms of teaching. David claimed that Western views of him had encouraged him to change his ways of teaching to be more engaging. He realised that the ‘teacher is not the number one’ but just a facilitator. Students are the ‘masters’ in the class (DA44). Henry claimed to have learned a lot from the West (HE46).

The Vietnamese lecturers reported making adaptations to the course material and the Vietnamese cultural context. They were also keen to stress the changes they had made in delivery techniques. They talked about incorporating more discussion into lectures and organisation of students into groups and pairs as well as individual work. Various techniques were attempted to try to engage students. These included providing hints for answers rather than entire answers, adding extra examples, supplementing pictures and including video clips. Lecturers also said they often sequenced material differently in lectures to that suggested by the onshore lecturers. This was done in an effort to make things simpler for students. Phyllis outlined how she had featured some examples from Vietnamese contexts featuring Vietnamese interlocutors in order to make the unit more relevant and absorbing for her students.

Lecturers showcased material added to the units. It comprised:
• A literature review taken from the PhD thesis of one participant on foreign
language education in Vietnam (the exact title has been withheld in order to
deidentify the participant).

• A PowerPoint presentation entitled Global English, global culture, global
problems: A view from Russia, delivered by Maria Verbitskaya (Moscow State
University National Association of Teachers of English, Russia).

• An article entitled Contribution of error analysis to foreign language teaching
(2005), by Vacide Erdogan (Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of
Education).

• An article taken from the conference proceedings of the CamTESOL
Conference: English language teaching: Selected papers, Volume 4, 2008, by
Keuk Chan Narith (Royal University of Phnom Penh, Institute of Foreign
Languages, Phnom Penh, Cambodia), entitled ‘English language variety in
Cambodia’.

• An article taken from the VNU Journal of Science, Foreign Languages 25
(2009) 41-50 entitled ‘Mistake or Vietnamese English’ by Duong Thi Nu
(Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, College of Foreign
Languages, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Pham Van Dong Street, Cau
Giy, Hanoi, Vietnam).

The local nature of the added readings is apparent in all but one of the titles. Authors of
the supplementary materials came from Vietnam, Cambodia and Russia. This highlights
the fact that Australia is only one of many players and influences in Vietnam and the
Asia-Pacific region. Lecturers had taken the material created by lecturers teaching the
units onshore in Australia and “contextualised” it.

6.2.3 Western educational discourses, the “good teacher/learner” and “Asian”
approaches to learning

This section moves discussion away from Vietnamese lecturers’ perceptions beyond the
classroom and towards perceptions of teaching and learning. Findings emerged from
responses to interview questions 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12.
6.2.3.1 Western educational discourses

The Vietnamese lecturers all reported being very affected by Western educational theories and research. They shared a common conviction of the worth of these ideas for their own teaching. They seemed eager to embrace new approaches. In particular, they expressed a desire to make their own teaching learner-centred and responsive to learners’ needs. Some lecturers also talked about the diminished focus on the teacher in educational theory. They stated that previously in Vietnam the teacher had been number one, ‘the biggest authority in the classroom’, but now that role was seen as one of facilitator. The students were ‘Masters of the class’ (PH28; DA44). The same Vietnamese lecturers stressed the importance of engaging, encouraging and motivating the students. The methodology they had learned in their higher degree studies in Australia, and the US, helped them to achieve this more easily. David offered a long list of positives about the enlightenment he had received from his studies in the West. He was particularly taken with the notion of lifelong learning and the use of technology in the classroom (DA88). He appeared enamoured with everything he had learned in a Western environment, adding that his students enjoyed departing from the ‘ordinary way’:

The way in the West, make the learners more like a habit … of lifelong learning. They learn, for example, for their whole life. But it’s not happen in Asia, because in Asia, we don’t give them ways of … we don’t give them room for them to make self say as the most important things in their career, in their work or even in their study. And then there is a big difference … between Asian … and the West in the sense that the West helps students to learn by themselves first and give them … tools, habits, basic knowledge, skill to sustain and … also to nourish the dream and the … very good intention of lifelong learning … it’s different from … Asia (DA88)

Henry felt that it was important to show students ‘how to benefit from different learning styles’ (HE55). They should not be forced to learn in this way but ‘be aware of those facts, those theories, so that they can do it for themselves’ (HE56). Two out of the three Vietnamese lecturers emphasised that Vietnam had a ‘different way of learning’ to Western classrooms. This can be seen in the previous quotes.
Phyllis claimed to have learned a lot from her studies overseas and in Australia. She was very affected by this knowledge. She was less infatuated, however, with the idea that Western methodologies could be easily transported to a Vietnamese context (PH30). She felt that teachers in urban environments may be more likely to adopt the new ways than those in rural areas. Institutions of higher education are also better placed to encourage a critical approach. A heavy curriculum (particularly in K12), pressure to succeed, and lack of time, militates against innovative teaching in Vietnam, she felt. The adoption of communicative language teaching is fraught with difficulties. As she outlined, ‘teachers don’t expect students to question a lot otherwise they just can’t finish the lesson plan’ (PH30). Besides this, the curriculum is imposed from the top down. The Department of Education mandates for innovation in teaching in schools in Vietnam without any input from the bottom. Despite the difficulties inherent in adopting more learner-centred, interactive and questioning approaches, however, Phyllis maintained that Vietnamese children, in particular, were slowly being taught and encouraged to be more creative and critical in the Vietnamese classroom (PH30).

### 6.2.3.2 The “good teacher”

All Vietnamese lecturers shared a similar perspective on the qualities and roles of a “good teacher”. Characteristics, qualities, skills and roles were so unified that it was easy to represent them in a figure such as Figure 6.1:
Phyllis emphasised the parent or care giver role of the teacher, in particular (PH41). She felt that, with Vietnam opening ‘the gate to other countries recently’, students feel ‘confused’ about which model they should emulate. One role of the teacher is to help the students ‘keep their identity and let people know they are from Vietnam’, she suggested (PH41). With Vietnamese parents now so busy ‘they don’t have time to educate their children well’. Therefore the role of the teacher, as a good role model, has become even more important (PH41).

6.2.3.3 The “good learner”

Vietnamese lecturers’ perceptions of the “good learner” are listed under personal qualities and strategies in Table 6.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits (innate)</th>
<th>Strategies (tactics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• able to adapt</td>
<td>• knows how to learn/achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knows what he/she wants</td>
<td>• learns in his/her own way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knows how to apply what is learned</td>
<td>• plans well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• not just a follower</td>
<td>• sets targets and has the techniques and skills to achieve them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knows more than the teacher</td>
<td>• uses technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘can integrate well into the world’</td>
<td>• extends learning to outside school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• gets on okay with people (own countrymen and people from other countries)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• independent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: The “good learner” according to offshore Vietnamese lecturers
The good learner is a mixture of conducive personality traits and good learning strategies. There was a slight skewing towards learner traits and many of the strategies could also be related back to personality traits, however.

6.2.3.4 “Asian” approaches to learning

Vietnamese lecturers all observed that their Vietnamese students had particular approaches to learning. These approaches relied heavily on rote learning, memorisation and passivity. All of these inhibited critical thinking. Participants attributed these approaches to five main phenomena: examinations; teachers; syllabus; safety; and identity.

Phyllis explained how the lack of a speaking component in testing systems in Vietnam contributed to the status quo. Students could memorise written components. They could learn to the test. Private schools are more likely to emphasise the speaking skills because they have fewer numbers in classes, she stated. More interactive testing is also encouraged in private language schools. Teachers at these schools are still under a lot of pressure to get students through exams, however. Low pass rates affect their status. As Phyllis commented, ‘The teaching and learning style can be improved when the testing system can be improved’ (PH48). Henry stated that student achievement should not be one of the criteria for ‘evaluation of the teaching’ as such a system causes ‘a problem’ (HE72).

Similar to the Asian postgraduate students, Vietnamese lecturers attributed the focus on memorisation in schools to the Asian teachers in those schools. Vietnamese teachers: require students to ‘learn by heart’ before they can award high marks. The teachers design tasks which demand only memorisation in order to be completed. They lack the competence to be more creative. They also have to deal with up to 50 students in a class. Teachers in these situations have neither the energy, nor the time, to deal with 50 individual ideas. This increases the chances of teachers being more inclined to ‘force the student to think’ in a certain way (HE70). Henry felt that Vietnamese teachers had a different perspective on education:
Because of the philosophy of education, perhaps they see that education is what to transmit to student … the knowledge rather than to create the student the power of thinking or solving problem … So in that way first I think that it’s a philosophy (HE70).

The syllabus prescribed by the Department of Education in Vietnam was also held accountable for the tendency towards memorisation in Vietnamese schools. Henry commented that some schools do, in fact, foster a kind of critical thinking but this does not sit easily with the prescribed Education Department guidelines.

Vietnamese students do not feel ‘safe’ to do anything else other than memorise in the system in which they find themselves. Learners do ‘as requested by the teacher’ and ‘do not initiate self-learning or autonomous learning’ (HE57). Even if they do have some idea of the importance of autonomy, ‘they don’t have [a] strategy [as] to where [to] start’, stated Henry (HE57). Rote learning inculcates an idea of ‘safe thinking’ in an exam environment. Students feel ‘secure’ using this approach, comfortable in the lack of change and confident in the fact that they can all ‘cram’ their notes communally, as indicated by David:

Rote learning as a … safety net, if the student did like that, you know, they can pass the exam, you know, they can ... work together like that, there is no big change … you know ... the society is … peaceful (DA101).

Any attempt to change such behaviour would need to start in kindergarten or nursery and continue through primary school. It would need to be emphasised in every conversation, every discussion in the work place and both inside and outside the classroom. It would need to include greater access to Western literature and movies, according to David.

What was noticeable in the Vietnamese lecturers’ responses was that a rote approach to learning was almost seen as a trademark of Vietnamese and Asian students. It was not necessarily an approach of which to be ashamed. It had hitherto served them well. This was illustrated when Henry called rote learning and memorisation ‘our way of learning’. He qualified this by adding that this style was more emblematic of Asia in the past, however (HE55).
Two Vietnamese lecturers were less convinced that memorisation was central to learning in Asia today. Phyllis claimed that this style of learning was ‘a strong method in the past’ but currently existed alongside a more creative approach (PH43). Classroom and test tasks had become more communicative, she said. For example Vietnamese students now write emails to each other and teachers also test them in this way. There is evidence of a critical approach. Students worry that they are ‘offending’ people, however, so they keep their thoughts to themselves. They also fear being considered ‘subversive’ (DA105). This can change if students are in a critical mass in an environment in which they feel comfortable. When individual students find themselves abroad they may feel too inhibited to be critical (DA105).

The last point highlighted the role of technology in breaking down rote, surface or non-critical approaches to learning. Because of the internet, students are now expected to research topics independently rather than relying solely on the text book. This makes them more autonomous, according to Henry. The downside is that inordinate amounts of time are being spent playing internet games rather than studying. Moreover, only a few private schools have unlimited access to this tool (HE34).

6.2.4 Summary of findings Site Two: Offshore Vietnamese lecturers of Vietnamese postgraduate students

Vietnamese lecturers shared the belief that the West saw Asians in an appealing way. They regarded the rise of globalisation, with its increased opportunities for interaction across cultures, and the constant ‘reinterpretation’ of Western perspectives by the West, as the key to greater understanding and respect for each other’s cultures. They suggested that this entails more ‘Westernisation’ of Asians in their everyday lives, with Asian/Vietnamese women, in particular, taking on new roles and opportunities. One lecturer was a little disillusioned that Vietnam and Asia have changed dramatically in recent years and yet these changes remain unremarked upon in Western perceptions of the East.

Western views of Asians had affected Vietnamese lecturers but they also felt secure in the second culture. One lecturer claimed to feel more Western than Asian. Their bilingual and bicultural position in the Third Space gave them confidence, not only
amongst their own countrymen and women, but also in the second culture/language environment. In terms of the impact of their own Asian upbringing, Vietnamese lecturers claimed they were very much in contact with their Asian culture and appreciated many, but not all, aspects of it.

The Vietnamese lecturers shared a common appreciation of Western educational theories and discourses. They were keen to incorporate new ideas into their own teaching repertoires. They expressed concern, however, that they could not easily transpose these ideas into a Vietnamese context. “Good teaching”, they felt, requires the teacher to be a controller, a facilitator, a role model, a counsellor and a surrogate parent or care giver. “Good learning”, similarly, requires certain strategies and personal characteristics on the part of the learner. Successful learning is fostered by personality traits such as sociability, adaptability, independence, ability to initiate and set clear goals, and application of learning.

Vietnamese lecturers observed that their Asian students relied on memorisation in lessons. They were sometimes passive in classroom settings and critical thinking skills were constrained. They saw such approaches as emblematic of Vietnamese learners and did not necessarily view them with disdain. Participants ascribed these approaches to five main reasons: examinations, teachers, syllabus, safety and identity. One lecturer emphasised that tools such as the internet were in the vanguard of change in learning styles within Asia.

Vietnamese lecturers did not make exhaustive changes to the material they received to deliver on the MA Applied Linguistics in Vietnam. Changes did, however, reflect the lecturers’ desires to place the input in a more localised context and deliver information in a way that might be more accessible for Vietnamese English language teachers living and teaching in Vietnam.

6.3 Cross-site observations

An analysis of cross-site differences and similarities highlighted the following issues:
Images

Onshore lecturers regarded the ways that Asians had been viewed in the past as very complex. While images were changing, there was an underlying sense that this might only be within certain sectors of the Australian population. On the other hand, two of the three Vietnamese lecturers were overwhelmingly convinced that the West held Asia in high regard. This reputation could only improve with increased globalisation. One Vietnamese lecturer was not convinced that present day Asia was perceived accurately by the West.

Effects

Onshore lecturers felt affected by Western views of Asians in their daily routines and in their roles as teachers and spouses. Contemplation of these effects was not entirely comfortable. They deemed Australia’s multicultural policies to be largely rhetoric or ‘lip service’. It goes only as deep as a celebration of diversity in food and the fostering of a ‘tourist approach’ to the teaching of cross cultural education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). They also perceived an ongoing ‘anxiety’ about Asians within the Australian public.

Vietnamese lecturers, similarly, reported being influenced by Western views of Asians. Unlike the onshore lecturers, however, there was an overall feeling of comfortableness with the ‘add on’ culture and positiveness about occupying a Third Space.

Western educational discourses

Both onshore lecturers and Vietnamese lecturers reported being very affected by Western educational theories and discourses. The nature of the influence was quite different, however. Overall, onshore lecturers took a more critical approach. They claimed to have synthesised and critiqued philosophical, theoretical and methodological frameworks in education. Vietnamese lecturers, however, seemed more enthusiastic about the new methodologies presented to them, and less prone
to critique at a deep level. They raised the issue of the incompatibility of these frameworks with Vietnamese educational contexts, however.

Onshore lecturers were more sceptical about the concept of a “good teacher” than the Vietnamese lecturers. From the formers’ perspective, the “good teacher” endeavors to have a good relationship with students but the emphasis is much more on ‘doing’ things that enable learners to learn. The Vietnamese lecturers, on the other hand, saw the teacher’s role as more far-reaching. He or she is a stand-in parent, role model for living, source of advice about life, counsellor and builder of dreams. Both groups of lecturers talked about the importance of respect for the students and showing a personal interest in them.

The idea of the “good learner” is equally as elusive for the onshore lecturers as the “good teacher”. If such a prototype exists, it is the student who employs effective learning strategies and, to some extent, has the right personality type. The Vietnamese lecturers described the “good learner” more in terms of personal characteristics compatible with life inside and outside the classroom.

Onshore lecturers were slightly undecided in their conclusions about approaches to learning in Asia. On the one hand, they saw the notion of an “Asian learner” as unreconstructed and static. On the other, they suggested Asian approaches to learning were distinct due to contextual, political, social and pedagogical factors. Vietnamese lecturers, in contrast, appeared fairly comfortable with the image of the Asian student as rote learning, passive and uncritical. They attributed such styles to extraneous factors such as exams, teachers, syllabus, a general reluctance to take risks and a desire to retain an Asian identity. Unlike, the onshore lecturers, they felt this was all about to change, however, due to influences such as the internet.

Onshore lecturers proffered minimal adaptation of input, material and delivery from an Australian context to a Vietnamese cultural context. Their main concern was to adjust to the new constraints of the environment, including student numbers and type, mode of the course and parity with the onshore course.
Vietnamese lecturers expressed more desire to incorporate local contexts and examples into their workshops. They did not mention adaptation to the environment or intensive nature of the course as influencing what they did. This was probably because they were already accustomed to large numbers, the Vietnamese teaching environment and spoke the same language as their students. They did not change any material supplied to them but added to what was there.

### 6.4 Conclusion

Chapter 6 provided a descriptive analysis of findings based on interview questions. This gave rise to participants’ perspectives on a continuum from appealing to pejorative, as well as detail qualifying their responses and further categorisation within the topics. Chapters 5 and 6 also presented descriptive analysis of perspectives on Asians that Asian postgraduates and their lecturers attribute to Westerners. In addition, the chapters reported how postgraduates and their lecturers reflected on the way that formal/informal discourses had influenced their self-construct as teachers and learners. Chapter 7 presents theoretical findings of the study in the form of five propositions generated from a thematic analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION: THEMES AND PROPOSITIONS

7.0 Introduction

In Chapter 7, a thematic analytical approach, in keeping with the processes of data reduction, data display and drawing of conclusions suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), is deployed. The chapter develops theory in the form of five propositions put forward to describe the meaning that Asian postgraduates and their lecturers make from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam. The propositions derive naturally and logically from the earlier findings chapters. Each proposition, and the emergent themes leading to this proposition, is outlined and linked with relevant supporting literature in the field. It needs to be noted once again that the term “Asian” in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, is Pan-Asian in nature; encompassing countries regarded as Asia from the early 1900s onwards, namely the East Mediterranean, through Arabia, South Asia, East Asia and South East Asia to Japan and that the researcher recognises the social construction of the contested notion of an “Asian learner” as well as the problematic nature of the metageographical terms “East” and “West”. The term “Asian postgraduates”, used in the statement of propositions in this chapter, denotes both onshore Asian postgraduates and offshore Vietnamese postgraduates, unless otherwise stated. The term “lecturers” refers to all lecturers unless otherwise stated.

Not all participants are implicated in all propositions. Proposition 1 relates to Asian postgraduates onshore and Vietnamese postgraduates offshore. Proposition 2 relates to Asian postgraduates onshore, Vietnamese postgraduates offshore and Vietnamese lecturers offshore. Proposition 3 relates to Asian postgraduates onshore and Vietnamese postgraduates offshore. Proposition 4 relates to all participants. Proposition 5 relates to all participants.

The data did not necessarily evolve sequentially but Proposition 1 was generated from interview questions linked to guiding questions 1 and 2. Proposition 2 was generated from interview questions linked to guiding questions 3 and 4. Each of the Propositions 3, 4 and 5 was generated from responses to interview questions formulated from guiding questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.
7.1. ‘Diversity in Unity (Bhinneka tunggal ika)

*Proposition 1: Asian postgraduates’ perceptions and experiences beyond the classroom are both shared and disparate. Disparity is local context specific.*

7.1.1 Shared perceptions: Double inscription and Chineseness

Asian postgraduates’ perceptions were unified in two themes: images of Asians as doubly inscribed (Bhabha, 1994) and non-Westerners’ views of all Asians as of Chinese extraction.

Asian postgraduates in the study shared the perception that Westerners see Asians as hard working, polite, persevering and stoic but, at the same time, inferior to Westerners. Pejorative images had, and often have, Orientalist overtones (Said, 1978). The West has portrayed Asian women as vulnerable and, at the same time, alluring and sensual, participants felt. The literature describes this double inscription in Hollywood films about the East. Films have depicted Asian women in essentialist ways as both ‘Lady Dragons’ (wicked, devious, seductive and sophisticated) and Lotus Blossoms (submissive, weak and ready to serve as depicted by Puccini (1904) in Madam Butterfly) (Shah, 2003, p. 3). Vietnamese postgraduates’ perceptions may stem from Vietnamese experiences of French and American soldiers in the past. English literature describes English expatriate women targeting Indian and Bangladeshi men, according to the Bangladeshi participant. These perceived images form a composite of shared colonial exploitation.

