

Us and Them: Exploring Internationalisation and  
International Postgraduate Student Identity at the  
University of Leeds

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores the phenomenon of internationalisation within higher education institutions in the UK and its various effects on the identity of the international postgraduate students at these institutions. The study briefly examines relevant literature and findings from previous studies discussing the topic of internationalisation, and dissects common terms within this field in order to bring awareness to the connotations of these socially constructed ideas. It then continues on to provide a description of the research performed, which focuses specifically on the experiences of international postgraduate students at the University of Leeds and their own perceived identities at the university. The methodology is discussed in detail, allowing insight into the exact processes of the research, as well as the motivations behind choosing these processes in particular in order to carry out the study. Various prominent themes that emerged from the conversations with the international postgraduate students are then discussed, and these themes are consistently linked back to the larger discussion of how the students' experiences continuously help them to mould their identity while studying at the University of Leeds. During the Discussion chapter of the dissertation, the researcher links the findings from the research to some of the literature, and also offers her own opinion as an international postgraduate student on a few of the themes discovered. While the dissertation is somewhat based in theory, many of the themes that arose from the discussions with the students draw awareness to a need for more practical methods to be taken by the university in order to improve the international postgraduate student experience at the University of Leeds, and to accommodate a more diversified international student body.

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## **KEY TERMS**

**IPGS** – International postgraduate student

**HE** – Higher education

**HEI** – Higher education institution

**PG** – Postgraduate

**UG** – Undergraduate

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“Internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization.”*

—Jane Knight (2004, p. 5)

This dissertation addresses issues of internationalisation within higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK on a small-scale basis, and aims to provide a better understanding of how the international postgraduate student (IPGS) perceives his or her own identity when analysed in the context of the UK university student life. As the primary researcher, I was drawn to this topic as it relates to my own experience as an IPGS at the University of Leeds, as I understood my own identity and connection to the university to be shifting constantly throughout the year spent in the programme. I felt that my position as a colleague amongst other IPGSs would allow me to better understand the issues being discussed, and would also provide a useful way of holding my own judgements and opinions up to the light for further questioning and personal analysis. I will be attempting to put forth the findings of the research in as objective a manner as possible; however, it is of importance to keep in mind that the goal of objectivity and the success in achieving that goal can vary greatly within research constructed by human design. Upon laying out certain themes that emerge through the data, I will thereafter provide my own perspective on the issues raised in the Discussion chapter of the dissertation.

I chose to focus on IPGSs in particular because, firstly, I could relate directly to the unique experiences they were undergoing while attending a HEI in the UK, which the data from this study show to differ significantly from the experiences of undergraduate students. Secondly, I was intrigued by the notion of IPGSs as more mature and fully-developed people than they might have been during their years as an undergraduate, and how this degree of maturity affected their time at the university. These IPGSs will also have had other experiences at other universities, usually in other countries, with which to compare their current situation as a student in the UK, and this will give them an additional perspective when considering their own identities in UK higher education (HE). Thirdly, I believe the length of time of study to be a highly significant factor as it relates to the identity of an IPGS, and for this reason it seemed important to me to find out how students felt the duration of their programme directly affected their experience. Finally, there appears to be a gap in the research when it comes specifically to postgraduate students; however, it is important to consider them as their own entity in order to address specific needs and concerns they have that may differ from those of undergraduate students.

It is the aim of this dissertation to provide insight into the individual experiences and expressed identities of a small group of IPGSs at the University of Leeds, and to relate what they have to say to findings from other studies focusing on internationalisation and the international student experience in the UK. I hope to be able to supplement the previous literature with the results of my study, and to

shed light on the aspects that are working nicely within the current system of how international students are addressed at the University of Leeds as well as the aspects that could possibly be reconsidered. During the Findings and Discussion chapters of the dissertation I will discuss common themes that emerge through the data, and in this way hope to provide an approach that is based both in theory and in practice for the future of internationalisation of HEIs. Due to the small size of the sample studied for this dissertation the findings cannot necessarily be applied to all IPGSs; however, it is my hope that by listening to and considering the opinions of these individual IPGSs administration staff of HEIs can more effectively analyse the overall repercussions of university policies with respect to international students.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Internationalisation of Higher Education

When considering the topic of internationalisation within HE, it is pertinent to get an understanding of some key terms in the discussion, and to problematise such terms so as not to simply accept them at face value. It would be useful to keep in mind that most of these terms, such as “internationalisation” and “international student”, have been constructed by society, and typically consist of a multitude of varied meanings and implicit assumptions about how society does, or should, function. While there are many terms within the realm of the internationalisation of HEIs that deserve “unpacking” and further analysis, for the purposes of this study I will be focusing on the terms *internationalisation*, *integration*, and *international student*, all of which I believe to be of central importance to the findings of the research.

### 2.2 Key Terms

#### 2.2.1 Internationalisation

Much of the current literature centring on the topic of internationalisation of HEIs is concerned with problematising certain ideas that we take for granted when engaging in discussions on internationalisation (De Vita & Case 2003; Ilieva, Beck & Waterstone 2014; Knight 2011; Stier 2004). Jonas Stier (2004), when discussing the concept of “internationalisation” within the context of HE, points out that although different cultures<sup>1</sup> have been coming into contact with one another ever since the existence of human beings, we still somehow consider the concept of internationalisation to be a phenomenon of recent times. This new conceptualisation of the idea of internationalisation, Stier (2004) argues, contains within it three implicit ideologies: idealism, whereby we assume that internationalisation is of benefit to everyone, instrumentalism, which focuses on the end goal of providing a large group of skilled workers to the global labour force, and educationalism, which argues that internationalisation automatically enriches the academic experience of every student. By challenging common conceptualisations of internationalisation, Stier (2004) allows his readers to understand that in taking the concept of internationalisation at face value, we blindly accept the ideologies that are packed into this single term without considering possible exceptions to these assumptions.

For the purposes of this dissertation I have chosen to incorporate the definition of internationalisation as “an ongoing process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight 2003, p. 2), and being “associated principally with an ethos of mutuality and practices geared at strengthening cooperation” (Kreber 2009,

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation the term “culture” will be used to describe an individual’s background more generally, while the term “nationality” will only be used in instances where the individual’s nation of origin is of particular relevance



pp. 2-3). I found this combined definition to suit this dissertation in particular because it stresses the motivations behind internationalisation as well as the benefits HEIs aim to achieve through its implementation. Noted amongst the many aims and benefits of internationalisation are: a curriculum that incorporates educational aspects from different cultural systems, the development of intercultural networks and relationships (Arthur & Flynn 2011), a more diversified educational experience for the home students (Hanassab & Tidwell 2002; McMurtrie 2011), and, as stated during a meeting of the International Association of Universities in 2000, a way of showing “commitment to international solidarity, human security...[helping] to build a climate of global peace” (Fielden 2011, p. 8).

When considering different ways in which to address the continued development of internationalisation, it seems helpful to analyse the approach taken by Ilieva, Beck, and Waterstone (2014), whose study examines practices of the internationalisation of HEIs in terms of the sustainability of those practices. The scholars analysed salient practices of internationalisation in order to view their long-term effects, and by this method they determined whether they understood the practices to be beneficial or detrimental to the goals of internationalisation. They concluded that practices which were seen as both “valuing diversity and mutuality/reciprocity” (2014, p. 883) were to be viewed as practices that should be continued in the future, and that practices which promoted “commercialisation, lack of awareness or understanding of internationalisation, and containment of diversity” (2014, p. 882) constituted unsustainable practices. Though their definition of the long-term goals of internationalisation may very well differ from others’, I have chosen their model to include in this dissertation because their goals match up with my own personal goals for the direction in which I would like to see internationalisation progress in the future.

### **2.2.2 Integration**

Within the discussion of internationalisation of HEIs it is common to encounter the word “integration” with reference to international students at these institutions. I agree with many of today’s scholars who suggest that in order for students and staff to fully reap the benefits of an international HEI, the university should promote an environment incorporating interaction between international and home students (de Wit 2011; Trahar & Hyland 2011); however, we must exercise caution when using the word “integration”, which carries connotations of efforts to combine separate factions in order to create a single homogenous group. Previous studies have discussed the dangers of attempting to integrate international students completely into a host country, and suggest that efforts to simply instruct international students on stereotypical behaviour in the host country denies them the opportunity to develop and co-construct innovative ways of interacting with other host and international students (Dervin & Layne 2012; Marginson 2014).

One of the more prominent discourses that emerges through discussion on internationalisation and integration presents the idea that a higher number of international students is equivalent to a greater degree of internationalisation on the part of the HEI. This is especially poignant in UK policies, as in

recent years the UK has enjoyed one of the highest global rankings as a destination for international students, and the increased flow of international students into the UK is a constant goal in order to maintain this status. However, as the study performed by Peacock and Harrison (2009) discovered, higher numbers of international students on campus often correlate with more instances of home students reporting feeling threatened, experiencing subversive competition, and constructing and perpetuating negative stereotypes with regard to the international students. Therefore, HEIs should not simply aim to increase the number of international student participation without taking into consideration how the numbers will affect the overall dynamic of the university population.

### **2.2.3 The International Student**

The label of “international student” is an intriguing one, as it is used all across HEIs around the world in a variety of different ways to address specific groups of students within the university. For example, the University of Leeds uses the label primarily in order to distinguish between those students who pay home fees and those who do not, and secondarily to provide supportive services to students who come from outside the UK to study at the university<sup>2</sup>. Even though the variation in use for the label of “international student” across HEIs can prove to be quite problematic, this labelling practice still continues within the HEIs as a simple way to address what the university sees as issues relating specifically to those students it deems “international”, whether those needs be sociocultural, academic, or psychological (Nancy 1997; Ward & Kennedy 1993). Altbach (1991) notes that there is a gap in the current literature when it comes to individual issues relating to international students, and points out that often times Western-oriented counselling services provided by the HEIs are ill equipped to address the specific health and psychological needs of many international students. This example demonstrates that as we look towards the future and as internationalisation of HE becomes an increasingly complex issue, the need may arise for a different approach in order to better address these issues without claiming to have a “one size fits all” remedy for all matters relating to international students.

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the fee structure at the University of Leeds is divided between Home/EU students and international students, while support services for “international students” are targeted towards any student who does not originally come from the UK (University of Leeds 2015)

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Methodology Description and Rationale

The methodology chosen to carry out the research consisted of discussions with IPGSs from the University of Leeds who were, at the time, in their first year of study. These discussions were held in the form of focus groups, comprised of four or more students, as well as through individual semi-structured interviews with students. The duration of the focus groups was promised to be under one hour, and ranged from thirty-three minutes to forty-nine minutes, depending on the strength of the discussion. The duration of the individual interviews lasted anywhere from thirteen minutes to thirty-one minutes, and this also depended on the strength of the discussion with the individual. Deciding whether a student would participate in a focus group or in their own semi-structured interview was based mostly upon the availability of the student in order to best accommodate their schedule; however, some students were sought after to participate in an individual interview due to my personal belief as a researcher that the student would be able to provide especially valuable insight on the topics being discussed.

Overall, three focus groups, consisting of four, five, and six students, respectively, and five semi-structured individual interviews were held, for a total of twenty students surveyed. The participants were all personal contacts who volunteered to attend the discussions, with no more than the promise of food, drink, and a “stimulating discussion” as incentives. As previously stated, this study *does not* claim to represent the population of IPGSs in their first year of study at the University of Leeds as a whole, due to the limited scope of students surveyed. Rather, the aim of this research was to speak more in-depth with a small number of students as to their personal experiences in order to extrapolate key findings and patterns within the spectrum of the twenty students surveyed. These findings are hopefully to be used as a starting point from which ways of improving the IPGS experience in UK HE can perhaps be sought with more success.

I made the decision to hold discussions with students because I felt the topics being discussed to be quite nuanced, and that they often required much more elaboration on the subject than a simple “yes” or “no” answer would allow. I also believed some of the questions being asked touched on potentially sensitive subjects for the students, and that the participants might be more willing to share their opinions in a discussion-based setting that could provide a safer and more personal environment, rather than having to explain themselves through another medium such as writing. I also believed that I was in a unique position as a researcher in that I was also, at the time, an IPGS at the University of Leeds in my first year of study, and I, therefore, considered the participants in my research to be my colleagues. This personal position was also significant in that it meant that I held my own opinions on the topics being discussed, and that I was able to identify and either support or disagree with the opinions voiced during the discussions based upon my own experience. Despite the fact that I held my own views on these issues, I made the attempt to speak as little as possible in

order to foster responses and discussion amongst the participants, and so as to interject my own opinions on the subject as few times as possible.

The students were each asked a series of thirteen questions during both the focus groups and the individual interviews, a list of which can be found in the Appendix section of the dissertation. The discussions began with more close-ended questions, asking for basic information about the students, their programme, and why they chose to study at the University of Leeds. The questions then became a bit more open-ended, inquiring as to the types of friendships made and how those relationships formed when they arrived at the university, and also problematising the idea of the “international student” label, asking students to elaborate on how comfortable (or uncomfortable) they felt being put into this category by the university. Towards the end of the discussion, the students were asked questions pertaining to the degree of connectivity they felt towards the university, followed by questions regarding the importance of the varied cultures and backgrounds of their colleagues and the role these factors played while building relationships. Finally, students were given the opportunity to address any issues regarding their experience as an IPGS at the University of Leeds that they felt should be discussed which were not covered in the discussion previously.

### **3.2 Transcript Formulation**

The transcripts of the focus groups and interviews were composed in a manner that attempted to capture what was said by the researcher and the participants in the truest sense. Filler words, such as “um”, “uh”, “like”, as well as words like “gonna” and “coulda” were included in the transcripts, as well as all instances of laughter, which most often indicated discomfort or agreement while discussing a particular topic. For the quotes used in the research analysis, however, I have opted for a “clean” transcription, whereby filler words are cut from the quotations and words like “gonna” have been traded for “going to”, for the sake of readability and a clear understanding of the participants’ message without the distraction of having to work around these words. In creating these clean transcriptions it is pertinent to note that I have only made changes where I believed it was necessary, and have made every attempt not to alter the meaning of what was said by the participants. For the sake of the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants’ names, and these pseudonyms are consistent throughout the research analysis as well as in the transcripts from the discussions, which can be found in the Appendix section of the dissertation. There were also instances of simultaneous speech by two or more of the participants, and in these cases asterisks (\*\*) were used to indicate the section of speech that was said at the same time as another section of speech. I felt that it was important to call attention to these occurrences of simultaneous speech because in most cases they seemed to indicate a more impassioned discussion of a certain topic amongst the participants.

### **3.3 Data Coding**

The interviews and focus groups comprised a total of 33,369 words, and three hours, forty minutes, and forty-two seconds of data. Through the collection of this data, my aim was to pick out key themes within the responses of the participants simply by noting how often the most common opinions were voiced. In order to organise and analyse the data collected through the interviews and focus groups, I coded the data by reading through each transcript and noting significant themes that arose within the discussion, and then tallying how often these themes arose in subsequent discussions. In this way, I was able to extrapolate many themes that were consistent across multiple discussions, while also being able to calculate the strength of the opinion by being able to see exactly how many students felt a particular way about an aspect of their time at the university. The participants were quite forthcoming with their views on the topics, which gave rise to a plethora of different themes that would take much more time and space than allotted here, so for the purposes of this dissertation I chose to discuss the themes that I discovered to have the most relevance to the topic of the identity of the IPGS in the UK.

### **3.4 Profile of Participants**

The twenty participants interviewed through the research process consisted of students from the following countries of origin: China (25%), Japan (20%), India (10%), Iran (5%), Italy (5%), Malaysia (5%), Poland (5%), Romania (5%), Saudi Arabia (5%), Slovenia (5%), Taiwan (5%), and USA (5%). Seventy per cent of the students were working to complete a Master of Arts degree (MA), twenty-five per cent were working towards a Master of Science degree (MSc), and five per cent were working towards a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD). Most of the students were studying in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies (55%), while others studied in the School of Design (10%), the School of Engineering (10%), the Leeds University Business School (5%), the School of Civil Engineering (5%), the School of Media and Communication (5%), the School of Mathematics (5%), and the School of Politics and International Studies (5%). Ninety per cent of the students interviewed were female, and ten per cent were male. With the exception of the student from the USA, none of the participants claimed to be native speakers<sup>3</sup> of the English language.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “native speaker” is one that is highly contested; however, for the purposes of this dissertation, it will be defined simply as a person who speaks English as his or her first language

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Motivations for Studying at the University of Leeds

To begin each discussion with the participants, I thought it pertinent to explore the reasoning and motivations behind these IPGS's decisions to come to study in the UK, and at the University of Leeds, in the first place. A full ninety per cent of the students mentioned the specific programme they were enrolled in at the university as their main motivation for coming to Leeds, forty-five per cent noted the university ranking, and thirty per cent simply wanted to study in the UK<sup>4</sup>. Other reasons mentioned frequently were the desire to improve their English, their wish to join family or friends who were already living in Leeds, and their efforts to improve their prospects in the future job market, as Romanian student Emilia remarks:

*“...it's the UK and it's a high standard all around the world. If you studied in the UK, then you must be good...People have this in mind, and you will not have a problem with English. They don't ask for an English certificate, and it's way easier.”*

Thus, the importance of the ranking of the university and the specific programmes within the university to these postgraduate students is apparent, as well as the idea that they are often keeping future employment opportunities in mind when making the decision to come to attend a university in the UK.

### 4.2 Desire for Interaction with UK students

Next, I sought to get an idea about the level of interaction and engagement with other students these IPGSs were hoping to achieve when they first arrived at the university. Ninety per cent of the students were hoping to build relationships particularly with students from the UK; however, fifty-six per cent of those students noted that this proved more difficult to do than they had hoped it would be. The intention of these students to interact with UK students almost always stemmed from a desire to gain a deeper understanding of British culture, lifestyle, and academics, while many also added their motivations to improve their English as another side benefit that could potentially be achieved through this interaction. In general, the students attributed this difficulty in forming connections with UK students to the feeling that the UK students were not as open to meeting international students as they would have hoped, as Chinese student Daiyu explains:

*“English people are very lazy here because they are in their own country, so they don't want to be changed. If they go to China, I'm sure they will change.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Most often in this section of the dissertation percentages will not “add up” to one-hundred, as students usually provided more than one answer to the questions

This remark gives insight into the notion that making friends from other nationalities can sometimes be challenging, and that it would often be much easier simply not to make the effort. This general feeling from my participants exactly reflects the findings from Peacock and Harrison's study (2009) which analysed the same phenomenon from the perspective of the UK students, in which those students also tended to stick with "what's easy". However, this conflict between an inner intellectual desire for intercultural communication and a more basic fear of putting oneself into an unknown situation applies to the international students as well, as Romanian student Emilia says:

*"I didn't really have the chance to meet UK students because in our small group there were no students from the UK. But, yeah, I kind of regret it. I also would like to improve my English...and also to know more about what life is like here."*

In this case, she recognises that interaction between international and UK students is something that needs to be supported from both sides, and she expresses regret at not having made more of an effort to pursue those relationships. A number of my participants noted having initial contact with UK students, but lamented that these relationships remained rather superficial throughout their time spent in the UK, a finding that correlates directly with the findings in multiple other previous studies (Urban & Palmer 2014; Montgomery & McDowell 2009).

#### **4.3 Desire for Interaction with Other International Students**

Eighty per cent of the participants expressed a strong desire to make connections with other international students upon arrival in the UK. These students mainly explained their aspirations to form these bonds as a way to learn about cultures which were different from their own, to help each other out with problems they were having while adjusting to life in the UK, and to support each other in the areas of academics and speaking English, mirroring the findings in the study performed by Montgomery and McDowell (2009). Many noted that, since all international students were going through a similar transition in adjusting to life in the UK, most would be willing to help others and to share the knowledge that they themselves were gaining by living there. Some students also came to the realisation that they did not require interaction with British students in order to achieve their goal of interacting in English, as Italian student Marta explains:

*"At first I tried not to have Italian friends, because I said probably I'm going to speak Italian. But then I realised that going out with Italian people and other international students was good, because in the end we were talking in English."*

While the clear majority of the participants specifically sought bonds with other international students, it may also be relevant to note that the twenty per cent of students who did *not* claim to have a strong desire to connect with other international students did not feel completely indifferent towards friendships of the international nature. On the contrary, for the most part they simply seemed to feel

that it did not suit them to seek out bonds based on the category of nationality, as USA student Amanda notes:

*“I didn’t really specifically, or not specifically, seek out international friends. I just kind of wanted to make friends.”*

Finally, twenty per cent of the students interviewed in separate interviews and focus groups were completely unprompted in saying that, although interaction with students from other countries could have led to potentially unsettling and confusing situations, they still consciously sought to put themselves into groups with different nationalities in order to achieve a certain degree of intercultural communication, as Slovenian student Mihael says:

*“...I joined couch surfing because I do like meeting people from other cultures, and exchanging information and viewpoints, and it’s definitely an interesting exercise when meeting people...I do like to put myself in that situation because it’s an interesting conversation to have.”*

This comment suggests a high level of perceptiveness and intuition when it comes to intercultural communication, such that the individual is aware of the factors at play in these situations, and deliberately aims to immerse himself within that context for the benefit of all those involved in the interaction. It may also be of interest to note that, while fifty-five per cent of the participants in this study belonged to the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies and were formally studying some form of intercultural communication, Mihael was a student pursuing a degree in Mathematics, yet still he considered intercultural communication to be a key aspect of his university experience.

Finally, fifteen per cent of students made unsolicited comments as to observations they had made about the changing relationships between students at the university over time, as Japanese student Noa remarks:

*“What I found interesting here is that in the first semester I saw so many international students trying to make friends with other international students whose backgrounds were really different from theirs...but in the second semester, I saw so many students always hanging out with same-nationality students...and I was wondering what happened to them here. They probably realised that it was a bit difficult always going out with international students whose backgrounds were totally different from theirs.”*

The fact that these students were able to perceive these subtle differences within the interaction between students with different nationalities, as well as their recognition of the mixing of cultural backgrounds within one’s social sphere as something inherently beneficial to all parties involved, suggests an increasing level of awareness about these issues in general. The feelings behind this



comment also suggest that building relationships with students from other cultural backgrounds may not be something that happens automatically, but which instead requires a degree of dedication from both sides of participants, possibly with help from the university.