There was also a common recurring theme amongst Asian postgraduates, that Westerners view Asians through the prism of Chineseness. They attribute all Asians with Chinese stereotypical reservedness, mysteriousness, adherence to Confucian principles and traditional behaviour. Such generalisations on the part of Westerners could be ascribed, in part, to the large numbers of Chinese people inhabiting Asia. What is more, Thais, Filipinos and Japanese have all lived in the present region of China at some time in the last 20 millenium. There are large numbers of ethnic Chinese in most of these countries (Korhonen, 1994). Paradoxically, as described in detail in Chapter 3 by Korhonen (1994), Chinese rarely refer to themselves as Asian. The meaning of this
word (Yaren) is ‘inferior people’ (bringing to mind the documented Chinese Occidentalist discourses explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis). They prefer, instead, to return to their old terms of reference (Zhonghuaren) which means ‘central flowery people’. They reserve the word Asian for other non-Chinese inhabitants in the region, according to Korhonen (1994, p. 350).

A further shared understanding seen in the findings was Asian postgraduates’ retreat from Asian identity. The Bangladeshi regarded herself as ‘just human’ (SA51), the Indonesian wanted to be just ‘herself’ (LW60) and the Saudi participant saw himself as ‘human’ (MY85) rather than a member of either Shia or Sunni sects. He felt impacted upon by East and West equally. Moreover, one of the Chinese postgraduates suggested that the essence of all people, from all cultures, was the same (WL39). Although only expressed by four of the participants, this shared perception was important because it illustrated a move beyond binaries of any description. It deconstructed the binary of East and West and highlighted the lack of importance attached to such labels by some of the participants. It reinforced the notion that identity was formed from other overriding factors such as family, nation, locality, profession and sub-culture membership rather than ‘metageographical labels’ as discussed in Chapter 3 (Tate, 2005, p. 351).

7.1.2 Disparate perceptions: Poverty, colonialism, work ethic and change

Asian postgraduates’ experiences and perceptions were often disparate. Emerging themes varied according to the background of the participants. Participants originating from recently developed or developing, Asian countries, such as China, Indonesia or Vietnam, felt that Australians see their countries through an essentialist, postcolonial lens of poverty, sickness, bad manners, filth and hatred. Asian participants from previously colonised countries such as India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia perceived Westerners’ as being far more critical of them than students from other countries in Asia. They identified Orientalist perceptions of Asian inferiority, sub-standard behaviour, less developed thinking, primitiveness and neediness. These comments indicated an ‘aftermath’ of colonialism and a feeling of having been ‘worked over’ described by Prakash (1992, p.8). These themes are further developed in Proposition 3.
In contrast to the ‘hardworking Asian image’ perceived for East Asians, postgraduates from Indonesia, India and Saudi Arabia felt that the prevailing image of them in the West is one of laziness. Indonesians sensed they were seen as ‘procrastinators’ for not exploiting Indonesia’s natural resources. The Indian participant speculated that the West held perception of Indians as pacifists such as Gandhi. His quietude is equated with laziness, she felt. The Saudi Arabian participant imagined Westerners to view Arabs as idlers and thieves who ‘steal money from the Western people’ with their high petrol prices (MY18). Westerners place Arabs far down the evolutionary chain, perceiving them as ignorant, ‘different’, with ‘no respect for any other thing’ except money (MY19). He believed that Westerners have a very ‘bad image’ of Arabs and see them as lacking the ‘same human aspects’ as people in the West. Such images resonate with Orientalist paradigms which describe ‘slipshod reasoning’ in Asians and Asian minds that are ‘lacking in symmetry’ (Said, 1978, pp. 38-39). They also align with Western media coverage of the Middle Eastern oil monopoly and post 9/11 Muslim Othering. These perceptions, or false representations of reality, can inform popular culture and social interactions, creating meanings which are fixed or arrested and then reproduced and re-inscribed over time and place (Bhabha, 1994; Rattansi, 1995).

Other areas of disparity amongst the Asian postgraduates related to Western perceptions of change in Asia. Asian onshore postgraduates (including one Vietnamese participant) observed Orientalist images to be very much alive in Western media, literature, film and art. They felt these images were accurate reflections of Asian life in many instances. In contrast, offshore Vietnamese postgraduates felt that globalisation was changing the West’s image of Asia. This was attributed to perceived increases in liberal attitudes in Asia and Asia’s improved economic status. Perceptions of change are further discussed in Proposition 4

7.1.3 Shared experiences: Enlightenment and disquiet

The West’s perceptions of Asians had impinged upon participants. A theme that emerged was of enlightening experiences arising from this contact. This included the development of an open mind and less conservatism. Others felt more Western than Asian. Many talked about negative experiences arising from these perceptions,
However. A shared theme was feelings of disquiet. Postgraduates from Indonesia and India, in particular, felt ‘disturbed’. The Chinese postgraduates just felt irritated. Feelings of worthlessness, being looked down upon, fear and depression have been documented in past studies on perceived discrimination (Jackson, Williams & Torres, 1997; Noh, Beiser, Kasper, Hou & Rummins, 1999; Williams, Yan & Jackson, 1997a).

Asian backgrounds had also impacted on Asian postgraduates in the form of preoccupation with respect, humility, politeness, patience, quietness and hierarchy. The positivity of these impacts varied between the offshore Vietnamese postgraduate and the onshore Asian postgraduate groups, however. The former were more positive about their Asian culture than the latter as detailed below.

7.1.4 Disparate experiences: Western Orientalism and Asianness

Postgraduates from previously colonised countries and Saudi Arabia displayed greater awareness and experience of Western Orientalist discourses. A deeper understanding of these discourses was to be expected from participants familiar with colonial rhetoric or deriving from the Middle East (Said’s thesis (1978) mainly focused on the Othering of Arabs). Chinese and Middle Eastern participants also engaged in more Occidental discourse, a phenomenon noted by Buruma and Margalit (2004) and to be expected in the light of the events of 9/11 and Chinese notions of superiority described by Korhonen (1994). Diversity of responses split across sites rather than across nationalities, indicating either changes in students who reside in the West or a greater tentativeness on the part of Vietnamese postgraduates living in a rapidly developing Vietnam. The Vietnamese postgraduates offshore judged their Asian background more harshly, in terms of the impact it had exerted upon them. They were scathing about the shyness, introversion and reticence in public expression that was enforced by Vietnamese socio-cultural norms. They felt these norms predisposed Asians to a lack of openness. Moreover, the collectivist cultural dimension curtailed the individual expression of feelings. Some female Vietnamese participants felt that their liberty, freedom and right to education had been limited by Vietnamese socio-cultural norms. These comments contrast with studies on links between personal control and depression amongst Asians. In Sastry & Ross’s study (1998), lack of control instituted by collectivist norms did not
impact negatively on Asian motivation or personal achievement or lead to feelings of depression in Asian participants. This study is quite dated so it could be that reactions and responses to collectivist norms are changing in different countries in Asia. Interestingly, Vietnamese participants did not attribute observed drawbacks to systems of government, government policies or other extraneous factors such as social class, socio-economic status, age or gender.

On the whole, diversity of experience challenged conceptions of a single Asian identity consisting of Arabian, Persian, Indian, Chinese and Japanese cultures and highlighted the fact that this notion is an artificial, dynamic construct which has its origins in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 (Beasley, 1994).

7.1.5 Summary

Asian postgraduate students’ perceptions and experiences beyond the classroom were both shared and disparate. As Miike has observed, there was ‘harmony without uniformity’ (Miike, 2009b). Key themes underpinning Proposition 1 were transformative contact with the West, reactions to stereotyping by the West, socialisation by the East and change in Asia. Homogeneity might be attributed to commonality in socialisation practices, home/school cultures, religions, shared perceptions and experiences of Western Orientalist paradigms discussed in Chapter 5. Heterogeneity could be derived from the many varied ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds of Asians at the onshore research site, as well as individuality of experience. It could also be linked with offshorenness or onshorenness and greater or lesser contact with the second linguaculture. Shared and disparate perceptions and experiences reflect differences and similarities in Asian contexts. The summation of factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic circumstances, geographical location (rural and urban; developing and developed), histories, world experience and individual encounters are likely to override or complement cultural considerations.
7.2 Appreciation of Western and Eastern educational discourses in the Asia-Pacific region

Proposition 2: There is a positive appreciation of Western and Eastern educational discourses of teaching and learning in Asia by Asian postgraduate students and their Asian lecturers.

7.2.1 Western educational discourses: Innovation/strategies/techniques

Asian postgraduate students and their Asian lecturers were enthused to try ‘different ways’ of teaching. They claimed to have found approaches to teaching which helped learners to learn and teachers to liberate themselves from the monotony of traditional grammar-based approaches. These new approaches also facilitated the development of good teacher-student relationships, they felt. New learning theories had led them to the consensus that a “good teacher” is flexible, knowledgeable, gives positive feedback to students, provides strategies to develop independent learning, has a sense of humour and is prepared to embark on lifelong learning. Such insights also encouraged critique of Eastern approaches to pedagogy they reflected.

The Vietnamese lecturers were appreciative of new ideas for teaching coming from outside Vietnam. They were eager to embrace new approaches. One Vietnamese lecturer described how his teaching had become more engaging and motivating. He focused on facilitating rather than instructing, was learner-centred and catered to learner needs. He was uncritical of Western methodologies, describing the insights he had received from his Western education. The Vietnamese system did not give students room to be themselves or equip them with the tools necessary for independent learning, he claimed. The influence of the internet is changing this quite dramatically, however. The transformation of practice and belief by non-Western and Western teachers has been described in previous research papers such as those by Chinn (2007) and Phan Le Ha (2004).

7.2.2 Eastern educational discourses: Insights/relationships/context

Common feeling amongst Asian participants, especially the onshore Asian postgraduates, was that traditional Asian educational discourses have merit. Being
Asian allows insider perspectives on things like plagiarism or the importance of parental input in the lives of Asian students (even adult students). The Bangladeshi postgraduate was confident that approaches held in high regard in the West were also in evidence in her home context. Her confidence reflects, what Korhonen (1994, p. 353) has called, ‘India’s self-understanding’ of ‘Great power’. Indian leaders have never seen India as a ‘poor and feeble developing country’ (Willetts, 1978, pp. 5-8). The Bangladeshi postgraduate and the Japanese postgraduate particularly valued Asian approaches to teaching and learning.

There was shared feeling amongst the Asian postgraduates (including the Vietnamese offshore postgraduates), and the Vietnamese lecturers, that a “good teacher” is controlling, a role model, a counsellor, a knower of the students, a surrogate parent or care giver and a builder of dreams. These cultures of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996) regarded the relationship between student and teacher as paramount. The Vietnamese postgraduates felt students should always believe in the teacher. The teacher’s role is to make students love them, show empathy, have positive feelings and care for each student, while at the same time being strict. The teacher should help students to avoid the ‘dangers’ and ‘evil’ that life has to offer. He or she should give guidance for living, and help with facing challenges and choices. The teacher should be respectful of the learners (a sentiment also expressed by onshore lecturers) and sincere. He, or she, should role model moral virtues. These responses resonate with the research done by Dung Hue Doan (2005) and Phan Le Ha (2008).

As described in Chapter 2, the Vietnamese government has approached moral education on two fronts in Vietnam: formalised into the curriculum; and instilled into every teacher as part of their repertoire of “good teaching” through the Education Law of 1998 and the Constitution of Vietnam. As the latter states, ‘the aim of education is to form and nurture the personality, moral qualities… to imbue [people] with … good morality…’ (Constitution of Vietnam, n.d.). This is corroborated by the Vietnamese saying, ‘Every teacher should be a model for the students’ (Moi thay co giao la tam guong cho hoc sinh noi theo) (Nguyen Phuong Mai & McInnis, 2002, p. 152). This is commonly heard in Vietnamese schools. Everyday proverbs are: ‘A teacher is like a fond mother’; ‘A teacher is an engineer of the soul’ (Phan Le Ha, 2008, p. 9).
Many writers on Asian cultural influences have ascribed the notion of teacher as moral guide to Confucianism (Nguyen Phuong Mai et al., 2005; Thi Tuyet Tran, 2013; Yang, Zheng & Li, 2006). However, Duong Thieu Thong (2002) points out, that notions of harmony, care and support for individuals in the community were core components of ancient Vietnamese (Lac Viet) philosophies of education up to a thousand years before contact with China. Moreover, Taoism and Buddhism had mixed together with local Vietnamese philosophies and culture before the arrival of Confucianism. Moral education is seen in Vietnam as ‘perspectives, viewpoints and behaviour of people in such social relations as Self in relation to other persons, groups and organisations’ (Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV), Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), 2004a, p. 69). The “good teacher” acts as a ‘behaviour educator’ as well as ‘a moral guide’ (Phan Le Ha, 2004, p. 55).

A good learner is not reliant on effective strategies but is sociable, adaptable and independent, according to participants in this study. Although seen as part of an Asian culture of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), memorisation and passivity are part of a repertoire of strategies to be utilised in certain situations, contexts and tasks as appropriate. Factors affecting approaches can be listed as: closed book exam driven systems; teacher confidence and security; syllabus; teacher identity; language and education level of the learner (awareness of style and register); ability; physical environment; cultural and familial influences; socio-economic background and status; prior preparation and diligence; classroom dynamics; and feelings of comfortableness.

### 7.2.3 Synthesis of discourses

Asian postgraduates onshore, Vietnamese postgraduates offshore, and Vietnamese lecturers alluded to the necessity to operate on many levels in the globalised world. This requires a synthesis of both Eastern and Western approaches to teaching and learning. The teacher as a parent or care giver needs to be married with the idea of the student as an independent learner. This fusion is not easy. Teachers and learners try to “progress” on the one hand, but keep their Vietnamese identity, on the other. Retention of traditional Asian educational tenets has become more important, as, increasingly, both Vietnamese parents go to work and lack the time necessary to educate their children.
The role of the teacher as a good role model for life is very important. At the same time, the research has shown that it is possible to teach using a combination of both Western and Eastern methodologies (Phan Le Ha, 2004). Strategies like memorisation can coexist alongside a more creative approach. As Phan Le Ha points out, qualities of teaching valued by the West can be interpreted and practised in different but equivalent ways in the East (Phan Le Ha, 2004).

7.2.4 Summary

Asian postgraduates and Asian lecturers expressed positive appreciation of Western and Eastern educational discourses for teaching and learning in Asia. Asian participants, and, in particular, Asian onshore postgraduates, felt there were benefits to be gained from utilising both bodies of knowledge and claimed to use a synthesis of both Western and Eastern approaches.

7.3. Feelings of deficit and difference in teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region

*Proposition 3: Despite positive appreciation of the value of Western and Eastern educational discourses, feelings of deficit and difference underlie much of the meaning that many Asian postgraduate students make from encounters within and beyond the classroom in Asia and Australia. Moreover, fear and scepticism pervade these encounters.*

Asian postgraduates raised points which collectively communicated feelings of deficit and difference in their encounters within and beyond the classroom in Asia and Australia. Inside and outside of the classroom come together to form the overall meaning that Asian postgraduates make from their teaching and learning encounters.

The themes of deficit and difference shaped recurring sub-themes which cumulatively suggested feelings of fear and scepticism. As well as being omni-present, fear and scepticism emerged as sub-themes in their own right. The two positions of deficit and difference do not necessarily exclude each other, but they have been split for ease of exemplification in the following discussion. Emergent overarching themes and sub themes supporting this proposition are grouped together and illustrated in Figure 7.1.
Figure 7.1: The themes of deficit and difference in the accounts given by Asian postgraduate students (including Vietnamese postgraduate students)

### 7.3.1 Notions of deficit

Deficit views of a culture by its members can lead to fluidity rather than stability of that culture. This has been called “lability” by the scientific world. Mercieca, Chapman & O’Neill (2013) have investigated lability in cultural literacy and identity. It can be particularly pronounced in countries that have undergone colonisation. The new dominant culture breaks down norms and traditions. Inability to integrate into that culture induces anxiety, fear and loss of identity in the community.

In the present study, Asian postgraduates’ comments reflected colonial legacies, feelings of inadequacy, ignorance and emulation of the new culture. Feelings of fear ran through these sub-themes.
7.3.1.1 Colonial legacies

Perceptions that Asian postgraduates felt Westerners had of Asians related to long standing Orientalist images. There was a sense of a Postcolonial hangover which leaves many Asians feeling sub-standard or perceiving that the West still sees them as dependent and childlike. This feeling was summed up by Indonesian President Sukarno in his opening speech at the Asian-African Bandung Conference in 1955 (and from which, as already noted in Chapter 2, Australia was conspicuously absent). He said, ‘Colonialism is not dead… in its modern dress it is a form of economic [and] intellectual control’ (Sukarno, 1955). Sukarno’s words are over 50 years old but participants’ comments still mirrored his sentiments. More recently, as described in Chapter 3, Mahbubani has spoken of a covert Western belief in its own moral superiority. The world is experiencing an ‘unwrapping’ of the numerous layers of Western influences, however. Many of those living outside the West are questioning the hither unchallenged superiority of Western discourses (Mahbubani, 2008, pp 129-130). Miike’s (2013) recent description of ‘asiacentricity’ (outlined in Chapter 3), with Asians viewed as subjects and agents rather than victims, has also drawn attention to this trajectory. As already suggested in Proposition 1, the majority of references to the theme of colonialism in the interviews came from the Indian, Bangladeshi and Vietnamese postgraduates. The Bangladeshi participant described an inability to break free of the effects of colonialism, feeling ‘overwhelmed by a white skin’ and ‘acting in a servile manner’ when encountering Westerners at events such as teaching conferences. She stated passionately, ‘I am not your servant anymore…We are not in the colony… we are separate human beings’ (SA25). Such outbursts conjure up Pennycook (1994b, 1998) and Phillipson’s (1992) Robinson Crusoe-Man Friday relationship outlined in Chapter 3, in which Self and Other are seen to be constructed through linguistically imperialistic English language teaching in a colonial context. The student’s passionate insistence that she has moved on from such colonial discourses also corroborates Clayton (2000) and Phan Le Ha’s (2008) charge that social agents are not merely ‘passive mediators’ of the these discourses and that the situation is far from static (Widin, 2010).
The same student attributed ignorance about research, and a paucity of expertise in academic theorising in Bangladesh, to the presence of Western colonial forces, ‘In our country there is not much of a new theory or new research…. everyone is following the Western thing… we have no other way but to… follow Western research’ (SA68). This condition was summed up by Bourdieu’s notions of colonialism as ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1984).

Asian postgraduates, and particularly the Vietnamese postgraduates, felt undervalued by the West. Asian pedagogical approaches were seen through the prism of Orientalist, essentialist and Postcolonial discourses. Their experiences often did not match those described by Mahbubani (in Chapter 3) when he spoke of Asia’s new found confidence (2008), highlighting the differences between countries and their progress towards this confidence. The next sub-theme of ‘inadequacy’ highlights this in more detail.

7.3.1.2 Inadequacy

Asian postgraduates described feelings which collectively suggested that they often felt inadequate against the yard stick held up by Westerners. Despite a few instances, in which Asian postgraduates felt viewed in a positive light, the picture painted was one of the West perceiving Asians as ‘not as fast or quick thinking’, with the speed of change being much slower than in the Occidental. They felt they were still seen as ‘small-minded’, the ‘underdog’, ‘old-fashioned’, ‘not smart’, ‘underdeveloped’, ‘left behind’, ‘more primitive’, ‘not competent’ or ‘independent’ enough, ‘dirty’ and unable ‘to come up with [their] own things’ or form an orderly queue. They felt that Westerners have a sense of superiority over Asians, in terms of gender equality. Asian women are pitied by Westerners for their perceived lack of freedom, and envisaged by Western men in ways which may offend traditional Asian values. Similarly, Asian men are perceived as dominant and dictatorial.