#### 4.4 “International Student” Label

While many of the topics covered in this dissertation represent overarching themes that have been touched on by many previous studies, the question about the label of “international student” was designed with the intention of addressing a more nuanced issue within the university context, and to gain key insight into the perceived identity of the IPGS. During the discussions, the students were asked simply if they felt comfortable with the label of “international student” as used by the university, and were then invited to elaborate if they chose to do so. Without exception, every participant chose to elaborate on the reasoning behind their response to the question, yet the responses varied greatly across all participants. Exactly fifty per cent of the participants responded that they felt comfortable with this label, typically citing their “foreignness” as the only necessary requirement, as Chinese student Keung notes:

*“I’m quite comfortable being labelled ‘international student’ here, or at any university, because I’m pretty sure as long as I’m outside China studying I’m always going to be an international student.”*

Many of the students made comments concerning the different connotations that came with the label of “international student” at the university, including the benefits and the drawbacks of being categorised in this way. Among the benefits noted were the activities and amenities provided for international students, an increased level of “helpfulness” from the university staff, and a better ability to relate to other international students. However, many of the students who claimed to be quite comfortable being categorised as an “international student” expressed that they strongly disliked certain aspects that came alongside the label. Some of these connotations were specific, such as the increased university fees for international students, or the requirement to take pre-sessional English courses, but others were more general, as Chinese student Hua remarks:

*“I don’t really like this label, because I have the feeling that it separates the international students out from the local students. But I think the UK is a very multinational country, so I think both international students and local students should be treated equally...I feel that it separates us, so I dislike this label.”*

Hua’s comment draws attention to a perceived barrier that is automatically built between international and UK students by the mere label of “international student” by the university. This separation has most likely come about in order to facilitate communication between the university and its students, and in order to address particular needs of different students. As the data from my research suggest,

however, many of the students who are put into the “international” category by the university do not feel that the international services apply to them, and so perhaps it would be best for the university to re-evaluate how it categorises its students in order to help eliminate this barrier.

Forty-five per cent of the students claimed to identify with some aspects of the label of “international student”, but to feel that they did not believe themselves to fit unequivocally under this category. Most often these responses came from students who were from countries inside the EU, or other mainly English-speaking countries. These students usually claimed not to feel completely “international” because they already felt a degree of familiarity with certain aspects of life in the UK, as Slovenian student Mihael observes:

*“It’s interesting watching the international students from outside the EU versus international students from inside the EU...I had absolutely no problems regarding the whole administration part of international services...but I have a lot of friends [who are not from the EU] and they have a lot of problems... Yes, we’re all grouped under the ‘international students’ flag, but it’s quite a bit different.”*

This comment provides further insight on the difference between the concept of nation and culture, as it is more so the cultural background of these EU students (that they receive as a by-product of their nationalities) that helps them feel more at ease while transitioning into life in the UK.

Finally, five per cent of the participants interviewed claimed a complete disassociation with the term “international student”, citing their feelings that the events and advice aimed at these international students did not take important aspects of their culture into account. As Saudi Arabian student Nadia says:

*“...most of the time they don’t suit our culture, in my country...because in my country we are not accustomed to go on trips from the university with other international students. I mean, if I want to go on a trip with the university, I have to go with my husband.”*

These findings suggest the identity of the IPGS in the UK to be an extremely nuanced and dynamic phenomenon, constantly shifting and changing its meaning for each individual categorised in this way by the university. This is an important point for the research and will be discussed further in the Discussion section of the dissertation.

#### **4.5 Degree of Connectivity with the University**

With the exception of the single PhD student, all of the participants in this study were Masters students and would be completing their degree within one calendar year. For this reason, I was curious to find out the degree of connectivity that these students felt they were able to build with the

university in one year's time, as well as the impression of their time spent at the university that they would take away with them once they completed their degree. Responses to this question, once again, varied greatly, but there were a few key issues that kept arising with relation to how the students connected with (or disconnected from) the university that are worth mentioning here.

#### **4.5.1 Duration of Programme**

Overall, forty-five per cent of the students claimed to feel connected to the university, thirty-five per cent felt disconnected, and twenty per cent felt a level of connection somewhere in between the two extremes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, fifty-six per cent of those who did not feel a strong connection with the university cited the duration of their programme as the main reason for the way they felt, as Chinese student Keung notes:

*"I think being a Masters...student here we are more isolated, more alienated in a way, because for undergraduate students, they have three years here to make friends. But, for us, we usually just have one year...so whatever friends we make, we might just lose them after one year. So, I feel like the connection between people, and the connection between us and the school here is less."*

This comment reflects many students' feelings that their programme did not provide them with sufficient time to truly acclimate to life in Leeds, and that the bonds that they were able to make in a year resulted in more superficial relationships than meaningful ones.

#### **4.5.2 Academic Relationships**

Those students who claimed to feel a lesser degree of connection with the university often provided additional comments that gave insight as to what they *did* feel connected to at the university, and this usually included people they met along the way that helped these students feel anchored in some way to the university environment. While a few students mentioned the importance of the relationships they had built with their colleagues, twenty-five per cent of all the students interviewed mentioned the connections they had built with their advisors as one of the main tenants upon which they viewed their relationship with the university as a whole, as Chinese student Hua states:

*"I think I gained a lot of support from my supervisor. I can talk quite openly with him, and he's quite open-minded and always gives me some very useful suggestions."*

These findings tend to emphasise the overall importance of the relationships built through academic study with relation to how the IPGS views the university in general.

### 4.5.3 Accommodation

One aspect of postgraduate student life that seemed to significantly affect students' feelings of connection to the university was the importance of their accommodation and the flatmates with whom they resided. When asked what helped the students the most to make friends when they first arrived in Leeds, twenty-five per cent of the students mentioned their flatmates, as they were typically the students' first real contacts in Leeds. Also, as Japanese student Raiko explains, flatmates often provided a concrete support system for the students:

*"My close friends are...from flatmates. They are like family, and my older sister or mother."*

Another factor that consistently emerged within the discussion of accommodation was the nationality of the students' flatmates, and the notion that residing with students from different backgrounds helped them to gain a better understanding of other cultures. In addition, while most of the students interviewed who had hoped to establish relationships with students from the UK claimed not to be successful, the few who were able to do so attributed their positive interactions with UK students to their academic courses or to their accommodation. On the other hand, those who were put into an accommodation that was separated between UK and international students generally noticed this, and cited it as one of the most important changes that needed to be made in order to improve the international student experience as a whole, as Japanese student Miyu notes:

*"My accommodation is divided between international students and British students...I don't know why they divided it [that way]...in accommodation there's no point to divide them."*

Thus, these students generally considered their accommodation and their flatmates to be significant factors while creating a social circle in Leeds, and were quick to comment on whether or not they felt their personal experience had lived up to their expectations.

### 4.5.4 Marketisation Discourse

Ten per cent of the participants mentioned feelings of discomfort with regard to the university's attempts to connect with them, because they felt that these efforts were presented under the guise of creating a relationship between the university and the student, but that in reality these efforts were made in an attempt to promote a different agenda, as Malaysian student Hani says:

*"I feel a low attachment with University of Leeds...sometimes because I am studying business, that's why I think some campaign, or activities, or the slogan that they provide is a marketing skill (general laughter). So for me, it's just a business thing."*

This “marketisation discourse” has been previously identified by many scholars (Ilieva, Beck & Waterstone 2014; Robertson 2011; De Vita & Case 2003) whose studies proclaim that modern HEIs view the student as a client, and their education as a commodity to be bought and sold. This argument has considerable weight in the UK upon consideration that international students provide more than seven billion pounds annually to the UK economy, and that the HE department currently receives approximately one-eighth of its revenues from the tuition fees of international students (Universities UK 2014). As of 2014, nearly thirteen per cent of all the world’s international students were attending university in the UK, putting it only behind the US in top destinations for international students. These numbers are impressive, but the competition has only increased since then (Universities UK 2014). A combination of recent changes to visa requirements and tougher laws on immigration has contributed to a decline in the numbers of international students coming to the UK in recent years, and postgraduate courses have been affected the most as a consequence of these policies (Universities UK 2014).

While there is clearly significant economic motivation behind the promotion of international study in the UK, it seems important that these students feel themselves to be an incorporated member of society rather than a mere tuition check. I believe Dr Camille Kandiko Howson, research fellow at King’s College London and co-editor of the *Global Student Experience: An International and Comparative Analysis*, states it best in an article of *The Guardian* (2014) that claims that “international students need to be treated as people and learners, not numbers on a balance sheet.” She argues that HEIs should consider students as individuals, and their needs as specialised, in order to better create a more positive UK university experience for more international students. I believe that this approach will help to address the issue of increasing student connection with the university, which will, in turn, help to increase the overall appeal of coming to study in the UK for international students.

#### **4.5.5 Technology**

The final factor that will be discussed with relation to the levels of connection the students felt towards the university is that of technology. This topic was raised many times throughout the various discussions, and, interestingly enough, provided reasoning behind why students felt more connected to the university *and* why they felt less connected. On the positive side, some students felt that they could build and strengthen new friendships with the help of social media, and in particular, Facebook. These findings are supported by data from a study performed by Skinner (2010), which investigated the effects of using online forums and discovered them to be a source of support during the transition for international students. When asked what helped her most to make new friends in Leeds, Chinese student Hua remarks:

*“I think the first tool I can make use of is social networking, such as Facebook. And I can interact with people I see at the very beginning, and then interact online...Usually with these*

*people, I meet them in school or in some workshop, and then we become friends with each other on Facebook so we can exchange some opinions or ideas.”*

On the other hand, ten per cent of the students interviewed made unprompted comments as to the same negative experience they had had with regard to the university and technology. Namely, as Japanese student Ume says:

*“...sometimes if I go somewhere, to some office, to get some advice, sometimes I’m so disappointed by being told, ‘Oh, there is a website’, or, ‘Check [the] website’, or, ‘Keep [the] url’...They always say they put all [the] information on the internet, or website, but sometimes it’s not really helpful. I need some personal support.”*

The comments made by the students who felt this way point to an issue involving a very recent phenomenon as more and more information is being put on university websites, purportedly for the students’ benefit. While universities strive to improve their appearance on the internet and to make more information available to those involved with the university, this overload of information can potentially have the opposite effect of disillusionment for the students, eventually driving them elsewhere to seek more interpersonal advice.

#### **4.6 First Weeks in Leeds**

Another common theme that emerged throughout the various discussions was the significance of the first few weeks of university for creating bonds with other students. A few students cited their pre-session programmes as their first real opportunity for making lasting friendships in the UK. In addition, twenty per cent of the participants reported that certain “ice-breaker” events at the very beginning of the semester were helpful in getting to know many different people at one time, and most students in general expressed their desire for more of these events. As Indian student Eila says with regard to the student union:

*“They should have activities involved, because the first few weeks are very crucial when you get to know people, but it’s like automatically the walls are built...It would be nice because everyone has something to say, and everyone has something to contribute. But yeah, something, some event, like a competition, which is compulsory for everyone to participate. Something very small, but which breaks the [ice] and then you just start to talk.”*

Eila’s feelings mirror findings from Bartram’s study (2007) which discovered that international students expected the university staff members to provide a social support system for them, inclusive of university trips, social events, etcetera, so that they could help the students establish their social circles. Findings from Peacock and Harrison’s article (2009) which focused on UK students directly support this comment, and suggested that the UK students felt the universities were lacking in terms of the services and activities they provided to promote interaction between home and international

students. During the focus group, Eila's ideas gave rise to a lively brainstorming session among the participants of this particular focus group on possible events that could be planned for more effective interaction of future students.

#### **4.7 Overcoming Obstacles**

Perhaps more subtle than other themes, yet no less important, was the feeling that emerged of pride in the IPGS, achieved by overcoming something they perceived to be an obstacle. My participants realised that coming to live and attend university in a foreign country often leads to certain obstacles, yet while it seems to be most common to try to avoid such obstacles, some of the students articulated instances in which they gained pride and self-confidence by being able to cope with the issues and come out on top. Issues that caused problems for the participants ranged from issues with language, to issues of interpersonal strife, to issues with accommodation, but the feeling of accomplishment as the end result was the same in each case. Here, Saudi Arabian student Nadia tells the story of her initial predicament, saying:

*“One of the lecturers suspected that somebody helped me with my essay, because when I spoke with her, she noticed that my speech is not like my writing...Why do they think that because we are international students we can't write a good essay?”*

The comment made by this lecturer carries a very negative implication that the academic work of international students is typically expected to be subpar, and this connotation was immediately picked up by Nadia. While she was distraught by this, she did not let it discourage her; rather, her lecturer's remarks caused her to work even harder in order to prove that she did indeed deserve her academic achievements:

*“I am planning to send [the lecturer] an email after finishing to tell her that I got distinction on all my subjects...I got the highest marks in the exams...so nobody helped me with my exam.”*

This type of data from the focus groups suggests that the way the participants dealt with the problems with which they were presented throughout the year formed a crucial part of their overall identity as an IPGS.