Westerners perceive Asians as inferior and ‘look down on’ them, often because of human rights issues (the words ‘inferior’ and ‘looked down upon’ appeared numerous times in the transcripts). Asian passivity, quietness and introversion, as perceived by the West, are incompatible with Western cultural expectations, according to Asian postgraduates. Such images are redolent of Orientalist images identified by Said (1978).
They resound with images of ‘boat people’ and old forms of abuse such as ‘slanty eyes’ and ‘slopes’ (MA6). This was born out in postgraduates’ stories of discrimination or perceived racism in their Australian work places or on public transport. They believed these to be linked to ethnic background and religion as well as linguistic proficiency and, as discussed in Proposition 1, felt ‘disturbed’ by them. One Chinese participant perceived an Australian reluctance to mix with Chinese people because they believed them to be impolite, ‘unhygienic’ or threatening because of their work ethic.

As frequently mentioned throughout the thesis, Asian postgraduates intimated images of Asians were doubly inscribed (Bhabha, 1994, p. 108); too ready to follow ‘regulations’, too ‘disciplined’ and principled but, at the same time, ‘spoilt’, ‘lazy in thinking’, ‘procrastinators’, stuck in bad habits especially learning habits, lacking in skills as teachers, linguistically inferior in terms of their command of English language, ‘backward’ (rural areas especially) and religiously intolerant.

There was generally common agreement amongst the Asian postgraduates that, as in Widin’s study (2010), described in Chapter 3, Asian teachers were de-valued and marginalised by expatriate Western teachers. This led them to a state of self-marginalisation and feelings of subordination in their own roles as English language teachers. Chowdhury and Phan Le Ha (2008) documented awareness of a power relationship, and feelings of inadequacy, in research conducted in Asia. Findings were, however, ‘vague’ rather than ‘critically felt convictions’ (p. 312). Asian teachers in Chowdhury et al’s study used words and phrases such as ‘hidden agenda’, ‘brainwashing’, ‘prescriptive’, ‘sale of English’, and ‘at their mercy’ in their responses (p. 312). Seah and Edwards (2006), in their study in Singapore (see Chapter 3), reported students ‘looking down’ on Asian teachers, preferring Western teachers instead. In this current study, Tania reported this same lack of respect for Asian teachers in Malaysia. This might raise the question, then, to what extent is any Asian student typically ‘Asian’? Responses from Singaporeans and Malaysians may be very different to those of other Asian countries.

Reconciling Eastern educational discourses with Western approaches to teaching and learning, while demonstrating a move towards Thirdness, sometimes led to feelings of
inferiority, incompetence, untrustworthiness, non-acceptance and backwardness. These responses mirrored those outlined in Chapter 3, where Smith (2009, p. 472) suggests that participants in her study felt that academic staff in Australia saw the offshore campus as below ‘their standard’ and ‘inferior’. Vietnamese offshore participants, in particular, claimed to be fatigued and frustrated by the task of occupying one pedagogical community and two pedagogical systems (Liu & Fisher, 2010, p. 180). They felt exhausted with the transition to a hybrid culture emerging from two traditions (a different world that is similar to both) and an unacknowledged new identity or Third Place (Matthews, 2002).

Inadequacy was a prevailing response for the Asian postgraduates at both sites. As reported in Proposition 1, such findings resonate with related studies which have reported feelings of ‘worthlessness’, ‘inadequacy’ and ‘incompetence’ in Asian students and workers living and studying abroad (Aspland, 1999, p. 37; Xu, 2007, p. 259). These feelings can be traced back to unfamiliarity with the new culture and ignorance of the new norms as discussed in the next sub-theme.

7.3.1.3 Ignorance

The majority of Asian postgraduates felt that, even in a globalised world, there remains a chasm between East and West, non-Westerners and Westerners, Asian educational discourses and Australian educational discourses. This was attributed to a lack of meaningful contact or familiarity with each other’s cultures and educational environments. This lack of contact was discussed by Hicks and Jarratt (2008) in Chapter 3. FIFO lecturers experience estrangement from their community of practice and can feel out of their depth in the new culture and context due to lack of opportunities for discussion about educational and cultural discourses between home and host providers (Hicks & Jarratt, 2008).

Western social discourses, such as media, literature and film, also exemplify this view, according to participants in this study. Western movies rarely feature Asian people. When they do, viewers make generalisations about Asia in its entirety based on settings featured in the movies, claimed the Taiwanese participant. For example, a Western
audience seeing *Slum Dog Millionaire* (Colson & Boyle, 2009), might perceive India in its entirety to be poverty stricken, in the opinion of the Indian participant.

The researcher in this study is no exception to this observation. Many times during the interviews she was unaware of key events occurring in places like Saudi Arabia or was unfamiliar with many of the traditional Japanese arts mentioned by the Japanese participant. This phenomenon is made more serious by the fact that, although not well informed about or involved with ‘the Other’, the Australian public continue to make statements about ‘the Other’, according to one of the Chinese postgraduates:

> I have the kind of feeling many...Australians and Westerners ... do not know much about China but they talk ... a lot about China ... I give an example ...from China’s family plan ...when I talking with someone here ...[they say] your government is stupid ... it’s terrible ... people have the right to give birth to kids but ... I think it’s reasonable.... it’s a very big population...too big...you seldom can find a city bus ...when you go to the downtown ... such a population it’s not easy for the government to feed them...to clothe them.... there should be more communication otherwise there’s a lot of misunderstanding ... (WL18).

Western views of Asians tend to focus upon Asia as “exotic”. They slip into ‘a tourist approach’ to cross cultural education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Schoorman, 2011). As already mentioned in Chapter 6, those residing in Britain still refer to Asia as “the Far East”, according to one onshore British/Australian lecturer. Attention tends to be paid to the traditional images of Asia associated with high culture such as dance, art, music and architecture, at the expense of deeper knowledge of mundane daily life, cultural dimensions and world views. This is not to say that Westerners are not interested in knowing. One Vietnamese postgraduate suggested:

> They want to explore and want to find out more about Asian people, the history, the war time, something like that'(NI4), but currently exotic images resound with Orientalist and colonial overtones (Said, 1978) and do not add to metacultural knowledge.

The same can also be said of Eastern knowledge about the West. Asian postgraduates claimed to be unaware of significant religious and political conflicts in the West such as Northern Ireland. They claimed ‘difference’ between the East and the West where there was none, harking back to Occidental images with which they had become familiar. A
woman getting up early in the morning to prepare everything for the family is not only typical to the East. This conviction that everything is good in the West is discussed in the next section under ‘emulation’.

In the area of English language teaching and learning, Vietnamese postgraduates contrasted their own expertise, in their own local contexts, with Western volunteer teachers’ ignorance of Eastern or Asian educational discourses. This situation was described by Seah and Edwards (2006) in Chapter 3. According to the latter, some intercultural learning can take place when immersed in the contact zone and there may be teacher reflection on, and modification of, world views and values but teachers working overseas often miss out on formalised discussions with local staff and chances to discuss contextualised educational discourses. Asian postgraduates in this study described expatriate teachers’ lack of understanding and knowledge about ‘the cultures and …concepts’ they encountered (NN3). Asian postgraduates did not display the same levels of ignorance or unfamiliarity with Western educational discourses. Most knew about contemporary approaches to education even if only at the level of theory. Their expertise was often not appreciated by Western expatriate teachers, however.

7.3.1.4 Emulation

They think that the Asian quite a bit passive, so I try whenever I … contact with them to be equal with them, to be as active as them and, to show that my ability as Asian woman, Asian person is the same as Westerner. I think some Westerner look down on Asians. (TI23).

Asian postgraduates talked about trying to ‘fit in’ on two levels: fitting in with their own cultural and educational discourses and emulating the new target cultural and educational discourses. Vietnamese female participants told how they were forced, by their mothers, to conform to accepted norms set down for Vietnamese women. One Chinese participant related how he was pressured to speak in the local dialect rather than Standard Chinese (or English) in order to avoid being labelled a ‘show off’ in his community. Participants who did not ‘fit in’ described themselves as ‘very different’ from the rest.
Participants spoke of Asians not really knowing what they want. They simply imitate ‘something from TV’, Western fashions, Hollywood celebrities or use taboo language for effect (in English) in public forums. Paradoxically, as mentioned earlier in the thesis, it is this capacity to ‘fit in’ which has enabled many Asian migrants to enter life in Australia fairly seamlessly. Cultural mores, valuing harmony and respect, have discouraged critical outspokenness.

Attempts to ‘fit in’ to the new target culture, however, mean that some Asians end up feeling they are caught between cultures, according to one Chinese postgraduate:

   Back in China they have a word for people like me … it’s just something like we … don’t fully belong to Asian culture or fully belong to Australian, but we kind of half/half because we’re not born here but we have grown up in China (YY56).

   Similarly, the Saudi Arabian postgraduate explained that he was ‘in the middle’ with no desire ‘to follow the whole Western culture’ but at the same time not wanting ‘to follow the … extremists … in Islam’ (MY60). These sentiments are expressed by the saying ‘a foot here, a foot there, a foot nowhere’ (offered by an Indian nurse in a study by Xu, 2007, p. 259).

   Through an educational lens, one Chinese postgraduate described how easy it was to ‘fit in’ when she found herself in a multicultural pre-tertiary classroom. That had changed as soon as she found herself in mainstream tertiary courses in Australia, as a minority Asian student, amongst local Australian students. Feelings of “Otherness”, lack of belonging, and inability to “fit in”, stem from inadequate cultural knowledge, or perceived cultural differences and linguistic challenges. They are well documented in the research (Chen & Shorte, 2010; Gu, 2011; Lewthwaite, 1996; Skyrme, 2007; Xu, 2007; Yu & Le, 2010). Xu’s (2007) account of the lived experiences of Asian nurses arriving from India, Korea, Pakistan and the Philippines to work in Western countries highlights a collective feeling of Otherness similar to those expressed by the onshore Asian postgraduates. One nurse felt left down that no one learned her name for four months and, when they eventually did, it was shortened and mispronounced. The reluctance of nurses to be assertive added to their “professional silence and invisibility” (Xu, 2007, p. 258). They expected their supervisors to adopt maternal roles, much like a
sister or an ‘adopted mother’ (Xu, 2007, p. 258). They looked to them for moral
guidance (Phan Le Ha, 2004, 2008). Such expectations were incompatible with current
Western values and norms. As a result they experienced feelings of ‘worthlessness and
incompetence’ (Xu, 2007, p. 259), rendering them unsure what to keep of themselves
and what to give up during the process of adaptation (Xu, 2007). Equally, studies
conducted by Chen and Shorte (2010) have focused on the lack of conversational
currency (Brislin, 1981) between students from different cultural backgrounds when
they enter universities in countries other than their own. This can lead to feelings of
isolation and disjuncture.

Vietnamese teachers claimed they tried to ‘learn from the Western … lifestyles’ (TI26)
using ‘the reliable method’ (HI27). Sometimes this may go amiss, with Asian teachers
neither attaining a new skill set successfully nor retaining their previous skill set. The
inability to meet “standards” set at the top can lead to a lack of confidence and produce
anxiety and fear, according to findings in the present study. This situation can lead to
feelings of lability as outlined by Mercieca, Chapman and O’Neill (2013). A sense of
fear pervades sub-themes categorised as deficit and also forms a separate sub-theme
below.

7.3.1.5 Fear

Feelings of fear arose from two sources: experiences in Asian postgraduates’ home
countries and experiences abroad. Chinese and Indonesian postgraduates communicated
fear of their own governments and incarceration if they indulged themselves in
behaviour taken for granted in the West. The Indonesian spoke of the likelihood of
being held hostage or ending up in a ‘big grave’ for speaking out during Suharto’s
regime. The Chinese participant feared being caught doing something as innocuous as
having satellite TV installed. At another level, postgraduates spoke of fear of their
parents and transgressing cultural and social norms. One Chinese postgraduate told
how, as a child, he was regularly beaten by his parents with a flower pot for fairly minor
misdemeanours. Asian postgraduates said they “feared” older Asian teachers and
worried that marks would be deducted if they spoke out. Consequently, several Asian
postgraduates claimed to feel ill at ease and fearful in many Asian classroom situations in which they found themselves.

Fear also stemmed from contact with foreigners. One Indonesian postgraduate spoke of the fear she harboured of Westerners’ negative perceptions. Another Vietnamese postgraduate commented that many Vietnamese people ‘feel afraid to have contact with the foreigners’ (HA9). She confided that she had been afraid of foreigners as a child, seeing them as ‘giants’ (HA9). Foreign teachers/lecturers are also fear inducing because they impose stricter rules for academic requirements.

The biggest fear expressed was that of losing face in an educational setting. This was common amongst the Asian postgraduate students and a disposition well documented in the literature (Juhana, 2012; McBrien, 2005; Tani, 2005; Wachob, 2000; Wong, 2004). As mentioned earlier in Chapter 6, one onshore lecturer observed that loss of face in classroom situations can be much more easily rectified by local students in their own contexts and first language environments. The local students can inject humour into situations where they have made themselves look ignorant. Asian students, studying in contexts that require a second language/culture, are less able to do this. Fear of being ‘laughed at’ by their classmates is a real concern. The Asian postgraduates endorsed this observation as did Pavlenko in her study (2003). She reported a Japanese postgraduate as saying, ‘I suspect that many Japanese people suffer from inferiority complex in English language’ (p. 264). A Korean student in Pavlenko’s study concurred with this: ‘I used to be afraid of speaking English in public… but I have not been judged at all since my identity changed’ (Pavelnko, 2003, p.263). In the present study, the Bangladeshi postgraduate claimed that, ‘students of Bangladesh are scared of English’ (SA117). Similarly, a Chinese postgraduate confided:

I was like sweating … what do I suppose to answer? …those two people was like … where do you come from? I was… yeah … from China. I was like, okay… I hate talking to those people [laughs]…. I’m getting like more and more quiet since I had that experience, so I thought, I don’t think I can fit in this environment. I was even thinking about to … learn something else, change the course (YY23).
Asian postgraduates deemed asking questions to teachers to be daunting. Questions to foreign teachers are more face threatening than questions to teachers with whom they share nationality. One Vietnamese postgraduate attributed this fear to the greater perceived distance between students and their Western teachers. On the other hand, foreign teachers encouraged questions and discouraged students who might ‘beat around the bush’ (NI23).

The global discourse on English language teaching and colonialism started by Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (1992), and described in Chapter 3, has moved its focus more recently to the experiences of non-native English speaking teachers (Hayes, 2008). Research has focused on personal biographies (Braine, 2010) and perceived identities (Inbar-Lurie, 2005). Researchers and writers have espoused the necessity of hearing these voices, views and ‘rich perspectives from the periphery’ (Berns et al., 1999). Asian postgraduates in the present study talked about fears in their roles as teachers. One Vietnamese postgraduate recounted her reticence about entering a staffroom full of expatriate teachers in Vietnam. She spoke of wanting to join in conversations with the foreign teachers at her centre but being too fearful to do so. She felt they would not ‘accept’ her because she was not the archetypal, medium build and height, beautiful Vietnamese girl. The same participant also claimed to have been initially very afraid of ‘contact with foreigners’ (HA9).

Other forms of fear centred on the Asian education system. There was fear of the quality manager, not knowing the content or teaching the wrong content and students’ poor test results (because they reflect upon the teacher). As one of the Vietnamese lecturers stated, ‘if you want to try to keep your image, so you have to have all the students pass their exam, and in order for the student to pass the exam so they have to follow the text book’ (HE70). Indonesian educators are so worried about their learners passing exams that they actively encourage or ignore student cheating, according to one Indonesian postgraduate. Such views have been mirrored in other research conducted with Mainland Chinese teachers (Gao & Watkins, 2002).

Asian educators ‘feel safe’ teaching to the text book or course book, according to the research (Gato Butler, 2005; Ying & Young, 2007). Moreover, they often have no
choice. The government approves the books to be used in the public sector and the same issues of standardisation (discussed by Pyvis (2011) in Chapter 3) that afflict university transnational courses and onshore courses, arise. Any creativity or deviation from prescribed texts is covert. One Vietnamese participant observed, ‘I’ll do it out of the observation of… the teaching quality manager because if they know I'm going out of the syllabus … it would be a big problem’ (HA44). Lack of knowledge of the subject also intimidates teachers, making them defensive about questions directed to them. They ‘do not know what they are teaching’ so the only recourse is to make their students feel ‘stupid’ and ‘humiliated in front of friends’ (LW116), said one Indonesian postgraduate.

Fear emerged as a considerable part of the deficit experiences reported by Asian postgraduate students. Its presence was both explicit and implicit. Another overarching theme to emerge was “difference”. This theme infused sub-themes as well as being explicitly referred to by participants.

7.3.2 Notions of difference

Talk generated in interviews described the East and the West as ‘two different worlds’ with ‘distance’ between them:

In Western literature there are two elements that … are evil, but only one is the good.

They are … more evil than good in Western literature… (AN40)… In Asian literature there is two good and one evil (AN44)… I mean life is the same in the West and in Asia, but the way Asian people look at life is different from that… (AN46)

One Vietnamese postgraduate felt that, in order for Western businesses to do well in the Asia-Pacific region, they need to “bridge the gap” and accept that ‘Asian cultures are quite different from Western ones’ (TI21). They need to be willing to ‘learn a lot’. There was a common feeling that increased travel has narrowed this gap somewhat but there remains a sense of socio-cultural difference, despite greater interaction. A sense of difference may inspire awareness of identity and a sense of nationalism but individuals may still be poised precariously in a mistrust of the new culture and this may lead to feelings of caution and an uneasy defensiveness. This again can lead to lability.
Similarly, feelings about differences in Eastern and Western socio-cultural norms, and socio-economic conditions, signalled a level of scepticism about the new culture.

Lecturers, teachers and students, living and working abroad, often remain trapped in difference and develop a sense of feeling ‘strange’, according to the postgraduates. This “strangeness” is discussed alongside socio-cultural norms in the first sub-theme.

### 7.3.2.1 Socio-cultural norms

Asian postgraduates highlighted the impact of cultural factors on their teaching and learning experiences. For example, in Asia, a married man and his family will live with his parents in order to look after them. Sons from large families often reside with their grandparents for the same reason. These situations are not conducive to studying or working. Other cultural considerations that seemed marked were shyness and respect. These phenomena are noted by many previous researchers in the Asian region (Chang & Sue, 2003; Juhana, 2012; Koydemir & Demir, 2008). The word ‘shy’ was mentioned frequently in the transcripts. Asian postgraduates contrasted “Asian shyness” with the perceived extroversion of Westerners. They did not see reticence about coming forward as deficient behaviour, however, merely culturally endorsed behaviour. A Chinese postgraduate attested to this in his description of being unable to talk to his son in English outside of his home in China for fear of ‘other people’s attitude’ (WL91). He could not afford to be deemed immodest. Asian postgraduates discussed respect for Westerners, respect for each other, respect for university lecturers, respect for the elderly, respect for teachers and respect for students. Notions of respect are ever present in Asian settings.

In the field of teaching and learning, researchers have described feelings of difference and “culture shock” (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Ward, Furnham & Bochner, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). In this present study, Asian postgraduates residing abroad, described feeling a sense of ‘difference’ more acutely than the Vietnamese postgraduates in their home environment. This sense of ‘strangeness’ ranged from feeling uneasy about things like the use of first names for lecturers, to feeling troubled about their own cultural norms in the presence of those who do not understand those norms. For example, one Japanese postgraduate said she
felt uncomfortable with foreigners because Japanese people had ‘strange feelings’. She perceived the need to ‘explain’ herself all the time (YO66). Another Chinese participant explained that students in China would be considered very rude if they just ‘told the teacher’ as ‘it’s not the practice in China’ (WL106). Being critical is considered impolite and has potential for upsetting people in many parts of Asia. It is more common to blame oneself for inability to achieve than the teacher. Some of the ‘strangeness’, however, arose from students living alone for the first time, according to the Taiwanese postgraduate.

Unfamiliar academic expectations created culture shock in a new learning environment. Participants found it difficult to deal with plagiarism issues. This is a much documented phenomenon in the literature on Asian students enrolled in Western higher education courses (Dung Hue Doan, 2012; Leask, 2006; Liu, 2005; Phan Le Ha, 2006; Sowden, 2005a). One Indonesian postgraduate claimed to find the concept ‘hard to comprehend’, as regulations in her country were not so ‘strict’ (LW120).

Equally, when Asian postgraduate students returned home they also experienced a sense of ‘strangeness’. One Chinese participant reported feeling ‘uncomfortable’ back in China with everyone ‘pushing’ to get on the bus and no one ‘queuing’ like in Australia. She added that she soon got used to it but similar reverse culture shock has been documented by researchers such as Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963), Gaw (2000), Gudykunst & Mody (2002). ‘Strangeness’ appears to originate from breaks with cultural and political norms/traditions of one country and attempts to fit into a whole new set of norms in another. Differences between life in sparsely populated, developed countries and life in populous, developing countries also came to the fore in interview responses.

### 7.3.2.2 Socio-economic conditions

Participants alluded to two main factors contributing towards difference in meaning in teaching and learning encounters: disparities in living conditions; and socio-economic divides. The former related to day to day subsistence in Asia, including pressures created by cultural expectations. The latter considered public/private education,
rural/urban educational circumstances, as well as the impact of socio-economic class on education in Asia.

**Disparities in living conditions**

Despite rapid change in some Asian countries this century, citizens of many Asian countries are yet to enjoy the level of affluence experienced in Australia. A Chinese postgraduate detailed living in rural areas of China as a child, recounting how little he had to eat and the resulting illnesses that befell him:

> I was born in China and especially for the countryside and I was young … I did not have enough to eat... (WL44)… I went hungry (WL45) in 1997 I developed tuberculosis (WL46)… and I got a big operation in year 2000 to remove one part of my lung so that’s why I didn’t got a master degree … I came here… I wanted to see more of the outside world and to get a degree … that’s it really… (WL47)... I was born in 1970…so at that time I was very poor … (WL48)

The extent of hardship often experienced in many countries in Asia, and the difference this causes between East and West, sometimes remains unappreciated by Westerners. They remain blinded by the economic vitality of the Asian Dragons, according to the Asian postgraduates. Similarly, it is common for complex situations to be reduced to simple equations by Westerners. Western perceptions that all Chinese people trust traditional healing methods were discussed in Chapter 5.

Comments from both Asian lecturers and postgraduate students resonated with work done by Bennell & Akyeampong (2007) on teaching conditions in developing countries. In the present study, Asian postgraduates described how low paid Asian teachers, and lecturers in places like Vietnam and Indonesia, often work two jobs and have many family commitments brought about by living in extended families. As already mentioned, under the section on socio-cultural norms, commitment may involve children taking up residence in their grandparents’ houses for part of their lives in order to assist the grandparents.

Learners may have very long, busy days and may then be required to expend energy changing their study habits to suit those prescribed by teachers returning from ‘foreign
countries’. These newly inducted teachers expect independent learning, extensive reading of original texts and the writing of lengthy essays from synthesised material. Asian postgraduates taking the MA Applied linguistics course offshore described the hardship of doing so in the circumstances they found themselves (detail of which has been given earlier in the thesis). They referred to their time in their primary and high schools as arduous.

The same participants also spoke of hardships beyond the classroom. Like many mature aged overseas postgraduates, one Indian participant had left her twin infant boys back in India while she completed her degree. She had no contact for up to six months at a time. Research in Australia and abroad has reported such experiences and financial difficulties experienced by Asian students living abroad (Forbes-Mewett, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia & Samir, 2009; Gao & Liu, 1998; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008).

**Socio-economic divides**

Some Asian postgraduates perceived that many of their hardships were attributable to socio-economic divides between public and private sectors, rural and urban areas, the financially disadvantaged and the wealthy. This resonated with arguments raised in studies such as those conducted by Chowdhury and Phan Le Ha (2008, p. 313).

In the present study, many Asian postgraduates identified a divide between public and private education in Asia, especially in the less affluent countries. Educational researchers in the region, especially Indonesia and China, have observed this phenomenon (Alderman, Orazem & Paterno, 2001; Raffick Foondun, 2002; Welch, 2007). One Indonesian postgraduate explained that low salaries in public schools in his country caused teachers to conserve their energy and creativity for their second, better paid, private teaching job. He gave the example of teachers who simply ask students to fill in the ‘exercise book’. They explain a ‘little bit of grammar’ and ask students ‘to work on the exercise book’ while they leave the room. Students enrolled in public schools have no choice but to attend classes, he explained. They cannot go elsewhere because of economic constraints and the teachers know this. Principals are aware of this lack of teacher motivation but again can do little to change the situation because they do
not have the necessary government funds at their disposal. Equally, they cannot terminate disengaged employees because these employees are government public servants with permanent positions. This security of tenure is not the case in the private sector. Teachers ‘have to work very well’ otherwise they ‘lose their [jobs]’ and ‘the boss can change them’ whenever he or she likes ‘if they don’t perform well’ (AS69). Few ‘foreign’ teachers work in the public schools, according to the Vietnamese postgraduates. Students do not have the benefit of hearing native-speaker models or being able to build their confidence in speaking.

Learning in Asian public schools is reliant upon memorisation and regurgitation a lot of the time. Teachers discourage students from asking questions and ask for ‘quiet in the classroom’ (YO162). In language courses, speaking tests are virtually non-existent and students have very limited, or no, access to the internet. This causes communication and discovery to suffer. Students with increased financial capacity often go abroad to wealthier Asian countries (students in Vietnam often go to Thailand) or Western countries to complete their studies.

The rural/urban divide in Asian education has also been fairly well documented in research focused on Asia (Kam, 2002; Meganathan, 2009; Qian & Smyth, 2008). In line with findings in these studies, Vietnamese postgraduates in the present study described the differential working conditions of rural teachers. Teachers working in the countryside in Vietnam usually earn much lower salaries than those in the cities. This is possibly because rural teachers possess fewer qualifications than those in the urban centres. Such conditions do not inspire motivation for change or innovation in teaching and learning. Teachers working in the cities are more receptive to the latest methodologies, as outlined below by one Vietnamese lecturer:

"Teaching and learning is different from place to place… more open-minded areas I met in the big city where people can get the influence from the West … and where the teachers are well trained, better trained than those in the countryside, and then that influence can be seen more clearly than in rural areas… In the countryside, life is more conservative and also the teachers there are more conservative, they don’t have more opportunity to be trained, to apply the new approach, for example (PH30)."
Learners in the urban areas, such as Ho Chi Minh City, are more active in classes than those in rural areas. The latter remain quite passive, according to the Vietnamese postgraduates. Furthermore, learners in urban areas have the advantage of committed parental involvement because more pressure is placed upon parents to help out in class due to the higher salaries paid to teachers in those schools. One Vietnamese postgraduate outlined how learners in rural areas not only do not benefit from parent involvement at school, but often are required to ‘work a lot for [their] parents’ (VA74) before, after and during school hours.

Overall, people living in the countryside have fewer opportunities in terms of teaching and learning, and are more inclined to be bound by tradition and cultural norms than those in the cities. As one Vietnamese participant described:

My home town is near the border of Cambodia… people there, the neighbours… really care about each other but they often don’t… criticise straight directly in front of you… mostly behind your back (TI62).

Students from wealthy families who reside in urban settings often have ‘lots of experience from travelling around’ and ‘moving from country to country’. This turns them into ‘independent thinkers’ (TO64). It instills confidence that what they are doing is right. This confidence is what separates those Asians who see themselves through a deficit lens from those who merely see themselves as different. Difference can translate into mistrust or scepticism of change and fuel insecurity about remaining unchanged. Scepticism infuses all of the sub-themes categorised under “difference” as well as forming a specific sub-theme.

### 7.3.2.3 Scepticism

Asian postgraduates shared a feeling of scepticism about change and the bridging of “difference” between East and West. They sometimes conveyed distrust of the influence and presence of foreigners and their ideas in their countries. For example, a Chinese postgraduate criticised the way that French residents and expatriate workers in China had publicly rallied to the cause of the Dalai Lama without understanding the anger they were summoning amongst the Chinese population. He blamed ‘too much democracy’ in
China now for this situation and was concerned that Western protesters, involved in such demonstrations, could lose their lives (WL31).

Other votes of no confidence emerged in the areas of teaching and learning. For example, one Vietnamese postgraduate, who taught English in a private centre, felt that the foreign teachers in her workplace were not ‘really helpful’. Furthermore, she added, ‘They don’t really listen to us’ (HI12). This perceived lack of respect is similar to that identified by researchers such as Bright and Phan Le Ha (2011), Milner (2010) and Widin (2010). Vietnamese postgraduates felt that Vietnamese teachers returning from ‘foreign countries’ often saw the need to apply their new knowledge in the old context, leaving the local teachers unsure of their own methods, under-confident and sceptical about the benefits of innovation. The demands on time for teachers working two jobs and raising families, militates against professional development. It leaves teachers feeling that they are very different to their well-educated colleagues returning from overseas.

The flip side to this is that Asian teachers, who manage to secure themselves the professional development they need, and do well in courses designed to transition them into new ways of teaching, find it very difficult to face colleagues with over 20 years of experience, who may have taught them at some stage. They feel uneasy about confidently espousing the new methods in case they are seen to be devaluing their mentors. As outlined under the section on socio-cultural norms, notions of respect run deep in Asian value systems. There is respect for teachers and respect for elders. Aware that these cultural mores are unlikely to be invalidated, teachers, who have attempted to re-educate themselves, become sceptical about the possibilities for change. Very little research in the region has documented this phenomenon apart from studies conducted in the 80s and 90s by Canagarajah (1993) and Pennycook (1989). These studies describe the conflict that can arise when TESOL teachers, educated in the US, UK and Australia, return home with newly acquired ideas to confront the ideas still held by local teachers. Researchers like Eilam (2002, p. 1693) have documented experiences of Israeli Arab teachers returning to their Arab communities, after “passing through” teacher education courses that have Western orientations. Teachers described the practical difficulties they experienced in implementing new ideas when they returned to a context in which Arab
traditions of respect for elders, authority figures, teachers and a school culture militated against teamwork. Older teacher perceptions, that old knowledge must always be totally replaced by new knowledge, compounded beliefs that change requires a lot of effort (Canagarajah, 1993; Eilam, 2002; Pennycook, 1989).

A common view shared by the Vietnamese postgraduates, in particular, and already mentioned in Proposition 1, was the mismatch between Western endorsed methodologies imported wholesale to the East and Asian educational contexts. This mismatch is redolent of previous research highlighting the problems associated with replacement of one teaching methodology in Asia with one from a different context (Bax, 2003; Hallinger, 2010; Kam, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Meganathan, 2009). The research outlines the very real existence of neo-colonialism in educational discourse in Asia (Nguyen Phuong Mai, Elliott, Terlouw, Albert & Pilot, 2009).

Lantolf (2000) proposed a more socio-cultural approach to teaching and learning. The import and adoption of Western pedagogies by resistant teachers in Asian countries often encourages the operation of two systems at the same time. Liu & Fisher (2010, p. 180) refer to this as ‘one community, two systems’. Brown also recognised and endorsed this response ten years prior to Liu et al (2000, p. 227). Brown argued that ‘cultural continuity’ should accompany gradual change and be ‘respected’ by ‘not losing contact with current [local] practice’. Participants in the present study talked about the difficulties of effecting change in pedagogy in their school or university environments. Theory tends to remain at the level of theory due to lack of expertise:

In Vietnam a new series of textbook have been introduced … at the high schools… these textbooks obey on the communicative approach, but … as teachers we cannot apply … we cannot teach communicative approach at high schools… It’s very difficult (TR40) … The first problem… class size is very big and …teaching to the test tendency is unavoidable in Vietnam… So as a teacher we have to teach the student what they can do in test (TR41).

Another obstacle can be textbooks. New material is only as good as the teachers using it and as one Vietnamese postgraduate commented, ‘most other teacher cannot apply that … teaching method’ (NN40). Coupled with ‘shy’ students, non-communicative seating
arrangements and hierarchical teacher-student relationships, it is difficult to apply the principles of interactive teaching.

7.3.3 Summary

Asian postgraduates have embraced Western and Eastern approaches to teaching and learning but not always with the amount of success hoped for by both Eastern and Western curriculum designers and teacher educators. Mismatches between educational discourses and educational contexts have produced an underlying anxiety and feelings of deficit and difference in Asian postgraduates in their roles as English language teachers, especially the Vietnamese postgraduates.

7.4 Change in the Asia-Pacific region

**Proposition 4: Irrespective of change in the Asia-Pacific region, there remains only partial movement towards the Third Space on two main fronts: Western Orientalist paradigms and approaches to teaching and learning.**

7.4.1 Beyond the classroom: Change in Asian perceptions of Western Orientalist paradigms

The gap between the West is not very wide, it is very closed now, [Western] people try to go closer to Eastern culture…(HE 38). Because the thinking of people in the Asia-Pacific region is changing, relations are becoming ‘easier’, with less racial discrimination (HE17).

A key emergent theme for Vietnamese lecturers was the ‘adaptation’ of the Vietnamese people to Western discourses. Two of the three Vietnamese lecturers talked about changing perceptions of the East by the West. Globalisation and Asian economic growth were seen as key to these changed perceptions. Mahbubani endorsed this view (2008), as discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. ‘More people in Asia can be integrated in the Western society’ because they are ‘more open now’ and more ‘Westernised’ ‘in their daily life’ (PH4), according to one Vietnamese lecturer. Moreover, Asians have become more liberal in their views due to increased contact with the West. This has changed, to some extent, Westerners’ perceptions of Asia.
Vietnamese lecturers predicted that the next 20 years would see more change as interaction with the West increases. This view is ratified by the Vietnamese government’s National Foreign Languages 2020 project. The project demands that all Vietnamese school leavers have a minimum level of English by 2020. All Vietnamese teachers have to have English to the level of B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference. This necessitates ambitious educational reforms (Parks, 2011). Such initiatives have altered the ‘atmosphere’ of places like Vietnam. Vietnamese ‘attitudes’ and ‘appreciation’ have changed as ‘development’ and ‘improvement’ take place, according to one Vietnamese lecturer (DA9,10). Vietnam needs this change in order to ‘compete’ and ‘cooperate’ ‘with … people from other countries’ (DA101).

Vietnamese postgraduates also observed change which they felt had been instrumental in altering Western images of Vietnamese people. One Vietnamese postgraduate suggested that Westerners held a different view of Vietnamese people prior to 1975 and Vietnamese independence. Vietnamese people at that time, had, for their part, seen the West as colonisers, she claimed. The same student observed that the development of the Vietnamese economy, and the increase in Vietnamese students going abroad to study, had accorded Westerners with a better impression of the Vietnamese people as ‘progressing’ (VA31). Other Vietnamese postgraduates described how globalisation was changing Vietnam. As one participant recounted, ‘Western culture has somewhat defined Vietnamese culture … especially … the young people’ (NN19).

The behaviours and roles of Asian women are changing, according to the Asian postgraduates. Vietnamese women are working outside the home, delaying marriage until 30 or 40 years of age, are no longer dependent upon men (in fact men are “obeying” them), are in possession of more power and money, are well-educated with higher degrees and are able to express themselves in terms of ideas and appearance. Asian postgraduates attributed this change to the influence of Western movies, music, TV, globalisation and the growing numbers of women holding positions of power in the Asian workplace. These opinions are supported by research in the field (see Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). The interface between cultures, and moves towards greater intercultural understanding through the lessons learned by visiting teachers in higher education in Asia (Bodycott & Walker, 2000), have also been documented.
Areas of change outlined by Asian participants included an opening up of Asia on social, cultural and political fronts. One postgraduate from Taiwan described how she could now say ‘I love you’ to her parents due to Western influence and how she had changed her diet (JW68). A student from China described changing her learning style once she got to Australia. Another divulged that he was now more ‘punctual’, ‘open minded’ and ‘critical’ after living in Australia for a few months (MY108).

Many Asian postgraduates talked of positive change in Asia but not all were convinced of change for the better. For example, one Indonesian postgraduate felt that in many ways his country was becoming more restricted with each new political figure that took power. A Vietnamese participant observed that, despite a lot of ‘time, money, [and] effort’ going into change (VE66), Westerners arriving in Vietnam may reassess their opinion that progress has been made. Such notions have also been discussed by Tan (2008) who argues that, in parallel to greater decentralisation of education policy in Singapore, greater reregulation is being introduced to try to control and influence key educational stakeholders.

The observations made by participants, and related literature, add weight to the idea that Asia is undergoing a lot of change at all levels of society. However, change in Asian perceptions of Western Orientalism and discrimination is not in line with this. As seen in Proposition 3, Asian postgraduates reiterated perceived notions of difference between the East and the West, downplaying any change in this area and referring to the ever lingering vestiges of colonialism and inferiority that they felt. This ratifies the proposition that there is only partial movement towards change in Asian perceptions of Western Oriental paradigms and Western colonial attitudes. The following section outlines Australian perspectives on this.

7.4.2 Beyond the classroom: Change in Australian perceptions of Orientalist paradigms

There is a greater level of understanding of different peoples, or less absolute stereotyping’ (KY15) and ‘greater recognition of the variety’ of literature and art out in the world (KY17).
Onshore lecturers shared a conviction that Australians are more aware of Asians now. They described ‘reduced notions of nationality, or ethnic backgrounds’ deriving from greater globalisation in the world (KY14). They talked about Asians being ‘mainstream’, ‘blended’, no longer subjected to ‘cultural separateness’ (RA23). Australian children were seen as interacting with other children from ‘a whole variety of cultural backgrounds’ (RA25). The feeling aired by one onshore lecturer, was that Australians had ‘moved on’ (RA35) and ‘evolved’ (RA44).

Lecturer comments alluded to Australians being ‘a lot more aware of the culture, and the society, and the individuals’ in Asia due to ‘travel’ and ‘communications’. Australians used to see Asians as ‘mysterious’, lacking sophistication, citizens of countries which are ‘Third World’. They saw Asia as ‘over-populated’ and ‘cramped’ (GE7, 11). The widespread distribution of Asian TV shows, SBS TV channel, and an increase in Asian movies, has changed people’s views ‘on the culture of the place’, however, according to some onshore lecturers. These views resonate with those of Sammut (2005), who, as mentioned earlier, feels that the thinking of the White Australia Policy is dead in Australia, with racial intermarriage common and students from every ethnic background intermingling on campuses. Overall, there was a common understanding amongst the onshore lecturers that Australians have shifted slightly from widespread Australian negativity towards all Asians, to ‘a positive image’ of most Asians.

Despite the rhetoric, onshore lecturers felt that changing attitudes were not widespread across all layers of Australian society, however. A recent ABC Q & A telecast from Jakarta endorsed this view. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, the Senior Advisor to Indonesian Vice President Boediono, observed that 'Indonesian-Australia relations are probably the best ever in terms of government-to-government relations’ but ‘there is something missing in the people-to-people relations’ (McEvoy & Jones, 2013). Moreover, recent results of the Lowy Poll (Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2013) revealed that only 33% of Australians realise that Indonesia is now a democracy (and has been since 1998). This underscores that most Australians are not ‘well-informed’ with regards to Indonesia or Asia generally (McEvoy & Jones, 2013, p. 10). In her paper entitled ‘Mixed messages in the Indonesia-Australia relationship’ (Anwar, 2012, pp. 1-3),
Anwar describes Australia’s relationship with Indonesia as ‘asymmetrical’. It involves ‘unequal cultural exchange’ and a neglect of cultural knowledge. On the same programme, The Chair of the Australia-Indonesia Foundation (AIF), Tim Lindsay, attested to the fact that relationships between Australia and Indonesia were ‘extraordinarily weak’ at the people level despite closer government interaction (McEvoy & Jones, 2013).