#### **4.8 Changes Noted in Self**

With only one student as an exception, all of the participants interviewed through this study claimed to have noticed changes in themselves since coming to Leeds. In some cases these changes were small, such as gaining a few extra interests, but in other cases the changes were much more significant, exemplified by Iranian student Romi:

*"I can say that my self-confidence has improved a lot, I can really say that. And my English has improved, it's much, much better. The first month I came here, I really couldn't talk properly. Now, I can communicate, and I understand what people are saying, but I remember the first week in the kitchen my flatmates were talking and I was just like, "What are they talking about?" (laughs) I couldn't understand anything."*

This comment can be seen as a representation of forty per cent of the participants in this study who claimed to experience an increase in self-confidence and independence, many for whom it had developed alongside the students' growing confidence in their English-speaking abilities. The most common change noted by the students when reflecting on the past year, however, had nothing to do with English, nor was it related to academics. In fact, fifty per cent of the students reported a change in their tolerance and cultural awareness levels, and this seemed to stem mostly from close bonds that had formed with international students from other countries, as exemplified by a statement from Indian student Eila:

*"I have a really, really nice Iranian flatmate...A lot of things you learn about the people, their culture, the general notion which is created by the world and the media is just gone."*

Like Eila, some students chose to use such examples of friendships they had established with students from other countries in order to better illustrate how they came to their new sense of cultural tolerance and understanding, while others stated that this heightened awareness came merely from being surrounded by different cultures throughout their daily lives. Ten per cent of the participants continued on to make unprompted comments about new insight they had gained with regard to their own cultures, as Malaysian student Hani states:

*"You get to know more about yourself because others will ask you, 'Oh, what is the famous food in Malaysia?', and, 'What is your main culture?' So, normally when you are in your own country you won't think more about this, but when you come here you have to."*

It may be of interest to note that all those who professed to have gained this awareness and cultural tolerance over the past year appeared to express this idea with much pride and satisfaction.

#### **4.9 Comparison with Undergraduates**

One of the key components of this study was its target towards postgraduate students, and for that reason I aimed to find out how the students themselves differentiated their postgraduate experience at the University of Leeds from their previous experience as an undergraduate. When asked if they thought their time in the UK would have been different if they had come to complete an undergraduate degree, all of the students replied that they thought it would. *How* it would have been different, however, was the follow-up question that provided a much wider variety of answers. Sixty per cent of



the participants felt that it would have been better for them had they come to the UK to study during their undergraduate years, and all of those students claimed they believed that the additional two years of study would have allowed them to create more meaningful relationships with students from the UK, and to incorporate themselves more into British society, as Chinese student Luli remarks:

*“I would have been really happy to spend my undergraduate time here for three years, because I’m always slow for everything (laughs), slow to adapt myself to the life here. So, as soon as I realised I had begun to adapt myself to the life here, I was going to graduate soon! So, if I could have spent three years for undergraduate here, that would have been very helpful.”*

The two other most common reasons why students believed it would have been beneficial to have attended the University of Leeds during their undergraduate years included the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the academic system in the UK, and to have more time to improve their English-speaking abilities. It may be of significance here that once again the amount of time of the Masters programme has been viewed by the students as something that was actively stunting their development as a functioning member of society in the UK and at the university.

Forty per cent of the participants felt that they were glad not to have chosen to study at the University of Leeds during their undergraduate years, mostly citing their youth, vulnerability, and immaturity at the time, all of which would not have been helpful qualities for studying abroad. Many of the students who mentioned the idea of maturity also spoke about their cultural awareness and interaction with international students, and thought that as an undergraduate they may have been unprepared to tackle the additional challenges university presents while in attendance in a foreign country, as Indian student Dhara observes:

*“...I have been to seminars where there’s been both UG and PG<sup>5</sup> students. I have seen that UG students form a close group of their own, cracking jokes, laughing at others, making fun of the other international students. But, in this very same room, there have been PG students who have been more welcoming, talking to other international students, telling them, ‘This is generally how a seminar is organised, this is what you can expect’...So, after seeing that, I am more convinced it was a good decision to come in for PG and not for UG programmes.”*

This comment reflects Dhara’s insight and awareness of the divide between undergraduate and postgraduate students, and that she feels this divide to be a poignant aspect of university life for international students.

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<sup>5</sup> UG = undergraduate, PG = postgraduate

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Reasons for Coming to the UK**

When scrutinising aspects of the IPGS experience, I found through my research that it made sense to start at the beginning, with the motivations behind coming to study in the UK in the first place. The decision itself to obtain a postgraduate degree through study abroad should not be overlooked, as it represents a dedication to academic study beyond that of an undergraduate degree, as well as a motivation to obtain this degree in another country and culture. This important decision is also one which could be rationalised in countless ways by different students. By listening to these students' stories we can get a better understanding of certain trends in these motivations to study in the UK, and this may allow universities with the intent of improving the IPGS experience to better address the goals of these students.

By far, the most popular reasons for my participants' decision to continue their education at the University of Leeds included the desire to improve their English, to gain a better understanding of UK culture, and to gain more worldly knowledge as to other cultures and ways of life. Happily, most of the students who were interviewed felt that they were able to improve their English, and that they were satisfied with the amount of interaction they had had with other cultures, leading to further development of their cultural tolerance and understanding. The outlier in this group, then, is the students' interaction with UK students, and their knowledge about British culture. Many of the students who were interviewed expressed a desire to learn more about the people living in the UK and about British culture, but reported being unsatisfied with the extent to which this goal was achieved.

Stier (2003) notes that international students should be encouraged to interact with the host culture as much as possible, and that without this interaction the student loses much of the essence of the study abroad experience. One of the main reasons I chose to study in the UK was for the very same motivation of understanding more about British culture, as I felt that it would be a more fruitful experience if I were to study intercultural relations outside my own cultural comfort zone. I, too, felt the same frustration expressed by many of my participants, in that I was unable to form connections with UK students as quickly and easily as I would have liked. This came as a bit of a surprise, and in my case served to motivate me to find other, more enduring ways of forming bonds with these UK students. However, I feel that I had a bit of an advantage over many other international students in that I come from a country where English is the main language spoken, with many cultural overlaps which always helped to facilitate conversation. Without confidence in the spoken language, and without previous knowledge of British culture, the international student can easily be silenced and put on the periphery.

## 5.2 “International Student” Label

One of the central aims of this dissertation is to address issues pertaining to the label of “international student”, and how this label provided by the university matches up, or does not match up, with the way these international students perceive their own identity. The findings in this study indicate that only half of the participants labelled as “international students” by the university feel that they fit completely into this category, while the rest either claim not to fit the label, or to find themselves fitting only in certain aspects. Eva Hartmann’s warning that “research on higher education needs to overcome a methodological nationalism that has dominated the field of study so far” (2011, p. 2), should be heeded, as I believe that by labelling all students from other countries “international students” the university is glossing over the modern reality of a diversified and complex global system in which the boundaries of nation are becoming less and less relevant.

Another subtopic that continuously arose through the discussion of the label of “international student” was that of the different fees paid by the students. By looking through the lens of student fees, we find a drastic inconsistency with the way in which the University of Leeds uses the label of “international student”, in that students from outside the EU are required to pay significantly higher fees for their postgraduate programmes than students who come from inside the EU<sup>6</sup>. This has not gone unnoticed by the students, as evidence from my research suggests, and it is an area of contention that often causes frustration and disassociation with the university. If the university wishes to increase the involvement of postgraduate students, I believe that addressing the issue of student fees would be a good place to begin<sup>7</sup>; however, it is important to keep in mind that issues pertaining to tuition fees are typically dealt with at the national level and are not so easily addressed by a single university.

## 5.3 Duration of the Programme

The issue of the duration of study for Masters students is an interesting one, in that it is another issue that would be difficult to alter without a complete overhaul of the existing educational system in the UK. I do believe, however, that by looking at the specific complaints students have with regard to the one-year programme, the university can find ways to increase satisfaction without having to completely change the system. For example, many of my participants voiced their frustration with the length of the programme because they felt that it inhibited their abilities to incorporate themselves into the society of the university, and this could potentially be addressed by increasing compulsory university-wide activities, an idea which will be discussed in the following section of the “Discussion” chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> As of September 2015, Home/EU students will pay £5,500 in tuition for taught postgraduate programmes, while tuition for International Students will range from £14,000 to £17,750 for the same programmes (University of Leeds 2015)

<sup>7</sup> UK tuition fees for international students are amongst the highest in the world: only private universities in the US charge more for tuition (Fielden 2011)

#### 5.4 After the Interviews/Focus Groups

Although the discussions that were held provided valuable insight regarding the IPGS experience at the University of Leeds, one of the most significant aspects of this study to me as the researcher was what occurred directly *after* these discussions. Once the recording device was turned off, it was often the case that students would elaborate on a particular issue that was discussed, or would offer some personal insight that they did not choose to share while the formal session was taking place. What was discussed once the recording device was turned off was of great relevance and would have perhaps provided more candid insight into the issues than what was offered during the formal session, but what I believe to have been of more importance than the comments themselves is the fact that these students *chose* to continue talking about these topics even after they were no longer required to do so. To me, this indicated a general interest in these issues and a potential for similarly engaging discussions to take place in the future.

Also following the discussions, it was almost always the case that the students expressed their desire to hear how I would have personally responded to my own questions. Sometimes they asked to hear about my opinions on the subject in general, but more often they would have a specific question in mind to which they wanted an answer. This surprised me at first, but eventually I came to the realisation that having my participants turn my questions around on me was yet another indication that IPGSs have a vested interest in sharing and comparing their experiences with other students, and that perhaps a new awareness of these issues might spark curiosity as to how their views compare with the views of others. Many students, especially those from outside of the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, expressed their satisfaction with having discussed these topics, as they had not been accustomed to doing so previously and felt that it had yielded a fruitful conversation.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Limitations of the Study**

Overall, the study was conducted in a manner that was meant to reduce personal biases of the researcher as much as possible, and to promote a safe and comfortable environment in which participants could feel free to express their opinions on the topics discussed. However, some limitations inevitably presented themselves through the research process, and it can be useful to keep these limitations in mind when considering the findings of the research. To begin with, the topics discussed could be considered sensitive issues to many of the students, and for that reason it is difficult to conclude whether or not there were opinions that were left unsaid during the discussions, for fear of the repercussions for voicing that opinion. Unfortunately, these opinions that were potentially being left out may very well have been some of the most valuable to the research. It was also mentioned previously that the participants were all personal contacts, which means that I had had a previous relationship with each one, and many of them knew each other prior to the discussions. This could create a scenario in which one would be more careful about what one is saying about his or her experiences and friendships in Leeds; however, it could also potentially lead to increased divulgence of information due to the closer degree of intimacy between the participants themselves and the researcher.