Onshore lecturers felt that Orientalist, doubly inscribed, images of Asians still remain in the Australian public domain. Asians are suspected of being inscrutable and scheming and yet obedient and passive; hard working and yet willing to undermine Australian work ethics; subservient and yet ‘up and coming’. There is an overall ‘anxiety’ about Asians in Australian society, according to many of the onshore lecturers. There remains a negative view of Muslim Asians, in particular, especially those originating from places like Iraq and Afghanistan and areas now known as The Middle East. The level of misinformation and ignorance was recently highlighted in a press interview with the Australian One Nation right wing political party candidate, Stephanie Banister. Her knowledge about Islamic religion and traditions included: a referral to Islam as a country; a referral to the Koran as the Haram; a failure to realise that kosher food and halal food follow the same food preparation rules; and a belief that the Jewish religion endorses the following of Jesus Christ (Ross, 2013).

Hooker (n.d.) further ratifies the presence of Orientalist discourses and fear in the Australian public in her response to the Gillard government’s latest White paper - Australia in the Asian Century (Australian Government, 2012). Media influence and historical mistrust produce xenophobic reactions in the public. In contrast to Sammut’s (2005) propositions, onshore lecturers felt that the Second World War and the Japanese invasion are still relatively fresh in many people’s minds. The White Australia Policy serves as a solemn reminder that Australians found ‘something very fearsome about Asians, and people from Asia’ in the past. The immigration policies of Pauline Hansen, another member and former leader of the Australian One Nation political party, are also in living memory, as are the right wing views of historian Geoffrey Blaney and Prime Minister John Howard, according to the onshore lecturers.
A further source of fearmongering is Australian immigration discourse and rhetoric and issues of asylum seeking. Some onshore lecturers felt that the Australian public feared being ‘overwhelmed in terms of population’ by ‘boat people’ and populous countries such as China. This image was redolent of *The yellow trash question* (Hopkins, 1895) and *The Mongolian octopus* (May, 1886), cartoons made famous by The Bulletin newspaper over a hundred years ago (and discussed in Chapter 3). This geographic insecurity highlights Australians’ tendency to attribute changes in social conditions to perceived increases in immigration (Markus, cited in Windschuttle, 2006). Onshore lecturers felt that anxiety in the Australian public also originates from post 9/11 discourses which have ‘triggered responses in Westerners’ harking back to the crusades and conflict between Christianity and Islam. The latter is very much associated with Muslim Asians by Australians, in their view.

Onshore lecturers felt that Asians are also feared because of their good qualities rather than their bad qualities. They display ‘inexhaustible energy, apply themselves to new tasks, endure and are the ‘ones who are coming top’ (KY7), according to one of the onshore lecturers. This same anxiety was articulated by Australian Prime Minister Deakin as far back as the early 1900s (cited in Clancy, 2004, p. 12 and mentioned first in Chapter 3 of this thesis).

As recently as two years ago, the Asian author of an internet post entitled ‘Orientalism still alive and kicking’ complained of Australian students’ racism, fear and jealousy of their ‘over-achieving but socially-stunted’ ‘unassimilated’ Asian classmates. Research in the area attributes any changes to these attitudes towards Asia to the notion of ‘education for location’, ‘a by-product of a positioning mechanism put in place in response to the perceived crisis of economic competition’ (Pang, 2005, p. 194). In 1992, MacKnight noted that Asia-literacy had been taken on board in an instrumental sense but asked that it be considered ‘a common stock of wisdom’ instead (MacKnight, 1992, p.61). Countries like Indonesia have become ‘entirely new societies’in the last 15 years since the days when ‘preposterous charicatures dominated Australian perceptions under Suharto’, according to Lindsay (McEvoy & Jones, 2013). He suggests that Australia’s relationship is ‘schizophrenic’, however, in that it is institutionally strong but beyond that, ‘weak’ and ‘fragile’ (McEvoy & Jones, 2013). Rafendi Djamin, representative to
the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, observes that Australian stereotypes of Indonesians are still prevalent due to the ‘fact of ignorance’ and lack of education in the culture and language (McEvoy & Jones, 2013).

Onshore lecturers perceived some Australians as devaluing intelligence and being fearful of immigrants taking what they have got. They suggested that Australian students fail to work as hard or as long as Asian or European students. In the words of one onshore lecturer, ‘Australia probably needs to lift its game, because, you know, China, and other economies, and societies, in Southeast Asia are proving to be very effective’ (IS105). Onshore lecturers claimed to have very little exposure to Asians outside their classrooms, however. One lecturer acknowledged that if he had not married into an Anglo/Indian/Malaysian relationship his contact with Asians would have been minimal.

**7.4.3 Perceptions of change in teaching and learning in Asia and Australia**

Asian postgraduates and Asian lecturers observed change in teaching and learning, in Asia-Pacific contexts. Asian teachers leave Asia to go abroad then return with changed ideas about pedagogy. A change in teaching style, they said, means a change in the student’s ‘way of learning’ (NN69). Where lessons previously featured the teacher being ‘like the parent in the class’ (Phan Le Ha, 2008), lessons become more learner-centred (TI173). Western methodologies and imported knowledge and ideas, are affecting change in testing practices and syllabus design, according to Asian postgraduates.

In the area of learning, Asian postgraduates talked about changing styles in Asia. Some felt that students are discovering more for themselves now despite being a little passive. Postgraduates (especially the Vietnamese ones) argued that Asians are often critical in their approaches to learning providing the topic is familiar to students, they are arranged in small groups and relationships between group members are conducive. Social problems and mere laziness underlie a lack of critical thinking skills more than cultural considerations, according to some Vietnamese postgraduates. Furthermore, there was a feeling that Asian students have misinterpreted critical thinking to mean disagreement with the teacher. This was not an appropriate interpretation, they felt. They also
maintained that there is more critical thinking taking place amongst the young. This is in line with Seah and Edwards findings (2006, p. 305) reported in Chapter 3 in which an expatriate teacher in Singapore reported that, when surveyed, Singaporean students claimed ‘they wanted their brains stretched to think outside the box’

Vietnamese offshore postgraduates had differing views about passivity in Vietnamese educational settings. Students are trying to shake off the ‘passive’ label by being more active in lessons, some insisted. Learning styles in Asian universities are changing the most quickly with students speaking out and taking hold of more power, although not quickly enough for some Vietnamese postgraduates:

I really want to change the student learning style but I'm just an individual, I'm just a little individual… I need…. lot of people involved to change it. Vietnamese educational system is really a big job to do (VE64).

The Vietnamese postgraduates, on the whole, were convinced that approaches to learning in Asia were changing due to Western media exposure, more access to Western styles of study, more travel and increasing numbers of expatriate workers. They commented on Asian capacity to adapt, ‘fit in’, ‘follow the standard’ or ‘conform to norms’. This was in evidence in comments made by a Chinese postgraduate who claimed that the longer she stayed in Australia the less ‘passive’ she became. She talked to people ‘rather than memorising stuff” (YY79). Onshore lecturers also described Asian learners as more vocal and critical, both in public and in private, after time spent in Australia.

Despite all of this, however, (and as mentioned in Proposition 2 above) Asian postgraduates still talked about the difficulties of effecting change in pedagogy in their school or university environments. They all concurred that, in their experience, Asian students, in the majority of cases, remain passive, reproductive and uncritical in their learning albeit due to matters of subject type, task type, level, second language proficiency, aptitude, socio-economic status, context (public versus private education systems) and laziness. Postgraduates from Asian countries in which freedom of speech was an issue pointed to ‘fear’ of speaking out in public situations as a contributing factor; a legacy carried over from pre-democracy times or current times in which there
are severe punishments for airing opinions publicly. This same sense of foreboding about government surveillance of critical thinking was also shared by one of the Chinese postgraduates. Even when change is possible in Asia, theory remains at the level of theory in many educational contexts, participants observed. Theory is prevented from becoming practice due to lack of expertise, resources and many other factors such as issues of resistance, identity and hierarchy.

The amount of real change at the level of the classroom is difficult to gauge, and adds to the proposition that much of the change talked about in the rhetoric of teaching and learning in Asia remains at the level of talk. What is more, change is assumed to be occurring in Asian countries at the same rate. Asia is sometimes only imagined as the Asian dragon countries.

Onshore lecturers’ perceptions of change in teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region referred to the learning approaches of their Asian students and not to their own teaching practices, except in one instance (the Malaysian/Australian lecturer). Onshore lecturers’ comments on change were sometimes contradictory. On the one hand, the prevailing view was that there is a lack of any observable learning differences between Asian students and local Australian students. On the other hand, some lecturers spoke of the change and adjustments they had made when teaching Asian students and the changes in study skills made by Asian students arriving onshore. They attributed certain approaches to learning in Asia to the political setting, social background, local conditions and situations and the ability of Asian students to adapt to new circumstances.

7.4.4 Summary

The case study found that Asian postgraduates and lecturers perceived positive change in Asian perceptions of Western Orientalist paradigms on many fronts. This change in perception was based on evidence of socio-economic change all around them. However, vestiges of Orientalist binaries and feelings of being sub-standard were still very much present amongst the Asian participants, making change in this area partial. Onshore lecturers, while confident that, in their own environments, the construct of “Asianness” was dynamic and ‘evolving’, recognised that change was not taking place to the same
extent across all layers of Australian society. Even within university settings, as one onshore lecturer pointed out, Asians are still seen as “different” and in need of ‘pressing into a more Western mold’ (MA12). Furthermore, onshore lecturers described contact between academics and the Asian community outside of lectures as limited.

Changes in teaching and learning emerged as a significant theme for all participants. However, meanings about change seemed to be asymmetrical. Asian teachers are ‘adapting’ and attempting to change to Western pedagogy but little adaptation to Eastern educational discourses is occurring in Western educational settings. The rhetoric of change in approaches to teaching and learning in the Asia-Pacific region offered by the Vietnamese lecturers, in particular, did not match the scenarios painted by many Asian postgraduates. The latter felt that approaches to learning were still mostly dependent upon an uncritical, passive and rote approach and teaching styles were still traditional, on the whole. In this respect there was an apparent academic/practitioner divide. Those at “the chalk face” were less convinced of changes in Asian teaching and learning styles than those removed from classroom settings. Hence, movement towards Thirdness in pedagogy remained only partial.

7.5 Movement towards the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region

Proposition 5: There is differential movement towards the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region by Western lecturers, Asian lecturers and Asian postgraduates. All are close to occupying a position of Thirdness, both within the classroom and beyond, but Asian lecturers and Western lecturers are closer than their Asian postgraduates and Asian lecturers are closer than their Western counterparts.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the Third Space is a place of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994). Occupation of the Third Space is socially constructed and engineered through social interaction, discussion (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2008, Moje et al, 2004), collaboration and innovation (Bhabha, 1994). The Third Space occupies a much bigger platform than just intercultural competence. As already iterated in Chapter 3, Thirdness involves the development of Third Culture methodology or an educational approach which is ‘context-sensitive and adapted to the demands of the environment’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 247). This may not be totally harmonious in the first instance. The establishment of new
practices and ontologies may precipitate ‘dislocation and disjuncture’) (Gutiérrez, 2008; Neilsen, 2011, p. 19). However, eventually Thirdness can become an arena in which teachers and learners are concurrently occupying first (home) and second (new) cultures comfortably.

Some may see Thirdness as remaining anchored in both Firstness and Secondness. Thirdness then is a perspective, viewpoint or process (more akin to Kramsch’s view of the Third Stance (Kramsch, 2009). This scenario could be portrayed as a Venn diagram. In the present study, the researcher envisages Thirdness more in the tradition of Bhabha’s (1994) description: totally separate from either the First or Second stance and requiring people to move or be moved to it. Such a move minimises the feelings of lability and loss of identity accompanying assimilation into the new culture. Thirdness in this present study, requires movement away from Orientalist, essentialist, Postcolonial lenses of Othering and toward Asian and Western appreciation and critique of both Eastern (Asian) and Western social, theoretical and educational discourses. Movement towards the Third Space can ensure that both Asians and non-Asians (in this case Australians) become confident, are interculturally competent, have dual identity, and stability. Participants in this study were at different stages in their journey, both in terms of within and beyond the classroom. Asian postgraduates and lecturers were discussed separately.

7.5.1 The Asian postgraduate students and Thirdness in the Asia-Pacific region

In Thirdness, it is foreseen that many Asian postgraduates will move from a state of fear and scepticism about embracing the discourse of a Western or Eastern culture to a state of comfortableness brought about by increased metacultural sensitivity (Louie, 2005). This includes capacity to critique Western and Eastern discourses. The move towards Thirdness by Asian postgraduates is envisaged in Figure 7.2. Criteria for Thirdness are outlined and discussed with reference to participants in the study.
7.5.1.1 Confidence

Occupying the Third Space occurs against a backdrop of conducive social, cultural, economic and political conditions, and social confidence. As discussed under
Proposition 2, these conditions are not in place for all Asian postgraduates in their roles as English language teachers.

In an educational context, divides exist between public and private, rural and urban, modest and privileged educational settings. Asian postgraduates sometimes have to work in settings equipped only with a combination of Western mismatched educational approaches and Eastern traditional “out-dated” approaches. They may have to compete with native speaker teachers for credibility in some instances. Many Asian postgraduates articulated feelings of marginalisation, debase ment and subordination by expatriate Western teachers and Western educational discourses. These sentiments were also corroborated in Widin’s study (2010). As a result, they do not exude self-assurance and conviction in their beliefs and practices. While on their way to a Third perspective, simply by virtue of being plurilingual, pluricultural and schooled in the educational ways both of the East and the West, they are, as Carrier (2003) observed in her study, less confident in their roles as English language teachers.

7.5.1.2 Critique of Western and Eastern social, theoretical and educational discourses

As previously mentioned in Proposition 1, Vietnamese postgraduates were more critical of Eastern educational discourses than the Asian onshore postgraduates. The former were critical of the match between Western educational styles and Eastern educational contexts. Critique remained at a mostly surface level for both groups of participants.

On the whole, neither onshore Asian nor offshore Vietnamese postgraduates believed Orientalist, essentialist and Postcolonial images of Asians to be diminishing. The Vietnamese postgraduates, in particular, claimed images of inferiority, incompetence, untrustworthiness and non-acceptance by the West to be flourishing. As a result, trying to bridge two discourses was attainable but exhausting.

7.5.1.3 Intercultural competence

The Asian postgraduate students who were studying onshore in Australia were closer to a position of Thirdness than their Vietnamese counterparts. Just like the Vietnamese postgraduates they were plurilingual and pluricultural. They had studied a second and
often third language for many years but they also had the benefit of time spent living and working abroad in a second culture; experiences conducive to (but not exclusive to) the development of interculturality and intercultural empathy (McAlindend, 2012). All Asian postgraduates were educated English language teachers who had experience in adapting, combining and harmonising their beliefs and practices with those of a globalised world. The Vietnamese education system has fostered openness to other cultures and practices (see Chapter 2). The system focuses on ‘development of cultural awareness’, ‘friendly attitudes towards people from other countries’, ‘development of understanding of foreign countries’, ‘kindness to foreigners’, ‘respecting international visitors’ and ‘appreciation of national identity’, in the Vietnamese primary school curriculum (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, pp. 456-457). This has helped to emphasise the place of Vietnam in the world and the importance of building relationships with people in the region.

**7.5.1.4 Dual identity**

Miike (2013, p. 207), in his speculative Asiacentric theory of identity transformation and intercultural competence, speculates four main stages of transition to a new identity:

1) ‘the yearning stage’ which is similar to the sub-theme of emulation discussed in Proposition 3 in which everything in the new culture is absorbed;
2) ‘the reflection stage’ in which the limitations of emulation and imitation of the new culture are acknowledged;
3) ‘the returning stage’ in which there is a renewed appreciation of the first culture; and
4) ‘the integration stage’ in which there is neither superiority nor inferiority complexes in the new culture and critique of both cultures. There is deep-rootedness in Culture 1 and yet global vision’ gained from embracing Culture 2.

This model is speculative and therefore needs to be used cautiously as does any model with definitive stages. The complex process obviously exists on a continuum. As already outlined in Proposition 1, the Asian postgraduate onshore students were more positive or non-committal about their Asian backgrounds, and the influence these might
have had on them, than the Vietnamese postgraduates. The latter voiced concerns about
the limitations they felt came with an Asian identity, especially in the area of the
expression of feelings. If Miike’s speculative identity transformation model (2013)
were to be used as a measure of dual identity, the Asian postgraduates onshore might be
viewed as being in the earlier stages of the development of dual identity along with the
Vietnamese postgraduates offshore (who were further from dual identity than their
onshore Asian counterparts, however).

Asian onshore postgraduates, including the Vietnamese postgraduates, were actively
trying to ‘uptake’ new ideas in teaching and learning and marry these with traditional
approaches to develop a dual identity. This situation is corroborated by Lewis and
McCook (2002) in their article describing cultures of teaching. Similarly, Asian
postgraduates identified a hybridity of approaches to learning as characteristic of a
“good learner”. The ability to memorise as well as criticise was considered essential for
the “good learner” by the onshore postgraduates. Compliance with instructions, as well
as independent sustainable habits, was also valued. The Vietnamese postgraduates
spoke of complementary learning habits such as cooperating and having a good
relationship with the teacher whilst, at the same time, disagreeing with the teacher and
not acting like a puppet.

7.5.2 The Vietnamese and onshore lecturers and Thirdness in the Asia-Pacific
region

The Vietnamese lecturers and the onshore lecturers did not report feelings of deficit or
difference, fear or scepticism, and their journey is envisaged more as the process
highlighted in Figure 7.3.
Despite beginning their journey at different starting points, however, the onshore lecturers and Vietnamese lecturers still needed to demonstrate an integration or accommodation of the values and positions of Thirdness.

7.5.2.1 Confidence

The Vietnamese lecturers showed that they are secure enough as educators to adapt and deliver material prepared in another country, for a different audience, to their own context. Furthermore, they incorporate unit readings which draw on researchers from neighbouring countries to Vietnam rather than relying solely on research conducted outside of the region. This corroborates Mahbubani’s suggestion that there is a ‘new found confidence’ in Asia with [Asians] ‘aspiring to peaks beyond the plateau that the West finds itself on’ (1998, p. 23) and Hill’s description of ‘Positive Self-Orientalisation’ (Hill, 2010, p. 678) outlined in Chapter 3.
Vietnamese lecturers have gained confidence to move towards a Third Space in terms of educational theory. This was in evidence in the way that one of the lecturers described incorporating more interactive work into lecture sessions, organising students more creatively and using different techniques to engage them. The other Vietnamese lecturers spoke of transforming their teaching to approaches which were more learner-centred and responsive to learner needs. All of these approaches are informed by current Western educational theory. Such confidence has been described by Phan Le Ha (2004, p. 54) in her study of Mai, a Vietnamese language teacher, who ‘confidently saw herself as a “very flexible” teacher’, creating ‘many activities for [students]’ and had no problem being both a facilitator in the Western sense of the word and a moral guide. Self-assurance in the Vietnamese lecturers has emanated from the security of being/becoming solidly middle class, well-travelled, citizens of the world. They are highly educated and Masters of at least two languages. They are also in no doubt that they are well respected by the Vietnamese public as Phan Le Ha (2008, p. 10) tells us:

> When my teacher writes on the blackboard… some chalk dust falls onto the ground and some falls onto his hair. I love this very moment when my teacher’s hair seems greyer and greyer because of his dedication to teaching us… Never in my life, shall I forget my teacher… (a translation from a Vietnamese song about teachers).

Vietnamese folklore enshrines this doctrine of respect in Vietnamese proverbs: ‘Respect teachers, respect morality (Ton su trong dao). Government banners in school yards proclaim, ‘Tien hoc le, hau hoc van’ (proper manners in human relations are more important than knowledge and language) (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, p. 451).

Self-assurance brought about by expertise is described in other studies of “experts” who manage to live easily in two worlds. Eilam (2002), in her study of Arab Israeli teachers, talks about experienced teachers who have had exposure to broader points of view in the likes of professional development and Western oriented teacher education programmes. She describes them as very comfortable and confident in their roles as they bring back ‘the good things from other cultures… and enrich their own …’ (Eilam, 2002, p. 169).

Onshore lecturers were self-assured in their ability to reflect closely on educational, social and theoretical discourses, as discussed under the next heading. They remained
unconvinced by rhetoric which may unwittingly promote Western knowledge as the ‘apex of civilisation’, to the exclusion of non-Western knowledge (Sanderson, 2003, p. 150). They were confident, as teacher educators and researchers, in their ability to deconstruct notions of the Self and Other.

7.5.2.2 Critique of Western and Eastern educational, social and theoretical discourses

Onshore lecturers questioned the definitiveness of the “good teacher” and “good learner”. They critiqued the idea that there is only ‘one way’ to teach. They remained unconvinced that such notions could exist outside of any given context. The influence of Western views of Asians on their teaching practices was acknowledged and Western “best practice” pedagogies were critiqued. As described in Chapter 6, one onshore lecturer summised, ‘There’s no actually right way and there’s no … best way. It’s about who the learners are and who the teachers are and what resources are available’ (RA56), echoing the sentiments of Foucault (1972), Haggis (2003) and Kramsch (2009).

Onshore lecturers claimed to have synthesised the philosophical, theoretical and methodological frameworks handed down to them through Western educational discourses. Through observation of varied teaching and learning practices, they suggested they had arrived at their own eclectic approach, or what was termed ‘a balanced approach’ (RA47). Comments resonated with research conducted by McAlinden (2012), in which teachers claimed to be more affected by the personal behaviour of the students than cultural background. Onshore lecturers felt that their empathy for students came more from factors such as course intensity and learners’ personal circumstances than cultural considerations, on the whole. This position is also acknowledged by Abdallah- Pretceille (2006, p. 476). She states that there is sometimes very little room for manoeuvre between a ‘culture zero’ view or negation of the impact of culture on education and the ‘cultural all’ view which sees culture as the only determining factor for classroom behaviour. In short, onshore lecturers concurred with the literature which states that ‘the culture-card’ is too often used to explain all global explanation of difference. The more ‘distant’ a country is in ‘geographic and linguistic origin’, the more ‘cultural difference’ is found (Hinnenkamp, 1987, p. 176). Responses from onshore lecturers were not dissimilar to Asian participants’ reports that they fused
their abilities as ‘expert knowers of the English language’, their knowledge of Western methodologies and their roles as moral guides (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 206). Like the Asian participants, onshore lecturers also spoke of the importance of teacher respect for the students.

Despite their confidence and exposure to both Western and Eastern teaching methodologies, Vietnamese lecturers did not readily critique either discourse to the extent that might have been expected from highly educated academics occupying the Third Space. This may have been due to factors connected with respect for the interviewer’s background or interlocutor etiquette. They were very definite about their ideas on what constitutes good teaching and learning and many of these ideas resonated with Western educational theory. They did not demonstrate a deep knowledge of Western histories or world views during the interviews, perhaps because they were not explicitly given an opportunity to do so with the interview questions that were asked.

With regard to Asian approaches to learning, onshore lecturers were, as suggested earlier, curiously erratic in their comments. Most began by denying any perceivable differences between Asian students’ approaches to learning and local students’ approaches. They attributed learning style to socio-economic and religious factors rather than ethnicity or national culture. As the interview progressed, however, one onshore lecturer spoke of ‘dramatically adjusting’ his own teaching methodologies to suit Asian learners over the years (IS28) while another observed having ‘minimal success with “active participation” type approaches [with Asian students]… on Australian campuses’.

Onshore lecturers maintained it was difficult to involve Asian students in critique due to matters of respect for the lecturer or significant others (GE65-70). Those who had previously censured notions that Asian students were uncritical in their approach to learning, went on to attribute Asian reticence in this area to considerations of hierarchy, Asian teaching approaches, student laziness, reluctance of the student to be shown to be wrong, lack of knowledge, student and parent status and cultural etiquette. They seemed uneasy about observing difference in Asian learning styles for fear it be equated with stereotyping and deficit type-casting. This phenomenon is expanded upon by
McAlinden (2012) in her study of intercultural empathy in Australia. The Vietnamese lecturers, on the other hand, were comfortable with Asian reproductive and reticent approaches to learning, calling it ‘our way of learning’ (HE55), although, like Phan Le Ha (2004), they worried that such images are problematic and misleading if not analysed further and the complexity acknowledged.

Vietnamese lecturers were very relaxed with the idea that they could harmonise their roles as knowledge experts, moral guides (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996) and facilitators. They were confident that they could adapt to any teaching situation. One Vietnamese lecturer recognised that this may be more easily achieved in urban, private contexts or institutions that do not judge their teachers on student results or adhere to prescribed government educational guidelines. Chowdhury and Phan Le Ha (2008) have recognised the cultural politics and power contained within English language teaching. In the present study, an Asian English language teacher described being aware of a power relationship between Western English language teachers and non-native English language teachers:

When we are taught in the West to be English teachers, there is also the underlying understanding that we would accept their way of doing things, learning things; but there is also on the other hand this idea that we are not really accepting everything that they are offering from their culture


When it came to unpacking Western and Eastern social and theoretical discourses, onshore lecturers were aware of past and present stereotypes of Asians in the Australian public. All purported to have been profoundly shaped by Orientalist images. Four of the six lecturers were familiar with the concepts behind Orientalism and the work of Edward Said and one lecturer, in particular, was very familiar with Orientalist literature and popular culture images of Asians. In the light of this, onshore lecturers observed the way that Asia has been “exoticised” in Australia with tourist approaches to cross cultural communication and diversity being the norm (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Likewise, Asians are perpetually portrayed as hard workers, being
simultaneously respected and demonised for this, they felt. They also recognised how these images might differ from those held by individuals in more academic circles.

The profile of onshore lecturers was one of very experienced primary, secondary and adult teachers and academics. All held teaching qualifications gained either in Britain, Europe or Australia and doctoral qualifications gained in Australia. They mostly had not studied the history, politics and cultures of Asia in any formal way. Even lecturers who have studied these fields may fail to adjust to students arriving from Asia or situated in Asia, according to Bodycott & Walker (2000). Some of the lecturers had reviewed these areas in research they had conducted in the field. The Vietnamese lecturers were also very experienced primary and secondary teachers, academics and managers who had all gained their doctoral qualifications in the USA, Thailand and Australia. Like the onshore lecturers, they had not undertaken formal education in the history, culture and politics of the Western world.

The Vietnamese lecturers saw the rise of globalisation as an opportunity for greater interaction and dialogue between cultures and countries and a chance for reinterpretation of, and reflection upon, Western perspectives by those in the West. This, they felt, was the key to better understanding and mutual respect across borders. Although there was no doubt that this will entail more Westernisation of Asia, including role changes and new opportunities for Asian women, in particular, the Vietnamese lecturers seemed confident that this could be achieved without significant compromise on Asian values. One Vietnamese lecturer pointed out that she has only taken the best things from the West (such as open-mindedness), leaving the rest behind. The same lecturer also expressed disappointment with the Australian public, however, for their inability to see past Orientalist images of Asians and Asian life. She felt they only portrayed the Asian exotic in books and photographs. She confided:

I don’t feel good … because they don’t change their perspective… Western people… need to update their perspective… to change their view about Asian people, because we are now in the globalised age and we are changing a lot in order to be relevant, to be suitable in this big community’ (PH16).
The Vietnamese lecturers were very aware of Orientalist, essentialist and Postcolonial images of Asians which portrayed them as ‘different’ in intelligence, education and societal values, ‘working with their hands’ in rural scenes (PH6-7) and perpetrating domestic violence (Asian men) in the family. They also bore witness to racial discrimination in the past but they did not report feeling ‘disturbed’ by such images. They seemed more resilient and able to transcend such discourses than the Asian postgraduates.

Overall, both onshore lecturers and Vietnamese lecturers were able to critique Western social and theoretical discourses, to some extent, but the onshore lecturers appeared more informed and critical. This was balanced out by the fact that Eastern social and theoretical discourses were hardly touched upon by the onshore lecturers (although no interview questions probed this knowledge directly). The Vietnamese lecturers were able to critique these effectively.

**7.5.2.3 Intercultural competence**

The Vietnamese lecturers are plurilingual and pluricultural. In particular, they possess the ability to communicate at a very high level and in an academic discourse in English. They have a working knowledge of Western culture from having lived all over the world. They manage a centre which requires them to travel constantly to both ASEAN and Western countries for the purpose of business and bringing programmes from universities world-wide into their centre. They speak Vietnamese, French, Russian and English fluently and are proficient in cross cultural information which often accompanies the learning of another language. They are still in touch with their Asian backgrounds, however, and empathetic to these influences to varying degrees. They felt that the insights they had gained from being in this position of Thirdness were very valuable and put them into a special category amongst the lecturers and postgraduate students in the study.

As already touched upon under *Confidence*, intercultural competence was manifest in the Vietnamese lecturers’ unilateral decisions to adapt and complement the MA materials sent from the home university. Vietnamese lecturers did not hesitate to make the unit material more interculturally suitable for their audience by adding to, rather
than subtracting from, the unit content. Their job was made easier by the fact that their learners formed a homogenous languaculture and both lecturers and students shared the same languaculture.

Comments referring to the characteristics of a “good learner” reflected Vietnamese educational focal points mentioned earlier, namely ‘development of cultural awareness’, ‘friendly attitudes towards people from other countries’, ‘development of understanding of foreign countries’ (Dung Hue Doan, 2005, pp. 456-457). The emphasis was on the students’ propensity to adapt, to resist being followers, to ‘integrate well into the world’ (PH42) and to get along with people from all ethnolinguistic backgrounds (including own countrymen and people from other countries).

In a similar way, onshore lecturers have developed familiarity with other languages and cultures from their experiences living outside Australia (in many cases). They speak French, Cantonese, Malay, German, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew and a modicum of Aboriginal languages between them. However, their position is more tentative in terms of being proficient in Asian languages and acquainted with Asian cultures. They have never resided in Asian countries (except for the Malay/Chinese lecturer). They have had only fly-in/fly-out experience of Vietnam.

Their reluctance to adapt unit material to the new geographical and cultural context, however, did not stem from these considerations. Rather, onshore lecturers believed that claims that material needed to be adapted to a new “culture” were overblown. Their views aligned with those of Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, p. 476), who speaks of a ‘dictatorship’ of the cultural and a reduction of the individual to cultural membership only:

If educational effectiveness becomes defined in terms of focusing on learning profiles according to cultural membership, there is a risk that education and training will become culturalized by highlighting inter-group differences to the detriment of intra-group and inter-individual differences.

As seen in Chapter 3, Egege and Kutieleh (2008) also supported an argument that difference should in fact be ‘dimmed down’. Instead, onshore lecturers based their
responses to teaching in a Vietnamese context on factors such as class size, intensive
nature of the delivery and the fact that lectures were being conducted through the
medium of English as a second language.

As reported by Pyvis (2011), Chapman and Pyvis (2005) and Middlehurst (2002), in
Chapters 2 and 3, onshore lecturers were pre-occupied with standards and
standardisation as reported in the International Education Association of Australia
(IEAA) guidelines (2008) on equivalence, comparability and “standards” (Middlehurst,
2002). While maintaining equivalence, onshore lecturers needed to procure
intercultural competence in many langacultures in order to interact effectively with
Asian students emanating from varied ethnolinguistic, interculturally heterogenous
backgrounds as well as homogenous langacultural backgrounds in Vietnam. The
Vietnamese lecturers, on the other hand, needed only to deal with an interculturally
homogenous group of Vietnamese speakers.

Outside of pedagogy, onshore lecturers demonstrated a propensity for critique of the
level of intercultural competence currently exhibited in Australia amongst the
Australian public. They claimed to feel uncomfortable when they contemplated
Australia’s multicultural policies, as they were left with the impression that a lot of the
rhetoric on this subject was merely “lip service” with any cross-cultural education kept
to the level of food or high culture. They condemned what they saw as a ‘tourist
approach’ to the development of intercultural competence (Derman-Sparks & Edwards,
2010).

On the whole, however, onshore lecturers remained firmly positioned within their own
Western backgrounds despite being able to view their own culture from the viewpoint
of an outsider (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Deardoff, 2006; Haigh, 2002; Kramsch,
2011). This is discussed in more detail under Dual identity

7.5.2.4 Dual identity

Vietnamese lecturers are secure in their identities. They refrained from talk about
‘fitting in’, unlike their Asian postgraduate students. They appear to have developed the
confidence to discuss with their international colleagues as equals. Pavlenko (2003) has
documented such transitions and regaining of identities in her study of non-native TESOL professionals completing an MA TESOL course. Participants in her study revealed how, as a result of the course, they had come to be aware of English as belonging to all individuals of all national, racial and ethnic backgrounds. ‘Linguistic assimilation’ and membership of an imagined community of native speakers was no longer a desired outcome as non-native English speaking postgraduates moved instead towards a Third Space. One Japanese student reported no longer feeling like a ‘tiny, unimportant and invisible’ outsider, ‘trapped by monolingual bias’. She observed that it had taken her ‘years to break the spell’ (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 265). Such observations give credence to critics of Pennycook (discussed in Chapter 3) who argue that non-native speakers (even those who have been subjected to colonialism) do, in fact, have access to their own counter-discourses which, ironically, they can argue in English (Vickers, 1999).

Onshore lecturers were critical of the idea that one size fits all in pedagogy but did not suggest an Eastern or Asian “add on” to their own teaching of Asians in Asian contexts or Australian contexts. They did not articulate any desire to adopt a syncretic approach or become the teacher as moral guide. The Vietnamese lecturers and Asian postgraduates, on the other hand, all talked of incorporating both Western and Eastern approaches into their teaching and attaining something akin to a dual identity. This was less in evidence in one Vietnamese lecturer, however, who felt much more Western than Asian. His education had prepared him to understand people from the West ‘without any obstacle’ (DA75), he claimed. He felt false identifying himself as Asian. Such feelings render him susceptible to submersion in the new culture with loss of identity rather than a position of Thirdness. In contrast, another Vietnamese lecturer claimed to have initially found it difficult to adjust to an Australian environment as a postgraduate student, but now felt that he had bridged the gap.

On the whole, however, most Vietnamese lecturers felt they had adapted to the situation they found themselves in very well. They demonstrate what Phan Le Ha (2004, p. 52) has called ‘a harmonious combination of global and local pedagogies’, an ability to locate oneself ‘within two identity umbrellas’ (p.55). They are no longer merely the ‘daughter–in–law of a hundred families (lam dau tram ho), whose lot it is to please the
new in-law family and satisfy expectations from many parties’. The Vietnamese lecturers have undergone identity formation processes which involve ‘complexity, contradictions, tensions, negotiations, fluidity, connectedness and continuity’ at ‘personal, local, global and transnational levels’ of the kind described by Phan Le Ha (2004, p. 3). The Vietnamese lecturers are testimony to the fact that Thirdness in pedagogy is attainable. Despite the influence of Western educational hegemony on Asian identity and knowledge formation, many other social and historical layers of meaning have also shaped their perspectives (Chakrabarty, 2000). Moreover, in line with claims by Vietnamese scholars (Duong Thieu Thong, 2002; Phan Ngoc, 1998) that Vietnamese academics actively Vietnamese foreign philosophies (e.g. Chinese Confucianism, French nationalism and Marxist/Leninist Communism), and develop their own syncretism of knowledge, the Vietnamese lecturers demonstrated a deep connection with their own cultural and historical heritage as well as affinity with the ideas of the West. If Miike’s speculative identity transformation model were to be given any credence (Miike, 2013), Vietnamese lecturers might be seen as having reached the later stages of integration. They are able to see what is valuable about their own culture and what needs to be changed. They ask that the West have a deeper understanding of Asia while at the same time calling for Asians to change Asia for the better. They are critical of their own discourses as well as the discourses of the new culture (although criticism of the new Western discourse is not as well developed as it could be). The onshore lecturers, on the other hand, while they may have progressed through the stages of new identity building at a previous time, in a previous language and culture, are not at the same point as the Vietnamese lecturers in terms of dual identity building in Asia (apart from the one onshore lecturer with the Malaysian/Chinese Australian background perhaps).

7.5.3 Summary

Asian postgraduates are close to occupying the Third Space in light of being plurilingual, and to some extent pluricultural (especially the Asian postgraduates onshore). They present some critical awareness of Eastern and Western educational, social and theoretical discourses. The Asian postgraduates onshore appear to value Eastern educational discourses more than the Vietnamese postgraduates offshore. The
Vietnamese postgraduates may be still in more of, what Miike has called, ‘a reflective stage’ (Miike, 2013). Both groups are able to juggle ‘one community, two systems’ (Liu & Fisher, 2010, p.180) and maintain ‘cultural continuity’, and ‘current [local] practice’ (Brown, 2000, p. 227), in their teaching and learning. The conditions, in which they are working, however, often militate against confidence and conviction in their beliefs and practices. Many still feel the effects of Orientalist paradigms which prevent them from embracing dual identity.

The onshore lecturers are closer to occupying the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region than the Asian postgraduates. They are plurilingual (but not in Asian languages), and pluricultural (having lived and worked overseas but not extensively in Asia). They are the most critically aware of all the participants in the study, in terms of Western and Eastern social, theoretical and educational discourses. This gives them confidence and insight. Intercultural competence has been acquired, for four out of the six lecturers, from many years of living and teaching abroad (but not necessarily in Asia) teaching classes entirely made up of second language speakers. They may well be on the way to developing a dual identity in a culture and language related to these experiences. This gives them the wisdom needed to deal with students from many different backgrounds. As humanities graduates, most also have at least a basic awareness of Western social, theoretical and educational discourses, and a good historical grasp of related issues, including Orientalism. This gives them greater metacultural sensitivity when compared to their fellow Australian academics at UoA and a much greater depth of understanding than the Asian postgraduates in the study. In most respects they did not fit the profile of monolingual, monocultural and untravelled Australian higher education educators described by Haigh (2002). Although onshore lecturers possess some Asian intercultural competence, attained from years of teaching Asian students onshore and spending two weeks of every year teaching Vietnamese postgraduate students in Vietnam, they have not lived and worked in Asia for extensive periods of time, however. Consequently, they are far from developing an Asian dual identity. The Malaysian/Chinese Australian is the exception to this.

The Vietnamese lecturers are closest to occupying the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region because they can claim dual Western and Eastern identity. They are plurilingual
and pluricultural. They retain respect and appreciation for their first culture and way of life (including educational practices) while embracing the new culture on many different levels. They are comfortable and confident in their role of having to ‘bounce back between the two rivers’ (NI25) because this forms part of their daily routine as academics, teachers and managers of an international organisation. They display awareness of Eastern and Western social, theoretical and educational discourses and a readiness to critique both. In this instance, however, they did not deconstruct Western discourses as extensively as their onshore counterparts. Nevertheless, they are the closest to occupying the Third Space in terms of affinities with the Asia-Pacific region.

7.6 Conclusion

This study has approached the issue of meaning making in teaching and learning encounters in the case of Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers from the perspectives of the students and lecturers at two sites: Vietnam and Australia. Theory about this issue was generated in the form of five propositions, as discussed in this chapter. Chapter 8, to follow, concludes the thesis.
CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter provides an overview of the study, including aims and research questions, rationale, participants and sites, methods and key findings. The chapter addresses the parameters of the study, and finishes with conclusions and recommendations for policy and practice.