Another notion that deserves mentioning is the fact that nearly all of the international students interviewed were participating in the discussions through the medium of a language which they were learning as an additional language to their mother tongue. This means that the students may have been unable to express their true feelings on a subject, they may have expressed an idea that was contrary to what they intended to express or they may have remained silent for fear of not being able to properly use the language to get their meaning across to the other participants. Finally, one must always consider the role one plays as a researcher, and the biases that inevitably infiltrate the research process as a result of the approach taken to the research. This is especially significant in this particular case due to the fact that I consider myself to be a peer amongst the participants in the study, and devised the set of questions based upon topics about which I already held strong convictions. I made every attempt not to make these biases visible to the other participants, but there is always the chance that my own feelings may have swayed the opinions of others without my intending to do so.

### **6.2 Looking Ahead**

As HEIs look towards the future of their institutions and of internationalisation, I would like to reiterate the importance of the idea of sustainability within practices of internationalisation as put forth in the study by Ilieva, Beck, and Waterstone (2014). If the goal of internationalisation of HEIs does indeed reflect the feelings of the International Association of Universities of 2000 in that it aims “to build a

climate of global peace” (Fielden 2011, p. 8), then surely incorporating the idea of sustainability can help determine which practices are to be continued in order to continue towards that goal, and which practices would be best left behind. Through my research I was able to get a glimpse into the experiences of just a handful of IPGSs, and yet I came to understand that the only way to achieve HEIs which successfully implement the sustainable and beneficial processes of internationalisation is to allow this student voice to be heard. These IPGSs will continue to hark back to lessons learned while interacting in such a multicultural environment as a university all their lives, and I believe it to be essential that they come away from their studies with the skills required not only to engage with diversity, but to learn and grow from it as well.

The background research on the subject of internationalisation, alongside my own findings, presents a picture of a system that is functioning but flawed. However, I believe that continued conversation with international students pertaining to their particular experiences as IPGSs would provide an effective method for keeping the communication open and the systems flexible. As I have attempted to explain through this dissertation, internationalisation of HEIs is a complex and multi-faceted process that will not be implemented successfully through a “one size fits all” approach, but which must continuously be examined and negotiated as global patterns shift and bring about IPGSs with increasingly diverse backgrounds. I believe that if HEIs keep their long-term goals in mind and maintain a policy of open communication with their IPGSs they will have greater success with the results of their institution’s processes of internationalisation in the future.

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# **APPENDICES**

## Discussion Questions

1. Please state your name, your home country, and your area of study at the University of Leeds.
2. Why did you choose to study at the University of Leeds?
3. How important was it to you to try to establish relationships with students from the UK?
4. How important was it to you to try to establish relationships with other international students?
5. What do you like to do in your spare time, and with whom?
6. What has helped the most in making new friends here in Leeds?
7. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since coming to Leeds?
8. How do you feel about the label of "international student"? Do you believe that you fit neatly into this category?
9. Do you feel that the university has provided the right kind of support for you as an international student adjusting to life in Leeds?
10. How connected to the university do you feel as a student?
11. How do you think your experience would have been different if you had been attending the university to complete your undergraduate degree?
12. How often does the conversation topic of "differences between cultures" come up when talking to someone from another culture?
13. Is there anything else about your experience as an international postgraduate student at the University of Leeds that you would like to share that has not been covered?

**Transcript from Focus Group #1**

**Participants (in order of appearance): Marta, Jiao, Amanda, and Lan**

**June 29, 2015 at 14:00, The Treehouse (student union)**

**Duration: 33 min 18 sec**

**(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So, I'm just going to have you start by, um, please just say your full name, your home country, and what you study here at Leeds.

**Marta:** Okay, I'm Marta, I'm from Italy, and, uh, I'm studying the, at the MAPLIS course.

**Jiao:** Uh, I'm Jiao, and I'm from Taiwan, and I'm studying MAPLIS.

**Amanda:** I'm Amanda, I'm from the U.S, and I study Advanced Textiles.

**Lan:** I'm Lan, I'm from China, I'm also studying on the MAPLIS course.

**Interviewer:** All right, thanks guys. Um, next question, pretty broad. Why did you choose to study at University of Leeds?

**Marta:** I decided to study at the University of Leeds because this course, it's, uh, quite unique. And, uh, it combines a lot of different models like translation and linguistics.

**Jiao:** Uh, I chose this because the programme is really interesting. I've never seen the courses at any other university, so, that's why I chose it.

**Amanda:** Uh, it was recommended to me to go here, uh, by a company that I used to intern for, um, they have a really nice programme and a lot of really great facilities, which are difficult to find in the States. Uh, so that's why I chose to come to Leeds.

**Lan:** Well, um, basically my reason is also the same with the previous two (laughing) MAPLIS students, but, um, the other thing is that because of the city itself, because it's a, uh, kind of city not a small village or town something which would make, um, life more easier. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Great. Okay, um next question. How important was it to you to try to establish relationships with UK students?

**Marta:** At first it was very important (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Marta:** But I guess I, I tried to have British friends. But then I realised it was, it was not like necessary (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Okay. \*So\*...

**Marta:** \*So\*...

**Interviewer:** ...it became less important \*over time\*?

**Marta:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (To Jiao:) \*Jiao\*?

**Jiao:** \*So\*, uh, at first I thought it's really important to, like, meet them, and get into the lifestyle here, but uh, as time passed I think that it's also good to meet other international students, not student, not only students from, in UK. \*So\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** ...yeah I think it's going to be getting less important.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (general laughter)

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Amanda?

**Amanda:** Um, I guess coming to the UK I wanted to really learn about the culture here. I didn't expect it to be much different from the States, which it kind of isn't. But (laughs) it kind of is in ways I guess, but um, so, I guess it was kind of important to me, but it wasn't something that I was specifically looking out for.

**Interviewer:** Okay, right. (To Lan:) Lan?

**Lan:** Yes, um. I don't think, um, like, mm, I don't think I'm looking for like specifically British friends. And, uh, actually as a matter of fact, er, it's a kind of difficult to, how to establish...to establish a friendship with them, because they already have a, uh, life here.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. (general assent)

**Lan:** So, um, yeah it's also, and I realise that it's also a, how to say, (laughs) it's not only being friend with, like, British students or something, there is a lot of other interesting people out there who's not from Britain, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So do you guys think that it became less important, maybe because you realise that it was, it would be a lot of effort? Or, more effort than you would've thought?

**Amanda:** I think that it became less important because I just met more international students than I did British students.

**Interviewer:** Right. (general assent)

**Amanda:** Just, kind of became friends with them instead (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Same circles, and \*everything.\*

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Interesting. Um, all right, uh, same kind of question. How important was it to you to try and establish relationships with international students?

**Marta:** At first I tried, like, uh, not to have Italian friends.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Marta:** Because I said probably I am going to speak Italian (laughs). But then I realised that, uh, going out with Italian people and other international students, it was good because in the end we, we were talking in English. So.

**Interviewer:** You were?

**Marta:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh wow. Okay.

**Marta:** So, it was not, like, um, something that I expected (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So you just made a conscious choice to do that?

**Marta:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's really interesting.

**Marta:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Okay, cool.

**Jiao:** I think it's really good to meet international students because they have different backgrounds with you, so you can learn many different things and it's interesting to know all different cultures.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Yeah, I think it's also important because, um, like, now most of my friends, like very close friends, are international students, who share the same experience and, in UK, I guess, the background of UK, like bec...because we are all non-UK, \*so\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Lan:** ...this kind of establish a foundation for our friendship I think, maybe.

**Interviewer:** So that you're all going through this new experience together? And like, binds you together a bit?

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Yes. Kind of. (general assent)

**Interviewer:** Okay.

(interruption to check recording)

**Interviewer:** (To Amanda:) Um, did you have something you wanted to add?

**Amanda:** Not really, I didn't really come, I didn't really specifically s..., or not specifically, seek out international friends. \*I just\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Amanda:** ...kind of wanted to make friends.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, in general. (general laughter) Yeah, I got you. Um, all right. What do you like to do in your spare time, and with whom?

**Amanda:** Drink...with my American friend. (general laughter)

**Interviewer:** \*Anything else\*?

**Jiao:** \*Uh, I like to\* explore, the different, uh, cities, and like countryside of the UK because \*it's really\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** ...really different from Taiwan. \*So\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Oh, cool\*.

**Jiao:** ...it's really pretty here. \*And\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Jiao:** ...yeah I'm gonna miss it. (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Yeah. \*So\*...

**Jiao:** \*Yeah.\*

**Interviewer:** ...exploring the UK?

**Jiao:** Yeah, exploring, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Awesome.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Anyone else?

**Jiao:** (unintelligible), and, uh, listening to music, going to the gym.

**Interviewer:** Okay, sounds good.

**Lan:** Basically the same, like, going to the gym, and, um, eating out, or cook at home with friends, um, and travelling as well.

**Interviewer:** Nice, nice. Good stuff. Uh, let's see. What has helped you the most in adjusting and making new friends in Leeds? Has anything stood out to help?

**Amanda:** The societies, I think. Um, when I came I joined CathSoc, and then eventually Real Ale, and that helped a lot to make new friends, to have, like, that kind of opportunity to meet people that are into the same kind of things as you are.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** Um, besides in your course, I think.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** And I think that the, like, introduction days that we had at the beginning of the course also helped a lot to get to know the people on my \*course\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Amanda:** ...as well.

**Lan:** Well, in our cases I don't really think that our c...course help us a lot in that way (laughing), like in integrating all the people together. But, yes I agree with the society, 'cause I remember I went to a kind of party of a Japanese society where I met a lot of both Japanese friends and other people who do speak Japanese.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** So, um, it's a very good, how to say it, commonplace \*where\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Lan:** ...we can meet common people with us. Yeah (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Great, yeah.

**Jiao:** Yeah, I think there's a lot of activities that the school provide us, because I've joined a few trip to, like, travelling to other place, but it's, uh, organised by the union. And you can meet, like, new peoples, and, at the same time you can also see the new scenes, and travel around. So I think it's really good.

**Lan:** Yeah, I, I've also like, um, signed up for these kind of trips...

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Lan:** ...for several times. But at the end I found that we just stuck with the people \*we\*...

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*.

**Lan:** ...went to. (general assent and laughter) Instead of, like, meeting new friend, making new friends.

**Interviewer:** \*So once you, you go to\*...

**Amanda:** \*Yeah, I'd go to\*...oh, sorry.

**Interviewer:** No, you go. (general laughter)

**Amanda:** Yeah I had the same experience with, um, going to Liverpool, and Chatsworth House, are the ones that I did, and then, I did one to the Yorkshire Sculpture Garden, but that was with the School of Design, and I didn't know anyone, I just kinda decided I would go. So, because of that, I kind of made friends, but, \*I mean\*...

**Lan:** \*Mhm\*.

**Amanda:** ...if you go with some people that \*you know\*...

**Lan:** \*Yeah\*.

**Amanda:** ...I think you're just gonna stick with the people that you know.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** Or that was at least my experience.

**Marta:** I think the ice break session is very good, like she said. And, uh, also in my case the, the Language Centre was quite good because I met other people like doing the Italian classes or Spanish, (unintelligible) wide variety of, uh, modules that you can join and you can meet other people, because the MAPLIS course is quite close. So I think we would know just fourteen people at the end. (general assent)

**Interviewer:** Right, okay. Good, um. Uh, have you noticed any changes in yourself since coming to Leeds? Either in your, the way you think or, in your behaviour? (silence, then laughter) If not, that's okay! (general laughter)

**Jiao:** I think I've become more independent, because in Taiwan, like, the teachers push you really hard.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Jiao:** So like, there's every, like, deadline for everything, so you just have to stick to the deadline. It's like somebody's pushing you, but in here it's just, you have to make your own schedule, and time managing is really important (laughing). \*So\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** ...yeah I think I've become more independent. Like time managing, and, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Anyone else? Anyone notice any changes?

**Marta:** More independent, too.

**Interviewer:** Also more \*independent\*?

**Marta:** \*Yeah\*, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you think that's a good thing?

**Jiao:** Yeah, (general assent) it's a good thing.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay. (To Amanda and Lan:) Do you guys feel any different?

**Lan:** Yes, I, I feel actually changed in a lot of ways.

**Interviewer:** Oh, really? (general laughter) So you're holding out! (more laughter)

**Lan:** Well, I'm (laughs), I can't give, like a really, how to say it, explicit example, but, um, I felt, yes, I became more independent, and, um, and in, also in the way I'm socialising, I guess. \*Cause\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Lan:** ...um, the way people, like, um, socialise here is pretty different from China.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Lan:** And, um, you just need to, I don't know. Um, for example they don't, um, tend to say something very serious, I cannot say that they are, say, rubbish, but... (general laughter) but it's a way, it's a kind of way of socialising, I guess. And, um, I feel more, like, confident and comfortable to get in touch with people, um, who I don't, who I'm not familiar with.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Lan:** I think I'm, like, I'm more skilful in that way...

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Lan:** ...than I used to be. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Interesting, yeah. Nice.

**Marta:** Apart from that I also realised like, uh, in the way of dealing with problems. Because in Italy, we, we are with our family until thirty years old because we don't have a job and (laughing)so it's...

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Marta:** ...it's quite difficult. But now that I am living by my own, it's, uh, it's better. \*I think it\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Marta:** ...yeah. I'm more independent, yes.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. (To Amanda:) Do you feel any different?

**Amanda:** (laughing) I feel totally different.



**Interviewer:** Do you?

**Amanda:** Yeah. I, I don't know. It's, it's been a learning process this entire time, um, in so many different ways I can't really put my finger on it. It's just, I feel like a completely different person. I mean I never really expected to live outside of the States, either, and then learning about the s...really, what I find to be subtle, culture differences, um, and how to, um, (to Marta:) it's kind of like what you said, how to, like, deal with problems and stuff. I find I'm a much quieter person now. Like, I, I, I'm a bit more reserved because I don't wanna offend anyone. \*You know\*? (laughs)

**Interviewer:** \*Oh, really\*?

**Amanda:** Yeah, it's, I mean, I, and I find that, um, I mean, um, being a bit more quiet too gives you a bit more time to, like, reflect on everything, and just, I don't know, I guess I've grown in that kind of way.

**Interviewer:** So, it's not necessarily a bad thing, that you feel like you're afraid to offend anybody, \*or\*...?

**Amanda:** \*Well\*, I mean it's not that I'm afraid to offend anyone, it's just that, um.

**Lan:** Awareness of culture?

**Amanda:** Yeah, I guess it's just more of, like, \*an awareness\*.

**Lan:** \*I felt the same way\*.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** You don't wanna tread on anybody's toes, or anything. (noises of dissent) Or you're just, just more aware of what's going on?

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*.

**Lan:** \*Yes\*. Yes, because, um, red...um, I don't know for me it's, um, they're not too many, like, Islamic, um, people...should I say that? (general assent) Islamic people in China. But here, we see a lot of them, and, uh, you see how they, they practise their religions, and I literally see, like, one or two girls in library, or in the, in the Parkinson building, they were doing the preach...praying I think? \*Um\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Lan:** ...just, right in the public. Um, because they have to do so, according to the religion. So I guess they're quite religious in this way, and, uh, and, uh, when you see...when you're seeing those, um, how to say it, those news and everything around Islamic and since they always tend to relate them to the terrorism, but, um, but when you really get down to know this person, it's, it's not, totally different things. But in the other way you don't want to, like, you have to be very aware of your, word...words, saying and actions, to not relate them into the, like, media discourses. So, um, yes, \*I guess\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Lan:** ...I'm more aware in this sense.

**Interviewer:** So it's not... (to Amanda:) Go ahead, go ahead.

**Amanda:** Sorry, I was gonna say, I think it's like seeing bigger picture things, like instead of your narrow view of, this is what I know, it's more like you're more open to, um, different ideas I guess, maybe, and instead of, I don't know where I'm going with that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** (unintelligible) end my sentence. (laughs)

**Interviewer:** So it's not just like, being aware of UK culture but since we're in a university it's also, like, the international culture as well? (general assent)

**Marta:** What I like is that, because in Italy, for example I come from Sicily, so imagine you go to university and there are just Italian and Sicilian people, so you don't really have, like, the feeling of international students. There are some people, like, in ERASMUS but you, it's just for six months and then they go, so. You have, like, the full picture, as you said. And there are different cultures and the regions and...

**Interviewer:** Yeah. You think being here for a longer time and being here for a year also affects that?

**Amanda:** Definitely. (general assent) Definitely. I see, I have a lot of friends in my undergrad, um, and still that are in undergrad at my old university that go on study abroad, which is anywhere from, like, four to six months. And, you can kind of get a glimpse of a place for that amount of time, but then you're also travelling to other places, and trying to see as much as you possibly can, (general assent) and even staying here for a year, I feel like I only know a tiny little bit (general assent). Like, I, yeah, I get to know Leeds better than somebody else who's only staying here for a few months would, but at the same time, there's so much more, and I wouldn't...you wouldn't know everything unless you live here for years and years, you know? (general assent) But...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** ...I definitely think there's a difference...I think it's kind of a substantial difference between staying here for just half a year to a year, definitely think so.

**Interviewer:** I definitely agree with you. (general assent) Uh, great. Um, how do you feel about the label of "international student" from university? Do you feel like you fit neatly, nicely, into this category, or do you feel like it doesn't really apply to you?

**Amanda:** In some ways I think it applies and in some ways it doesn't, because I find that coming from an English-speaking country, um, just that alone kind of, almost, alienates me from that category because I don't have to, um, take advantage of a lot of the international student services that they have.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Amanda:** It's mostly just like, if I wanna get my CV looked at, or if I have a problem with my visa. Like that's pretty much it. \*Other\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Amanda:** ...than that, it's more geared towards students that come from non-native English speaking countries.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** I find.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** So it's kinda like half and half, \*I guess\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Anything \*else\*?

**Marta:** \*For me\*, it's the same, because in my case, we are from (unintelligible) like British and European \*countries\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Marta:** So I don't know. Sometimes, I can feel like I am international, but, yeah, it's often \*not the case\*.

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** I think I just fit in with the international (general laughter), yeah. Because, and also the school have a lot of, like, um, activity service for international \*students\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** So, I think it's good to, like, fit in \*myself\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Sure\*.

**Jiao:** ...into this category. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you go to these activities?

**Jiao:** Uh, sometimes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. (general laughter)

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** Like the Global Café stuff? \*Have you\*...

**Jiao:** \*Yeah\*.

**Amanda:** ...done that?

**Jiao:** Uh, I think once.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Jiao:** Yeah. (general assent) \*I think\*...

**Marta:** \*It's quite nice\*. (laughs)

**Jiao:** ...I've been to one of the term. (general assent and laughter)

**Interviewer:** I went once by myself in the very beginning, and I was so overwhelmed, just because there were, just big groups, and I kind of just turned around and left. (general laughter) So...

**Amanda:** I definitely did the same thing. Honestly. (more laughter) \*I was like, this is intimidating\*.

**Interviewer:** \*I was like, I wanted to\*, uh, okay. (more laughter) So, I feel like that's probably, you know, wha...what you were saying about, like, sticking with your group...

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...no matter what. Even if you're going with the intent of meeting people.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Um, (to Lan:) how about you, Lan?

**Lan:** Um, I think I fit in namely (laughs) but, but in the other sense like, I just feel like I am, I'm no... I feel like I'm approached, um, by other people as Chinese student more than international student.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh, really?

**Amanda:** \*Yeah, (unintelligible)\*.

**Lan:** \*Because there are\* so many Chinese students on the campus, and I don't really feel the international thing.

**Interviewer:** You feel like \*it's a different level\*.

**Lan:** \*How, yes\*. Like um, yeah, \*like, like\*...

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*, sorry.

**Lan:** I don't know. I don't know how to say that.

**Amanda:** Is it because there's just so many Chinese students? Like, you've, you, um, is that why, I guess? Like, 'cause you would be, like, with them instead of, like, a whole mix of people, or...?

**Lan:** Mmm...it's, um, how can I say that? It's may...probably, this, there, this is the one, one of the reasons.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Because we are, there are too many, so we're kind of, like, identified or labelled as Chinese students.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** Rather than international students.

**Interviewer:** Mmm.

**Lan:** And, uh, on, on the other side I think Chinese students themselves as a group is also quite exclusive in, in themselves. 'Cause they seldom, like, socialise with other student...other international students, which is a, uh, quite, how to say, substantial phenomenon, \*I, I guess\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*. So you think it goes both ways?

**Lan:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. Great. Um, do you feel the university has provided the right kind of support, and enough support, as an international student adjusting to life in Leeds? Um, did it start out good, end badly? Vice versa? What do you think? Have you felt supported here?

**Marta:** I think so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah?

**Marta:** Yeah. Even from the union. Because there are many, many events, so, you can do everything you want, \*I think\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Marta:** Yeah, \*it's good\*.

**Interviewer:** \*And if you\* have a problem, you feel like you can...

**Marta:** You can go there, yeah, they will listen to you.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Amanda:** I had a really difficult time the first, like couple of weeks, I think. Um, even just moving in was really difficult. Um, because there was almost no information given to me about how to move into my accommodation, and living in Grayson Heights. And, the cab driver didn't know where the building was, there was no, like, university representative or anything there, or, I mean there was at the airport and they gave me a nice little packet and everything, but th...that didn't help me get to my room. (general laughter) Uh, I literally walked around the entire block with my huge bags because I didn't know where I was going. Um, and for the next few weeks there I found it kind of difficult, but, after those first couple, or thr...like two to three weeks, I found it a lot better, and now I find it just fine. I think that the university gives me, you know, the support that I need if I need it. Um, I think it just really, they really should try and ramp up that first couple of weeks. Like I get that they have international students' week \*and everything\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Amanda:** ...but it doesn't help unless you're on campus.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** So.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I see what \*you mean\*.

**Lan:** \*Yeah, I had\*, I had a very difficult time, um, and, th...in the first week as well, because some of my documents are missing for the, um, enrolment and \*administration things\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Lan:** And they are really, really restrict, restrict on the, how to say, on the steps which you need to go through, like if you don't have those documents you just cannot do anything. You cannot apply for the student cards, you cannot (general assent), just basically anything. And, uh, and there is nothing we can do about it. I have also contacted with, um, our supervisor, course supervisor, and, uh, the international student office, as well, and, uh, they, they just say, they say that this is our regulation. So, um, so I have noth...I can do nothing by then, and just to wait for my documents to come. So, um, yes. Maybe that's also the, because of this is the first impression I got from University of Leeds, so I don't felt really supported by, by the school.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So, after that did it get better, or do you feel like \*you\*...

**Lan:** \*Ehhmm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...didn't need the support anymore \*as much\*.

**Lan:** \*After\*, (laughs) after, after, I, um, mm, how can I, hmm, good question. (general laughter) After that, um, I still, I feel that I can, I can do things, I, I think even on a campus you need to, like, take the initiative, rather than, like, wait to be helped.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Lan:** Because they just don't, they don't come to you if, because you are international students, only if when you say "Help! Help!", (laughs) they will probably do something for you.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Lan:** And, um, I think, um, th...the good thing is that when you reach them, they will try to help.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** But the thing is that, um, for, probably for the new coming students, they don't know where they should turn to when they, they come to problems. So, they just don't say, they, they won't say "Help! Help!" (laughs) So their problems remained unsolved, I guess.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. (general assent). I see. So more reaching out?