8.1 Aims and research questions

The study aimed to generate theory about how Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers (who may or may not be of Asian ethnicity) make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam. It also attempted to investigate the perceived impact of Orientalist discourses, Eastern constructions of “the Asian” and Western educational discourses on Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers while endeavoring to assess both students’ and lecturers’ positions with regard to the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 2009). The study was driven by the main research question:

How do lecturers and their postgraduate Asian students in Australia and Vietnam make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters?

Guiding questions were:

1. What influence has the Western construction of “the Asian” and the related social and theoretical discourses had on postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers, and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?
2. How have Asian background and culture contributed to Asian postgraduate students’ and their Asian lecturers’ perceptions of themselves as Asians?
3. How have theories of teaching and learning established mostly in the West influenced postgraduate Asian students’ and their lecturers’ views on teaching, and learning and how close are they to occupying the Third Space in this regard?
4. How have postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers responded to theories about “the Asian learner”?

8.2 Rationale

The rationale behind this study was firstly that data from Asian sites, and, in particular, Vietnamese sites, are still fairly sparse. The voices of Asian postgraduates and their Asian lecturers are rarely heard in Australia. Secondly, Asian postgraduates in the study, both in Vietnam and Australia, were both teachers and learners concurrently, affording a dual insight into teaching and learning experiences. Thirdly, much quantitative research has been conducted in the area but relatively few qualitative studies have been attempted. Finally, very few studies in the area could be described as interdisciplinary in scope. The researcher felt it was important to draw from a broad range of complementary fields of knowledge including cultural studies, sociology, history and education if any kind of legitimate statement about teaching and learning in Asia and Australia was to be made. Such a syndetic or link-making approach (Pavlic, 1996), in which attempts are made to augment current bodies of knowledge in the sociology of education, is rare in the literature in the field. The study sought to go some way towards drawing attention to ‘transformative encounters’ (Sanderson, 2003, p. 145) and the need for ‘more culturally pluralistic’ perspectives from those involved in teaching and learning in the region.

8.3 Participants and sites

A multiple site case study strategy was used to collect perspectives from postgraduate Asian students and their lecturers at two sites of a single Australian university. The first site (UoA) was the home campus of a university in Australia which runs MA Applied Linguistics programmes and which attracts both local Australian students and overseas full fee paying Asian students. Students at this site were all enrolled in the onshore MA programme. The second site (VCoT) was an offshore partner of the Australian university; an educational training centre in Vietnam. The centre runs the same MA Applied Linguistics course in transnational mode for local Vietnamese English language teachers. Institutions in the study were de-identified and any information which might indicate the identity of the institutions has been withheld.
8.4 Methods

The study was located in an interpretivist theoretical paradigm. Symbolic interactionist thought and critical forms of interpretative inquiry were brought together to form an interpretivist interactionist approach to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative data were collected from participants using semi-structured interviews and student generated documents and analysed using a Miles and Huberman (1994) approach. The data collected from interviews, documents and primary texts were brought together to provide a snapshot of meaning making in the teaching and learning encounters of Asian postgraduates and their lecturers.

8.5 Key findings

Asian postgraduates and their lecturers made meaning from their teaching learning encounters in ways which generated the following five propositions:

Proposition 1: Asian postgraduates’ perceptions and experiences beyond the classroom are both shared and disparate. Disparity is local context specific.

This proposition arose from data confirming commonality of experience amongst Asian postgraduates. These shared experiences and perceptions reflect Western Orientalist paradigms and postcolonial encounters, in many instances, as well as mutual socialisation practices, similar home and educational cultures, shared religions and a common feeling that to be seen as human was more important than to be seen as Asian, in some cases. However, there is also great diversity of experience that can be linked with geographical location, social class, age, gender, socio-econmic circumstances, histories, world experience and individual encounters and which can either complement or override notions of culture.

Perceptions and experiences of Asian postgraduates were both shared and disparate. Homogeneity was attributable to common socialisation practices, home/school cultures and religions of postgraduates in Asia. It was also attributable to shared perceptions and experiences of Western Orientalist paradigms. Disparity was derived from the many varied ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds of Asians at the onshore research site, as well as individuality of experience. It could also be linked with offshorenness or
onshoreness. Site One postgraduate students had mostly not left their home country of Vietnam while Site Two postgraduate students had all left their home environment and were living and studying in a Western English speaking country. Shared and disparate experiences and encounters, beyond the classroom, reflect differences and similarities in Asian contexts and degree of contact with the West. The summation of factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic circumstances, geographical location (rural/urban; developing/developed), histories, world experience and individual encounters override or complement cultural considerations.

Proposition 2: There is a positive appreciation of Western and Eastern educational discourses for teaching and learning in Asia by Asian postgraduate students and their Asian lecturers.

This proposition arose from data suggesting that participants had been inspired to be innovative in their teaching and learning, using different techniques and developing new strategies, as a direct result of contact with Western educational discourses. Evidence of this was most pronounced in the Vietnamese lecturers. Eastern educational discourses were also valued, however, especially amongst the Asian postgraduates studying their course onshore. Good teachers were seen as a combination of Western strategies and techniques and Eastern attributes such as recognition of the teacher’s role in being a moral guide, a protector, ‘an engineer of the soul’ (Phan Le Ha, 2008, p. 9) and role model of moral virtues. That qualities of teaching valued by the West can be interpreted and practised in different but equivalent ways in the East (Phan Le Ha, 2004), was verified.

Good learning is established through a combination of strategies and personal qualities endorsed by the West and East, respectively. Approaches to learning commonly found in Asia often make use of memorisation and students may remain passive or uncritical, but there needs to be consideration of the factors contributing to these approaches and acknowledgement that these approaches are not necessarily seen in a bad light by Asians themselves. Furthermore, these approaches can coexist alongside more creative approaches.
Proposition 3: Despite positive appreciation of the value of Western and Eastern educational discourses, feelings of deficit and difference underlie much of the meaning that many Asian postgraduate students make from encounters within and beyond the classroom in Asia and Australia. Moreover, fear and scepticism pervade these encounters.

Participants perceived Asians to be seen as either deficient or different by Westerners both in and beyond the classroom. Comments which conveyed underlying themes of deficiency focused on the legacies of colonialism, feelings of inadequacy, unfamiliarity and ignorance, a desire to emulate and feelings of fear. The impact of social and theoretical discourses such as Postcolonialism, Orientalism and essentialism was evident in these responses. Comments which focused on the difference between East and West addressed socio-cultural norms, living conditions and hardship and socio-economic divides. Feelings of scepticism were identified mainly due to what was felt to be a mismatch between Western endorsed methodologies imported wholesale to the East (especially Vietnam) and Asian educational contexts and capabilities; a phenomenon referred to as ‘one community, two systems’ by Liu & Fisher (2010, p. 180). There were traces of Occidentalism in responses from Chinese, Saudi Arabian and Bangladeshi participants but, apart from these participants, this discourse was barely in evidence.

Proposition 4: Irrespective of change in the Asia-Pacific region, there remains only partial movement towards the Third Space on two main fronts: Western Orientalist paradigms and approaches to teaching and learning.

Asian postgraduates and their lecturers were well aware of rapid change in some areas of life in Asia. However, they overestimated the amount of change to have taken place in the areas of Orientalist images and pedagogy. Perceptions fell into two main categories: Asian perceptions of Asian views and behaviours and Australian perceptions of Asian views and behaviours. Asian postgraduates described Asian daily life, and the attitudes of Asian people, as changing rapidly due to globalisation. Vietnamese lecturers claimed increasing change and closure of “the gap” between the West and the East. The Asian postgraduates, in contrast, spoke of the continuation of Orientalist, colonial
attitudes and the inferiority that they felt. The onshore lecturers observed significant change in perceptions of Orientalist binaries in Australia but did not believe this change to be widespread in all layers of Australian society. Change and adaptation was seen as asymmetrical. Asians are moving towards the West but very little change is occurring from the West to the East, especially in the areas of teaching and learning. A general inertia in the development of intercultural competence in the Australian public was suggested by the onshore lecturers.

**Proposition 5: There is differential movement towards the Third Space in the Asia-Pacific region by Western lecturers, Asian lecturers and Asian postgraduates.** All are close to occupying a position of Thirdness, both in the classroom and beyond, but Asian lecturers and Western lecturers are closer than their Asian postgraduates and Asian lecturers are closer than their Western counterparts.

The Third Space is a place of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 237). Thirdness in this study, involved no longer seeing Asia through an Orientalist, essentialist, Postcolonial lens and valuing Asian educational discourses as much as Western ones. It involved moving to a position of confidence, intercultural competence and dual identity. All participants in the study demonstrated proximity to the Third Space to varying degrees.

Vietnamese postgraduates and Asian postgraduates were plurilingual, pluricultural and able to manage Western and Eastern approaches to teaching and learning simultaneously in many instances. They did not exude the same confidence, comfortableness and conviction as the Vietnamese lecturers or the onshore lecturers, however. They were sceptical and fearful about the successful integration of Western methodologies into Asia. The Vietnamese postgraduates were less well informed about cross-cultural issues.

The onshore lecturers were critically aware of Self and Other and Western and Eastern social, theoretical and educational discourses. Most originated from countries outside of Australia and were able to speak more than one language to varying degrees of proficiency and four out of the six had experience of living and working abroad for periods of time but not necessarily in Asia. All had experience of teaching students from many ethnolinguistic backgrounds and as a result exhibited a degree of intercultural
competence. They had not spent extensive periods of time living or studying in Asia, however, and could not claim dual identity in Asia.

The Vietnamese lecturers were confident that East and West could be harmonised. They were secure in the idea that they could operate ‘within a two identity umbrella’ (Phan Le Ha, 2004, p. 55) without significant compromise on Asian values. Aware of Orientalist, essentialist and Postcolonial discourses about Asians they felt able to transcend such notions. They had insights gained from working closely within Asian educational systems and Western teacher education courses (although critique of Western discourses was not all that forthcoming in all participants). They were pluricultural, plurilingual and they exhibited heightened intercultural competence. Their dual identity (both Eastern and Western) put them in a special category of Thirdness amongst the lecturers and postgraduates in the study.

8.6 Parameters of the study

This case study explored in-depth perspectives of a small group of participants. The case consisted of Asian postgraduate students, onshore lecturers and Asian lecturers. While case study research does not purport to generalise to entire populations, it does have benefits for situations similar to the one in the study. Findings can be used to confirm the presence of a phenomenon (Van Maanen, 1988) and as a basis for theoretical propositions (Yin, 2003). Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the use of the widest possible range of data, thick description and participants’ own voices in the case study allows for judgement to be made on the part of the reader (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). ‘Research legitimisation’ (Kelliher, 2005, p. 123) ensures the “truth” of the findings, their applicability and consistency across contexts (if the same participants were to take part in a repeat study) as well as the reduction of researcher bias, motivations, interests and perspectives. Transparent documentation of procedures also produces dependable findings. In the present study, the researcher’s ‘insider status’ as a lecturer known to them, and a researcher very familiar with the Asian and Vietnamese context, proved to be an asset when it came to participants sharing their perceptions, beliefs and practices.
Although small, the study is credible in that it made use of ‘prolonged engagement’ with the case by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The MA Applied Linguistics programme at UoA has run since 1997 onshore and 2006 offshore. Over this time the researcher has built up knowledge of the Asian students typically studying the course both onshore and in Vietnam. Data collection was carried out over several years with frequent visits to Site Two. Related documentation provided further credibility to the study.

The case uses the context of Vietnam, as well the Australian context, to achieve its purpose of exploring Asian students’ and their onshore and Vietnamese lecturers’ perspectives. This does not mean that the researcher constructs Vietnam as “typical” of all Asian countries. Vietnam was chosen as a case study site for many reasons. Firstly, it is a growing source of overseas students globally with sizeable numbers of students studying in Australia both onshore and offshore. It is important, therefore, to know more about the perspectives and encounters of such students. Secondly, relatively little has been written about Vietnamese learners and teachers. Thirdly, onshore lecturers in the study teach both the Asian postgraduates onshore and those in Vietnam. This allowed for the investigation of deeper insights by the onshore lecturers. The diversity of Asian postgraduate nationalities at the onshore site also facilitated acumen which might not have been possible if the study had focused only on the homogenous Vietnamese participant group offshore. Fourthly, Vietnam was a site well known to the researcher. The findings from Vietnam cannot be claimed to represent all Asian countries, their academics, postgraduates or teachers but, as Van Maanen (1988) pointed out, they can be used to confirm the presence of a phenomenon and provide food for thought when setting up transnational programmes or onshore units which examine Western educational discourses. The focus on Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers at two sites allowed more potential for transferability of theories, propositions and shared themes while the diversity of Asians in the onshore group served as a reminder of the disparate experiences and backgrounds of the Asian participants.
8.7 Conclusions

The way that Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers in this study made meaning from their teaching and learning encounters was very complex and involved experiences and perceptions beyond the classroom as well as in it. Experiences were co-constructed through interaction between lecturers and students, lecturers and lecturers and the influence of significant others on both. Perceptions and shared understandings were shaped by social, theoretical and educational discourses as well as socio-economic, political, cultural, geographic and psychological factors. This is not to suggest that participants were not agents themselves in shaping the meaning that was made and their prospective identities, as Dunn (cited in Parmenter et al., 2000, p. 9) explained:

Understanding how identity is constructed is … no longer solely a matter of the influences of history, culture, geography and power but depends also on choices and constraints immediately available to individuals who as actors negotiate their lives within a broad field of social meanings and actions, and within a range of institutional settings.

As argued in the previous chapter, occupation of the Third Space was necessary for intercultural competence and confidence in such contexts. There has been much rhetoric on changing attitudes and behaviours and the positive influence of Western ideas in some spheres. Progress towards the breakdown of Orientalist binaries, and moves towards the Third Space, are gradual, however. Hicks and Jarratt (2008) pointed to the fact that Said’s imperialism is present today in the ‘impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination’ (Said, 1993, p. 9). There remain feelings of fear and scepticism in Asian teachers charged with managing one community and two systems. As Manathunga (2005, p. 26) points out, ‘we need to find ways to display our ambivalence about educational development orthodoxies’. The meanings that Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers in this case study have made from their teaching and learning encounters in Australia and Vietnam have been, simultaneously, enriching and detracting.

These suppositions beg consideration of wider issues such as the ‘delusion of regionalism’ (Jones & Smith, 2001) and ‘regional delusion’ (Jones & Smith, 2006).
They highlight considerations of identity as a choice rather than a fate (Gray, 2000). At a more basic level they guide attention towards examination of the nature of change in the Asia-Pacific region, not only in teaching and learning practices and approaches, but also in attitudes and perceptions held by the non-teaching and learning fraternity. They signpost and align with what many have said before, that there is, to date, an asymmetrical relationship between Asia and its nearest neighbour in terms of movement towards the Third Space and intercultural competence (Bhabha, 1994; Kramsch, 2009; Lo Bianco et al, 1999; Taylor & Chiam, 2011).

The rhetoric which promotes Western knowledge as the ‘apex of civilisation’, with non-Western knowledge either ignored or demoted to the Other (Sanderson, 2003, p. 150), still prevails to varying degrees in many layers of Australian society. Some in academic circles and the younger generation seem to have moved from deficit images of Asians to images which perpetuate difference or Culturalism. The Australian public exhibits tolerance at best for Asia-Australia relationships and disinterest in what goes on in Asia, according to Anwar (2012). Similarly, Asian postgraduates and Asian academics in the present study demonstrated awareness of Western contexts but stopped short of exhibiting deep knowledge of Western histories and world views. They demonstrated a rudimentary awareness of Orientalist ideas.

Attempts at cross-cultural education in Australia seem to have remained at the level of ‘a tourist approach’ to multicultural education (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Asians originating from many different ethnolinguistic backgrounds are often grouped together and labelled as threatening, either because they are suspected of being terrorists (Muslim Asians), or are too hard working (Singaporean, Indian). The former view is disparaging and is based on racism and discrimination. The latter is what has been termed ‘new racism’ but is simply Culturalism, where culture or ethnicity are used to separate and point to difference (Gilroy, 1992). An example of this is the following Australian teenage jingle:

Roses are red, violets are blue
There will always be an Asian better than you   (Doctor Derpy, 2012)
Ethnic success theory is related to Culturalism and based on conceptions of acculturation. Asian/Australian cultural differences are accentuated by reifying Asian cultural values, homogenising Asian socio-cultural norms and understating ‘inter-Asian’ cultural heterogeneity in terms of race, class and gender (Matthews, 2002). In Australian public space, comments reinforcing this notion of Asian homogeneity, and “difference” to Australians, prevail:

This notion that they [Asians] are different to us in the way they learn… I agree. I think they definitely are’ (comment from the mother of two school aged boys at the researcher’s house).

A ‘pro-school orientation’ and high educational achievement are not indicators of social acceptance or economic advancement. Perceptions of successful Asian integration and transcendence of social inequality is often based on educational performance and representation in universities, however (Matthews, 2002, p. 195). Asian culture is charged with promoting educational success and linked with socialisation, home/school culture and religion. It is rarely associated with social class, socio-economic status, migrancy, marginality and racism. Research has suggested that success in education is a priority for all migrants, regardless of nationality or ethnolinguistic background. It is not their only passport to social mobility, however (Pookong & Kuck, 1991). Financial security and secure employment are equally as important (Matthews, 2002). Subsequent generations of migrants are less motivated to succeed educationally (Pookong & Kuck, 1991).

Anecdotally, Asian students in Australia seem to possess a set of very definable characteristics (hardworking, mathematical, different, clever, passive) in the eyes of the Australian public, but paradoxically, the nationality of the learners can remain a mystery to those charged with their care. Australian teachers are often unable to differentiate between Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese students in their classes as seen below:

Field experience supervisor: Have you got any Japanese students in your class?

ESL teacher: Yes, I have one…Dawn Wang.

Field experience supervisor: Wang…that is a Chinese name.

ESL teacher: Oh is it? Oh maybe she is Chinese then.
Asian students arriving in Australia seem aware, in many cases, of the image that goes before them; an image which paints them as ‘lacking in initiative, socially inept, boringly bookish’ (Louie, 2005, p. 220) and poor at thinking critically. They are sometimes quick to define themselves as the Other having internalised these descriptions as seen below in an exchange between the researcher and a Foundation studies student:

   New student: Hi …I’m from Bahrain.
   Researcher: Really? And …?
   New student: Well, I can’t critically think you know.

Matthews (2002) describes a similar experience with an Asian student who was convinced she must be good at maths because she was Asian. As she points out, this ‘pro-school, smart student’ label is misleading because it gives the impression that Asians are treated equitably in Australian schools and elsewhere in the world (Matthews, 2002, p. 193).