**Lan:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Mokay, good. Um, okay. Uh, how connected to the university do you feel as a student? Do you feel like a University of Leeds student? Do you not, for some reason? How connected do you feel?

**Marta:** I don't know. At first it was difficult. Because our course is very, like, fourteen people, and, uh, I spend a lot of time at the libraries during the exam and I felt like they know all, they all knew each other.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Marta:** Because they, they spent a lot of time in (unintelligible) and British students, for them it's easier, like, uh, yeah, to get connected with the university and this place as well.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Marta:** So, at first it was difficult. It was better, like, uh, even now I feel more connected with the university. But still, it's not like, uh, Leeds Uni! Leeds Uni! (laughs) \*Like, uh\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Super proud\*?

**Marta:** ...yeah, super pride.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah, yeah. Anyone else?

**Jiao:** Um, I think it's similar to, uh, Marta. I think it's, um, I don't really feel like, I mean I study here, and all things, but I just, like, don't go out and say that, "Oh I'm from Leeds and, University", and yeah I don't know why but (laughs) I just feel that way, so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Jiao:** Yeah. \*Not\*...

**Interviewer:** \*So you feel\* like you're here but not, \*necessarily\*...

**Jiao:** \*Like\*, yeah. Not like, I'm with this group.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Jiao:** But, I'm here, but, yeah, not belongs to th...the group, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** I think I'd say I feel more like a textile student than a University of Leeds student. Like it's, it, which sounds weird I guess but, um, I don't know. It's, it's just different I guess.

**Interviewer:** That's the group that you feel like you belong to more than...

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...the university as a whole?

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** No, that makes sense.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Lan:** Yeah, it's the same to me.

**Interviewer:** Yeah?

**Lan:** Yes. I don't really, like, um, like, want to (laughs) not bolster but,(unintelligible) into Leeds, or something.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay, cool. Okay, just three more questions.

(interruption to check recording)

**Interviewer:** All right. Um, so this one's a little bit different. So, how do you think your experience would have been different if you had been at the university to complete your undergraduate degree? So you would be younger, and spending more time here, I guess. How do you think it would be different?

**Marta:** I think in my case, I think it would be better (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Better, \*yeah\*?

**Marta:** \*Yes\*, because I think if I had more time, I would probably have the chance to join our, like, uh, societies or clubs and, uh, manage, managing my time better, and...

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Marta:** ...have more friends, I guess. Because you have four years of your life, and I think, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So just the, the longer duration would be good?

**Marta:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay.

**Jiao:** I think it would be better because I would be, like, more well-prepared, because the system is, like, totally different from Taiwan. It's like totally different place. Quite. So I have hard time adjusting to it. So, I think if I have, like, more time, then I would be, like, more prepared.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Jiao:** Yeah, so, like I'm studying now, I'm like, thinking I'm like, jumping the levels, like I shouldn't, uh, I'm not able, I'm not prepared enough to, like, be here now. So, like, I feel like if I have, like study here for undergraduate, I would be more prepared and used to the systems. \*And\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Jiao:** ...yeah, it would be better.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** I definitely agree with that, be more prepared for, you know, the differences between, um, the systems and everything like that. Um, and think that, as far as, like, the university goes, that the undergrads definitely get a lot of support as compared to postgrads. Which I understand as a postgrad you don't necessarily need the same kind of support (general laughter), you know this is not my first time away from home, or anything like that. It's, 'cause I lived in a different city, when I went to, um, when I did my undergrad. Um, but there's different kind of support that you need as an international student than you would as an undergrad, I guess you could say.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** Um, I don't if it would have been necessarily beneficial, like, if I would've, if I, I don't think I would wish that I...let me start that over. I don't wish I had done my undergrad here.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Amanda:** Um, but I could see where it would've helped.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, fair enough.

**Lan:** Yeah, besides I think, um, uh, maybe one would be more adaptable, or, uh, to, to a new, to a new circumstances when he or she is younger. \*Because\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mkay\*.

**Lan:** ...um, some of, some of, um, the ways of our thinking and your, uh, perception expectations of the world has already, how to say, um, settle down.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** In, in our age. Well, in my case. (general laughter)

**Interviewer:** In our old age. (more laughter)

**Lan:** And, and, um, yes I th...I think, um, an...and also, um, in terms of the language...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** ...um, it is also a big challenge for international students, so, um, definitely spending more time here you would, I, I think you would feel better...

**Interviewer:** Okay.



**Lan:** ...than the postgraduate.

**Interviewer:** Right. Okay. Interesting.

**Marta:** And also the undergrad, sorry...

**Interviewer:** Please.

**Marta:** ...the undergraduate students, I think they have more time. So, (general assent) at the beginning I think it would be better for us (general assent), because we have to adjust ourselves and it was quite difficult, so if we had more time like at, at the beginning, not necessarily during the whole year.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Marta:** But, for masters students it's even more difficult, because we don't have a lot of time, so, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*You mean if the\* programme were less \*intense\*?

**Marta:** \*Yeah\*, yeah.

**Amanda:** I definitely agree with that. I, I feel very rushed, right now (general assent) to finish my dissertation. And plus, I don't know if I'll be able to stay past my due date, or much longer past that...

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Amanda:** ...if I find a place to live. And, that is just an incredible amount of stress.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Amanda:** To try and finish a dissertation and to figure out if, what I'm gonna do afterwards. \*All at the same time\*.

**Interviewer:** \*That's the other thing\*, trying to do it in, in a year. (general assent) You feel a bit...

**Amanda:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...a bit pressured, I guess (general assent). Yeah okay, interesting. Um, right, how often does, uh, the conversation topic, uh, come to differences between cultures when you're talking to someone from another culture? So basically, if you're talking to someone from another culture, how often do you talk about the differences between your culture, and how often do you, how often does it come up?

**Amanda:** If I'm talking to a British person, it's almost all the time.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh. (general laughter) Yeah.

**Amanda:** Like, if I were talking to someone from almost any other country, it wouldn't necessarily \*come up\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Amanda:** ...like maybe, once during conversation and we had to clarify something. \*But\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Amanda:** ...if it's a British person, it is seriously all the time (general laughter). Especially with the, like, the accents.

**Interviewer:** Accents, \*right\*.

**Amanda:** \*And\*, different words, like chips or fries, or something like that (general laughter). God, it's constant. It is constant. (more laughter)

**Interviewer:** Right, okay. Um, (to the rest of the group:) how about you guys? How often does it come up?

**Lan:** I guess um, especially, uh, especially in the initial contact it, it emerges all the time.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lan:** Because it's the, it's kind of topic that you can pick up, pick up...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Lan:** ...with, and because you don't know each other, actually. And, um, and, and besides that, um, mm, I think more we have talk about is the life in UK, that's something we shared in common, um, besides the cultures \*differences\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Interesting\*. Yeah. (To Jiao:) What do you think?

**Jiao:** Yeah, I agree with Lan. I think it's just like an ice breaker for initial, for the conversation. \*But\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Jiao:** ...after get to know each other or, more times see you we just like, focus on life here, \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Jiao:** ...the common, yeah, I \*think\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Jiao:** ...I agree with Lan.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah.

**Jiao:** Yeah.

**Marta:** Yeah, I agree with Lan, and, uh, in my case a lot. Every time, "Oh you are Italian, what do you eat every day?", (general laughter) "Do you eat pasta every day?" (more laughter) (multiple voices joking) So they were always, even my flatmates, because they are Brazilian, two Brazilians and two Chinese, so they were always looking at me, "What do you eat?", and (general laughter) "At what time do you eat?", and so, a lot. And also my neighbours because they are Indians, and, uh, some Brazilians, too. And, uh, it comes up a lot.

**Interviewer:** So that has just been consistently, just coming up a lot?

**Marta:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Marta:** Always, like even now. (general laughter)

**Amanda:** It's been ten months guys, really (more laughter).

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah wow. I mean \*it's\*...

**Marta:** \*I think\* it's like, the image. Or, uh, I don't know, probably, stereotypes.

**Amanda:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Sure\*. Sure. People either trying to confirm or deny...

**Amanda:** Push boundaries, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Great. Um, last thing is pretty general. Um, is there anything else about your experience as an international student at the University of Leeds that you would like to share that hasn't been covered? Any struggles, anything good, anything that you feel like, just needs to be said? (silence)

**Amanda:** I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That's okay.

**Lan:** I cannot think of \*anything\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yes\*? It's been covered? (general laughter)

**Lan:** Yeah, I think so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah? Okay.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from Focus Group #2**

**Participants (in order of appearance): Eila, Dhara, Emilia, Hani, and Lena**

**July 1, 2015 at 18:00, Grayson Heights**

**Duration: 39 min 25 sec**

**(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So to start, I'm just gonna have you say your full name, your home country, and what you study at University of Leeds, or studied. (To Eila:) You can start.

**Eila:** Okay my name is Eila, I am from India, and I am doing my masters in Advertising and Design.

**Dhara:** My name is Dhara, I am from India, I am doing MA in International Journalism.

**Emilia:** My name is Emilia, and I am from Romania, and I am studying, um, Tribology.

**Hani:** My name is Hani, I am from Malaysia, and I'm taking MSc Management currently.

**Lena:** I'm Lena, from Poland, I'm doing Mechanical Engineering.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. All right. First question, um, why did you choose to study at the University of Leeds?

**Eila:** Uh, because the course that I was looking for in the UK, I was particular about UK 'cause it's, like, closer to home, US was far away compared with, like, \*the distance\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Eila:** Um, the reason why I chose UK, this Leeds University over other universities is the course that they offered was half business school and half design school. So I got a bit of both, and that's why I became interested.

**Dhara:** Uh, my reason for choosing UK is because it's a one-year course here, and apart from that the school of Media and Communication is, like, very famous, so that was the, like, most important reason for choosing Leeds.

**Emilia:** Um, actually I didn't choose Leeds, but, um, I suppose my programme did choose it because, uh, like, Leeds is really, um, highly ranked in mechanical engineering school. And also in Tribology, so, I'm, while I'm, I'm doing a Tribology masters, like, um, all around Europe, uh, we started here, and, um, we got the basics in Tribology at this school.

**Hani:** Uh, I'm choosing University of Leeds because, um, is recommend by my friend, he said that it's good and that it's, like, a safety area. And then, like, LUBS have a very good ranking in finance base, or something, that's why I'm choosing this one, yeah.

**Lena:** Mhm. For me, it's (unintelligible) the programme that, um also take place in UK. And I like it 'cause, uh, as the first semester I could study, for the first time I could study in English. And also high-rank university.

**Interviewer:** Okay, great. Okay. Um, how important was it to you to try and establish relationships with UK students when you got here?

**Eila:** For me it was actually a little bit difficult because I came in two weeks late, and that was, like, two weeks after the courses started, and my classmates, we're just twenty-four in my class, so there were already, like, established, like, groups of friends, so it was, like, mm, it was little weird. And also, because I had, like, it's, uh, we have fifty per cent Asians and fifty per cent British nationalities in my class almost, that's the ki...the ratio. So, it was a little bit difficult, because you had to get into the group and to break, but then eventually it worked, yeah (laughs).

**Interviewer:** So was it important to you to try and make friends \*with British students\*?

**Eila:** \*Uh\*, for me I, like, for me, one of the reasons when I came here, I wanted to make friends with other nationality, just to learn and, from new cultures, and new people, so, um, yeah that was important to me.