In “educated” circles, research has highlighted a paucity of cross-cultural understanding in Australian teachers and lecturers. Haigh (2002) has underscored the fact that few Australian educators, who work in higher education, have ever taught or lived outside of Australia and most are monolingual in English due to the monocultural and monolingual complacency in which they find themselves (Clyne, 2005; Coleman, 2012; Lo Bianco, 2009). Unlike the lecturers in this study, Australian academics are often ill-prepared to cope with the demands that culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to their courses (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010; Wallace & Dunn, 2004; Whitfield, Klug & Whitney, 2009) unless they are bi-lingual and very experienced (even then Othering may occur) (McAlinden, 2012) as seen in the dialogue below:

   PhD Seminar participant: How will you collect your data?
   Researcher: Maybe focus groups
   PhD Seminar participant: That won’t work with Asians ‘cause they won’t speak out

Furthermore, few teacher education courses really address intercultural education, multilingual education or multicultural education in any depth (Leeman & Reid, 2006). Buchori (2011) describes a study conducted in an early childhood culturally diverse
setting in Australia in an attempt to underscore the need for more metacultural sensitivity and awareness in schools and teacher education courses. The story is shared below by a teacher in the school:

We were learning about Aboriginal culture...we did dot paintings and we looked at pictures of Aboriginal people living in the bush...we also painted the children’s faces. It was funny because one of the kids seemed confused; he told me that he had a neighbour who was Aboriginal and his neighbour didn’t wear “normal” clothes and did not look like the Aboriginals shown in the picture and he asked me “does my neighbour really eat bugs and insects?”...I was just lost for words...I didn’t know what to say....I didn’t realise I was stereotyping a particular group of people...that wasn’t the message I was trying to portray (Buchori, 2011, p. 60)

Such static images and stereotypes are not helped by the unimpressive number of Australians enrolled in, or speaking, a second language compared with their Asian counterparts (Lo Bianco, 2009; The Group of Eight, n.d.). As already mentioned in Chapter 1, linking up with Asia forms part of the recommendations put forward by the latest White Paper Australia in the Asian century (Australian Government, 2012) compiled by Gillard’s Labor government. The Paper calls for ‘more specialised Asia-relevant capabilities’, employment ‘across regional borders’, ‘a more general understanding of the region’ and an exchange of ideas and resources in best practice teaching. This may mean considering a change in the way that Australians educate themselves. There needs to be a focus on making sure that ‘Australians have the right capabilities to take advantage of the Asian century’ (Australian Government, 2012, p. 162), including more widespread mastery of Asian languages. Even a rudimentary knowledge of an Asian language would provide ‘an opening to go through’, according to Jose, a writer and guest on Radio National’s radio broadcast of The Asian Century (Soutphommasane, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the scarcity of attention to metacultural sensitivity, knowledge of the Self and Other, Orientalism and Western histories was also apparent in interviews with Asian participants. Stereotyping and ignorance is not a one-way street. Djamin, suggests that although ‘the stereotype from the Indonesian side is actually much more decreasing in the last 15 years’, many Indonesians still perceive Australia as a ‘white
country’, one which is ‘not part of Asia and ... always representing the Western interest...’ and trying to ‘divide Indonesia into pieces’ (McEvoy & Jones, 2013). It would seem that Occidentalism is also at large from these statements. Although he concluded that he felt Indonesians were becoming more interested in Australians than Australians in Indonesians.

The teaching of a second language is not necessarily accompanied by education in raising metacultural awareness, either. Asians learning English as a foreign language in their home countries may still remain quite metaculturally unaware and afflicted with ‘Australiaphobia’, according to Indonesian journalist, Yuli Ismartono (McEvoy & Jones, 2013). Furthermore, bilingual teachers may find themselves less than comfortable in their new role of ‘bouncing back between the two rivers’ (NI25) and experience the ‘dislocation’ and ‘disjuncture’ mentioned previously in Chapter 3 (Neilsen, 2011, p. 19). One of the more memorable moments of the study was when one of the Vietnamese lecturer participants reported: ‘I am Asian but actually you know I learn, educated in the West so I bring here the Western thinking, the West ways of teaching and learning’.

Occupation of the Third Space cannot be considered static. Remaining in a position of Thirdness requires much effort and commitment in keeping up with changes in Self and Other. Providing there continues to be role models, such as the Vietnamese lecturers in this study, however, the future should prove to be less bleak. The contributions of plurilingual, well-educated, citizens of the world who, after some time away from their home cultures and submersion in a new culture can confidently and unashamedly say, ‘I am Asian’ (VV59) and feel comfortable acknowledging multiple identities (Sen, 2006), provide hope for large scale movement to the Third Space. The challenge is to ensure that metacultural awareness becomes integral to a future globalised world. There needs to be identity choice rather than identity fate (Gray, 2000). As Federal Minister for Finance, Penny Wong, pointed out, in her interview on Radio National, ‘cross-cultural engagement with our region is one of the key aspects of our future prosperity’ (Southphommasane, 2013). This can be achieved, in part, in the opinion of the researcher, by instituting the recommendations listed below.
8.8 Recommendations

8.8.1 Recommendation 1: Diagnosis of the extent of the problem.

More qualitative research needs to be carried out in schools and tertiary institutions to help ascertain the level of metacultural awareness and knowledge possessed by teachers in culturally diverse settings, particularly in Australia. In this way the depth of teacher knowledge about Western social, theoretical and educational discourses (Widin, 2010, p. 106) could be ascertained as well as the extent of influence these discourses have had upon teachers. Similarly, levels of intercultural competence could also be gauged as well as gaps in teacher knowledge of Self and Other. Once the magnitude of the problem has been pinpointed, both Asian and Australian teachers could be helped to move to where many (but not all) of their plurilingual, pluricultural, Western-educated, Asian counterparts already are, using some of the strategies outlined below.

8.8.2 Recommendation 2: Metacultural awareness raising and knowledge of related social and theoretical discourses.

Teacher education courses in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region need to be reconceptualised to foster increased metacultural awareness and metacultural sensitivity (Louie, 2005, p. 17) in pre-service and in-service teachers. As far back as 1998, authors like Liu (1998, p. 8) proposed that there be provision made for ‘systematic study of culture via a course or research project’ (Liu, 1998, p. 9), but there needs to be more. Teachers, in research carried out by McAlinden (2012, pp. 168-169), felt that teacher empathy was limited by ‘lack of cultural knowledge’ in intercultural contexts. Moreover, participants claimed to find instruction more difficult if they were unfamiliar with the cultural backgrounds of the students. In the current study, one Vietnamese postgraduate described the fear experienced by an expatriate teacher working in the same institution when faced with teaching students from different cultural backgrounds.

Attempts should be made to provide insights into Eastern and Western social and theoretical discourses which exercise an influence over teaching and learning in the region through mandatory university or school-wide units of learning which explore changing social, political, historical, cultural landscapes and world views, as well as the construction of the Self and the Other. As Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, p. 477) observes,
the understanding of other people requires ‘work on oneself’ so as to avoid the temptation to slip into a ‘projection and a game of mirrors’. Likewise, cultures cannot be understood in isolation. They need to be located within their social, political and communication-based realities (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). As Sanderson stressed, there needs to be ‘transformative encounters’ in which university staff and local students are empowered to take a culturally pluralistic perspective (Sanderson, 2003, p. 145).

Moreover, courses or units should emphasise the diversity present in Asia and provide in-depth, up to date knowledge about countries which constitute Asia Greater (including what is now more commonly known as The Middle East) as well as South East or East Asia. There should be particular attention paid to moving Australians away from seeing all Asians as Chinese. Such recognition of the diversity of experiences in Asia might help to prevent the culture shock that many teachers, who claim to be “Asia-literate”, experience when they encounter students from places like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This cultural confusion can constrain teacher empathy considerably (McAlinden, 2012). As Abdallah-Pretceille (2006, p. 477) states, ‘cultural competence fits within a knowledge of the multiple and not of the whole or the homogenous’.

Teacher education courses should impress upon teachers and learners the importance of making the politics and power embedded in teaching and learning (especially English language teaching and learning) explicit to students in the region (Chowdhury & Phan Le Ha, 2008). They need to bring to their attention the fact that ‘it is always the Other who has to work hard and adjust to meet the requirements set by the Self. The standard always belongs to the Self. The Other remains a second-class practitioner’ (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu & Riazi, 2001, p. 22). As Jose pointed out there remains an Australian pre-conception about what Asians are able to do (Southpommasane, 2013).

Acquiring an ‘intercultural dimension’ is not merely a matter of doing content units on cross-cultural matters, completing communication skills courses, relocating abroad (although this can help) or becoming an expert on cultural diversity (Crichton & Scarino, 2007). Intercultural competence means ‘moving well beyond a static approach to learning isolated facts’ (Liddicoat, 2003, p. 16). Developing intercultural awareness
in teaching and learning, across all disciplines, is a social, linguistic and cultural act that has to involve dialogue. There is continuous interpretation and making of meaning between individuals (Crichton & Scarino, 2007, p. 12). Rizvi (2003, p. 39) endorsed this recommendation further with his notion of ‘global intelligence’. He spoke of ‘the development of a moral imagination to view the world through the other’s eye, and a commitment to build cultural bridges across regimes of fear and suspicion of others’. It is only by drawing attention to discourses which have shaped our ways of thinking that, as Kramsch (2009, p. 246) suggests, ‘sedimented representations’ of the Self and Other, both in daily life and in pedagogy, can be broken down. A connection between both the intracultural and intercultural needs to be established (Crichton & Scarino, 2007).

The ground for East/West dialogue has been prepared. Research has deconstructed binary paradigms (Takayama, 2008) and there is an increasing Asian confidence arising from rapid economic development in East Asia. There is an awareness that Asian minds are not second-rate (Mahbubani, 1998). Asians are no longer struck by ‘Euromania’ (Al-i-Ahmed, cited in Irwin, 2006, p. 312). As Kevin Rudd, the former Australian Prime Minister and the then Labor Party’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, claimed, ‘What happens in Asia now matters not just for Asia itself, but the world’ (‘Rudd backs two state solution’, 2011). The current economic crisis will shake not only markets but ‘an entire way of thinking about how the world works’ (Foroohar, 2011, p. 18). Evidence of this can be seen in the title of the 2012 Grattan Institute Summary Report, ‘Catching up: Learning from the best school systems in East Asia’ (Jensen, 2012).

The Vietnamese lecturers in this present study are well positioned in terms of Thirdness. They have attained what Kumaravadivelu (2008, p. 169) refers to as ‘the Gandhian view of cultural growth, with its twin pillars of rootedness and openness, that … offers a strong foundation for the construction of global cultural consciousness in the contemporary world’. For other Asian educators to follow there needs to be attention to creating favourable social, educational, political and economic conditions to complement the programmes of second (and third) language education in most public and private schools in Asia. Likewise, the onshore lecturers in the present study are almost as well positioned but need experience that can only be gained by living and working in the second culture for a substantial period of time.
8.8.3 Recommendation 3: Greater understanding and critique of educational discourses

Opportunities need to be provided for pre and in-service teachers (and lecturers in some instances) in the region to be able to examine current developments in educational research which can provide ‘a conceptual lens’ to help replace outmoded dichotomies (Kramsch, 2009, p. 248) and alter ways of thinking (Milner, 2010). This could be achieved by ensuring that all education courses have units which really probe, contest and critique dominant ideologies and taken-for-granted educational approaches. As Tu (2002, p. 88) pointed out, ‘The deeper you dig into [the]… common ground of existence, the nearer [you] … come to the common spring of humanity’. Armed with this knowledge, teachers would also be in a stronger position to be able to conduct interdisciplinary, qualitative research in which they are mindful of the social and political ramifications of education and culturally situated ethnocentric meaning constructions. Without such opportunities, teachers may desist from questioning power structures, operating solely from their own cultural references, ways of knowing and experiences (Milner, 2010).

8.8.4 Recommendation 4: Maximising opportunities arising from transnational educational programmes.

With transnational education on the increase, the joint delivery of courses by host and home country lecturers is also the first step towards dialogue between educators from different cultural backgrounds. They present opportunities for true cross-cultural exchange. Currently, many offshore programmes, run by host universities in Asia, rely solely upon fly-in/fly-out models of operation or distance learning and on-line approaches to course delivery. While these models might be cost effective and stream-lined they do not maximise opportunities for students and teachers to become more culturally aware by immersing themselves in Culture 2. They are delivered entirely by the home university’s lecturers rather than lecturers from the local setting, even when qualifications and experience are matched. This is largely due to votes of no confidence by Australian institutions in the ability of local offshore lecturers. It is also attributable to a lack of confidence in Asians by Asians themselves. In the Master’s course described in this study onshore lecturers teach and assess alongside their Vietnamese
counterparts. The contributions and adaptations that the Vietnamese lecturers make to the units are valued. However, these same Vietnamese lecturers are rarely involved in the writing of units of work or course construction. They simply teach what is given to them and modify it to suit the Vietnamese context. As Middlehurst (2002, p. 11) suggests, permission to ‘design and determine content’ needs to be more equally shared. The composition of teaching teams in universities needs to be rethought. The idea of a shift in power relationships also has to be deliberated. The notion of ‘standards’, which currently dictates that equivalence be considered before comparability, also needs to be reconsidered (Coombe & Clancy, 2002). The Good Practice Guidelines document (International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), 2008, p. 16) has already questioned ‘implicit assumptions’ that Australian partners take the senior roles. They are asking for ‘balanced transnational associations involving associates of similar status’.

Transnational programmes offer opportunities for teachers to converge and exchange ideas about teaching and learning experiences. Australian educators can learn from those already more comfortable in the Third Space (Crozet et al, 1999). Moreover, transnational programmes present prospects for two-way learning and a reversal of unidirectional knowledge flow. These opportunities need to be formalised so that informed exchange can be the by-product of moderation processes and workshops. As Manathunga (2005, p. 26) has pointed out, ‘We need to engage with our “Other” colleagues … in a two way, reciprocal, intercultural, interdisciplinary exchange’. Equipped with greater intercultural competence, educators in the Asia-Pacific region might think beyond national borders and arrive at a view of learning which deconstructs Orientalist binary paradigms (Takayama, 2008, p. 19).

8.8.5 Recommendation 5: Formalising opportunities to work and study abroad.

Australian would-be teachers, in-service teachers and lecturers should be given opportunities and incentives to work and live abroad. As outlined in Chapter 3, such opportunities can stimulate reflection and help educators to modify their worldviews and ‘personally-held values … relating to culture, pedagogy and …content knowledge’ (Seah & Edwards, 2006, p. 309). Research has also shown that students benefit from
study abroad programmes in many ways. They develop greater intercultural proficiency, increased openness to diversity of cultures and a more global perspective. At the same time they acquire confidence and see themselves through the lens of an approachable and receptive citizen of the world (Clarke, Flaherty, McMillen & Wright, 2009). Living in another country also teaches mindfulness of other people, alertness, and an ‘experience of otherness’ (Abdallah- Pretceille, 2006, p. 478). Many postgraduate Asian students and professionals are much more familiar than Australian students and lecturers with the idea of living, studying and working in a variety of educational settings.

Gap years are an opportunity for such experiences and should form part of any teaching degree. Experienced teachers and lecturers should also be actively encouraged and rewarded for spending time teaching in places other than their home environment on sabbaticals or exchanges. Linked with this is the urgency for more emphasis and importance to be placed upon teachers and lecturers to be conversant with a second Asian language (any language will encourage reflection on world view and instil a heightened sense of tolerance and respect). Similarly, school children studying foreign languages at school should be encouraged and rewarded for travel abroad on school trips with some government funding being provided.

8.8.6 Recommendation 6: Exploiting cultural diversity in the classroom.

The classroom context provides opportunities for teachers and lecturers to become interculturally competent without leaving Australian shores. It is rare for teachers or lecturers to find themselves in a homogenous cultural setting these days. The extent of cultural diversity to be found varies enormously across demographics, however. Quite a lot of the time, teachers see cultural diversity in terms of ‘cultural baggage’ or as a ‘cultural burden’ (Buchori, 2011, p 68). They devote most of their efforts to bringing students from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds ‘in from the cold’. They seem to be fearful that if they do not achieve total assimilation for those in their care, the students will suffer at the hands of significant others and school managers (Buchori, 2011; Buchori & Dobinson, 2012).
If the element of fear mentioned earlier in Chapter 7, and summarised in Buchori’s study of early childhood teachers in Australia, could be overcome, however, teachers may ‘pause for thought’ (Grace & Gravestock, 2009, p. 20) before assuming that all culturally diverse students conform to the stereotypes. This could be achieved in many ways. Firstly, units on metacultural sensitivity in pre and in-service teaching courses (as mentioned in Recommendations 3 and 4) could be included in the teacher education curriculum. Secondly, room in the school timetable could be made for opportunities to share cultural experiences. Thirdly, more cross cultural and English language support could be given to teachers. Fourthly, attempts could be made to lower levels of teacher anxiety about standards and performance. Fifthly, culturally diverse students could be seen as a resource rather than an encumbrance. In-building opportunities for face to face dialogue between students from diverse Asian cultural backgrounds could help to dispell notions of a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching of students from Asia.

8.8.7 Recommendation 7: Ongoing, informed, dialogue between “East” and “West”

Despite being central to the ‘success of an offshore program’ (Dixon & Scott, 2004, p. 4), lack of communication on transnational programmes has still been found to be the ‘most pervasive issue’ (Pannan & Gribble, 2005, p. 11), as already described in Chapter 3. As a result, Dunn and Wallace (2008) have called for ‘intentional’ and ‘intercultural’ ‘communities of practice’ comprised of teachers and learners from both onshore and offshore communities. Television programmes, such as the recent talk show Q & A (McEvoy, 2013) televised from Jakarta, and referred to earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 7, highlight the value of bringing audiences and publics from different countries together in meaningful symmetrical dialogue. Such connections have never been easier with the internet, SKYPE and satellite TV. Utilisation of this technology in transnational education would see more interaction between Asian teachers and Australian teachers, onshore lecturers and Asian lecturers. Such a dialogue would enable educators to maximise learning opportunities with Asian learners in their classrooms. It would help to boost the confidence and self-respect of Asian teachers and diminish fear and scepticism about Western educational discourses. As Pang (2005, p. 194) points out, ‘The heightened consciousness of the need to co-exist in difference in
these treacherous times points to the direction of a new era of educational dialogue, multiple literacy, and mutual enrichment among civilisations’.

As proposed in Recommendation 4, interaction could take the form of dialogue between lecturers and teachers working side by side on transnational programmes or it could be managed through teleconferences and the use of technology. Equally it could be achieved by the formalisation of workshops and discussion groups on campuses and in schools between teachers and lecturers from different cultural backgrounds. This would not be an easy task as it is difficult enough to get secondary teachers and primary teachers from the same cultural background to cross over the boundaries of status and perceived expertise to engage in discussion, but with the right strategies in place it may be achievable. Also to be taken on board is the fact that second language capability does not necessarily equate with second culture capability and metacultural awareness, knowledge of Self and Other. It would be necessary to make sure all teachers and lecturers have access to knowledge about their own cultures and those of the Other before dialogue began. As noted by Tu (2001), there needs to be renovation of embedded heritage, not exodus from it, in order to become a global citizen with a cosmopolitan outlook. Furthermore, achieving a meaningful cross-cultural exchange between staff would require educational workplaces to be culturally diverse and have a concept of pluralism (Tu, 1991). This is often not the case in Australia, particularly in the private language school teaching sector, where marketing forces favour the employment of so-called ‘native’ speakers of the language especially if the language being taught is English.

8.9 Final remarks

Overall, the key to any kind of positive change in the way that Asian postgraduate students and their lecturers make meaning from their teaching and learning encounters has to lie in the fostering of mutual respect (Bowser et al., 2007, p. 678; Crichton & Scarino, 2007) and a willingness to take responsibility for developing multiple perspectives (Crichton & Scarino, 2007). As Tu (2001, pp 69-70) has noted, ‘Without equality, there would be no common ground for communication; without distinction, there would be no need to communicate’. There continues to be a conviction that
Australians will educate the future leaders of Asia, according to Tim Harcourt, a Fellow in Economics at the University of New South Wales and guest on Radio National (Soutphommasane, 2013). He did not mention Australia being educated by Asia, however.

This thesis finishes with the final reiteration that it is imperative that there be ongoing dialogue between Asia, Australia and the rest of the world on the subject of teaching and learning and the bigger context within which education lies. There needs to be greater understanding of each other’s world views for any positive change to take place in teaching and learning encounters and the meanings that are made from those encounters. As Wong suggests, ‘the first thing we have to do collectively is open our minds to this very different world’ (Soutphommasane, 2013). This can only be achieved by perpetual, informed focus and symmetrical dialogue. As Hamston (2000, p. 6) said, ‘Our values and our ways of seeing the world are never complete, finished; each individual’s ‘becomingness’ is open and dialogue keeps this process alive’.
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