**Dhara:** Um, I had one British classmate and he was in my, what do you say it, um, I mean, group, we were doing our presentations together. And so that is how we started talking, and because we, like, could, interact with each other, so I went up to him and asked about the co...way the university and the programme worked, because being an international student I had no idea. So, he was like, "oh, you know, this professor says this, so it means this, so if it's an essay coming up, you'll have to, like, write it like this, if it's a presentation, this is what they expect from you." So, having an, like, a UK citizen in my class sums up, like, everything that I need to know for, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So it was really helpful \*for you\*?

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*.

**Emilia:** Well honestly, for me, I, I didn't really have the chance to meet, um, UK students because our small group wasn't, uh, there was no student from the UK. Um, but, yeah, I think I, I kinda regret it, and I also, like, I would like to, um, improve my English, like, this is would be the main reason, and also to know more about, like, how's life here. Well, we, we had the chance to meet some of them but not closely, like, just couple of words and then that's all.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hani:** Like, for me, I'm quite lucky because I met someone who is a British citizen here in the same flat in Grayson Heights. So, this is, um, this who I first met, and then my secondly because we have a management practice in our module, that's why we, we have to get along with different countries' friends and then they break the wall, like, that's why I start talking with another UK friends, yeah. \*This is the\*...

**Interviewer:** \*So you think your\* programme was really helpful, to get people talking to each other?

**Hani:** Yeah, this one. Yeah, because they start out with some ideas and then you have to discuss with your group mates, \*yeah\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Hani:** ...that's why.

**Interviewer:** Do they assign you to the group...

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...or do you choose yourself?

**Hani:** They assign us to the group. \*That's why\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Hani:** ...we have, like, a lot of American, like Indian or something get into a group, so it's a mix culture, \*mix\*.

**Interviewer:** \*So, they\*, they try and mix you on purpose?

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Lena:** Uh, I didn't ha...um, my group didn't have any British citizen, so, like, uh, just international students, and, but we had British, uh, lecturers, and they were really helpful. So, um, what can I say? (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, this is a similar question. How important was it to you to try to establish relationships with international students? (To Eila:) You, kind of already touched on this, did you have anything else you want to say?

**Eila:** Uh, no. Just, like, it, it's, it's nice to know other cultures and, I mean, also, like the way they think, the way they function's a lot different than how we're used to, and how we think. So it's like, nice to, like, just learn stuff from them, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So that was important to you?

**Eila:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Dhara:** Uh, my first intention of interacting with other international students was the language, so that, like, I could pick up words, like, uh, majority of my classmates are Chinese, so Mandarin, I learned, like, words here and there (laughs). And there were, there are these two French girls in my class, so I learned a bit from them as well. The rest is, like, me and two other Indians, and two Brits. So mostly Chinese and French, that is the interaction that I had, so, yeah, it was, like, fun to, like, know what you say in your language, what we say in our language.

**Interviewer:** So for you it was more about learning different \*languages\*?

**Dhara:** \*Yes\*, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Cool.

**Emilia:** Yeah, for, for me besides studying here, it was the best experience to meet, um, many cultures, and to get to know people, like, I heard about many cultures and, and, and, their, um, um, I, you can hear a lot of things, um, on the internet, or read, but, when you, when you meet them, it's totally different, and it's really cool to meet these people, talk with them, like, um, about their experience, how they see, um, some things. It was the best experience, I think.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Hani:** Yeah, like, me is, we have, like, more than fifty per cent Chinese in our class, and our class have, like, hundred peoples, so because I am from Malaysia so, is like, we already have a lot of races in our country, so Chinese is not really a big issue for me. But I'm more interesting to the Europeans. That's why I make friends with them, like, know what is the difference, what their cultures, and what they usually speak, something like that. And...

**Interviewer:** So instead of, I mean it would've been easier for you to just be with the Chinese students. But you made an effort because you were interested in what was different...

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...to associate with European students?

**Hani:** Yeah for me, because I'm coming here, I want to study English, or something, if I go with, uh, Chinese, then I will speak Chinese, because we tend to speak the same language. And, uh, I did, uh, get in touch with them, but not that frequent as compared to the European. Because I think we have a totally different culture, like, uh, compared to the European. That's why I want to know more about them. \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Great\*.

**Lena:** Um, for me, the most important was to make good develop my social skills. And, so.

**Interviewer:** So you wanted to interact with international...

**Lena:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** ...students \*to do that\*?

**Lena:** \*Yes\*, yes, yes.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Okay. Okay. What do you like to do in your spare time, and with whom? So, when you're not in university, what are you doing?

**Eila:** Um, (laughs) so I have a really nice Mexican friend, he's very spontaneous with plans, so we just, like, um, actually we don't plan anything so it's like, I know he's gonna text, like at the end of the day saying, "Let's do something" that's like at the peak hour, but then we'll just go out, like, maybe he comes over we have a meal, or just walk around Leeds, explore things.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Eila:** Yeah (laughs).

**Dhara:** Uh, same with me. I go about exploring the city, and if I am too tired I just come back to my room and (laughing) sit in front of the laptop, or do whatever I feel like, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And who is that usually with?

**Dhara:** Eh, my flatmates, my (laughing) fellow Bengali classmate, and, who else, uh, some other classmates at times, yeah.

**Emilia:** Well, when I had the time, I, I, I tried to travel as much as I could. Unfortunately just a couple of times, but, uh, I would like to do that more, like, to get to know this area, but, um, mainly I was trying to, uh, discover the city, like, the shortcuts (laughs). And, um, yeah, well, I think this, this is all. Um, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Did you spend most of your time with, um, other international students \*then\*?

**Emilia:** \*Uh\*, well, with my colleagues, \*most of\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Emilia:** ...the time. And, yeah, we, we met some people here in Grayson Heights. Um, and we became good friends, I think. So.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Emilia:** Yeah, it was great.

**Hani:** Yeah, for me, is, like, depends, like, if it's just some spare time out of the class, I will hang out most of the time with my classmate, like, we having the gathering, or having birthday parties, because this is the way that we network.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Hani:** Ne...Networking. And, if it's like holiday, normally I will go out with, uh, flatmates most of the time, but sometimes I going to the travelling, like, to European like Greece, or something. Or, we might go to the gym as well, like join the class, or something like that. Yeah.

**Lena:** Um, I, during my studying I also discovered the city but there wasn't much to discover, so, uh, (laughs) so I try to go around. And, um, my spare time I spend with my, uh, classmates, and international students, and people I met in university, mostly. Didn't me...uh, didn't join any s...society because of lack of time, but I think it's nice.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

(pause to check recording)

**Interviewer:** Okay. What has helped the most to make new friends here in Leeds, when you got here?

**Eila:** I think it's like, social events and parties when you meet new people, 'cause usually when you're in university, you come, and then you attend class, and then you just leave unless you have, like, a long break in between where you get time to hang out. But yea, social parties, and get-togethers have really helped.

**Interviewer:** Were those arranged for your classmates, and everyone showed up? Or you just kind of made the effort yourself to go out to these \*events\*?

**Eila:** \*Um\*, so, like so I told you we're just twenty-four of us so we, so every time we have a party we call all twenty-four, irrespective of who's throwing the party. So even if I'm like, I've, like, invited my classmates over, I cook a meal, and then they come over. They have a birthday party, then I go over, so it's both ways.

**Dhara:** Em, I started by heading out to the Global Café on Monday evenings. So, from there I got to know one friend, and she was, like, "Oh, come on I have another friend", and then, so I got to, like, have a bigger circle of friends. And then we started visiting their accommodation, so, their flatmates, and, like, it kept on growing (laughing) and growing and growing.

**Interviewer:** So Global Café was good for you?

**Dhara:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, great.

**Emilia:** Well, I think the societies, and the union, student union are great, like, uh, if you join them, like, you have many things to do, like, just to, like, just try to find one or maybe what's your interested. Um, I think these are the best ways to bring people together at the beginning, \*yes\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Did\* you do that?

**Emilia:** Um, me? Eh, yeah, we participated in some events, but, we didn't join any society, \*because of\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay, so how did you find\*...

**Emilia:** ...lack of time...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Emilia:** Most of the time. We had to, actually we had a lot of work to do, and actually I don't know why (general laughter).

**Lena:** I went to some meetings, but it's like the first meeting, so join and check this, mm, our society but then I didn't, just met some people and then I hang out with them.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.



**Lena:** But, eh, didn't, I didn't participate. But I think the best, eh, fro...in my opinion is to join some, uh, dance classes, or, eh, or parties.

**Emilia:** Or student accommodation, are, \*one of the best ways to\*...

**Lena:** \*Or a (unintelligible) class, yeah, yeah\*.

**Hani:** Like, for me is like, I think the assignment, like, preparation is the most effective way, because we have the common topic to talk about, you know, like, because sometimes I will have lack of topic to talk with, like, European friends, because we have a different mind-set, or something. But, like, for Taiwanese, or Chinese, these people, is easier, like, when we hang out, or have a dinner, or gathering, then we make friends then. It's so easy that way.

**Interviewer:** So, with \*schoolwork\*...

**Hani:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you have something in common to talk about? Mm. Okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Eila:** Yeah! (laughs) Um, the weather today (in reference to the heat wave) (general laughter). (Unintelligible) saying, "You're from India, you shouldn't be feeling hot", but it's just that I'm, like I can't say, um, I'm not used to the heat, of course I am. But I told you that it's the ventilation and not these small, small things. But apart from that, I think you pick up a few words, you pick up a few interests, like, i...it could be music, it could be, like, uh, I told you about my Mexican friend, so he has, like, really weird way of making drinks with the, the weirdest name possible, so like, these small things I probably, like, wouldn't learn from my, um, friends in In...back in India. So, like small, small things that you, like, treasure it for life, so. Yeah.

**Dhara:** I started talking a lot more than I did back in India (general laughter).

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Dhara:** Yeah, even I'm surprised, like, at how much I can talk now (more laughter).

**Emilia:** I had the same experience.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Emilia:** Yeah, I don't talk a lot, like a lot lot.

**Interviewer:** So why do you think that is?

**Dhara:** It's because, like, you start opening up, you are meeting, like, so many different kinds of people, so it's like, you have, like, hundreds of things to talk about. And like it's con...like your brain is constantly working, "Oh, I could've told her that, you know I could have told her this", and so it's like, oh my god, I talk so much now.

**Interviewer:** So it's a good thing, it's not like you're fighting to be heard, but it's just, \*like, you have a lot of things to talk about\*?

**Dhara:** \*No, yeah, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay, cool.

**Emilia:** Yeah, because of differences of culture, cultural differences, and...

**Interviewer:** So that gives you a topic always?

**Dhara:** Yeah, always, always.

**Emilia:** Yeah, it's good.

**Eila:** And also, like Dhara said, it's like, they only want to know about your culture so you have so much to tell them about your culture (general assent), so you have, like, more reasons to talk back and, (laughs) yeah, yeah.

**Emilia:** And people are interested, this is also a point. Because if you are talking with somebody from your country, like, they might lose interest, like, but cultural things are really \*interesting\*...

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*.

**Emilia:** ...it's the basics of our \*(unintelligible)\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\* because I remember, like, I keep on changing my earrings, and, like, everyone in my class asks me, "Is it from India?", "How did you buy this?", "How do you make this?", and I'm like, I tell them everything and they're like, "Oh, you can find these things in India", like, yeah (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Oh, so they're really interested, \*that's cool\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*.

**Emilia:** But I also, uh, learned a lot of stuff to cook, like, new, new things that, that was one of the things I, I learned here. Also, yeah, I improved my English.

**Interviewer:** Did you learn from the UK or just from...?

**Emilia:** Uh, no, from the students, like.

**Interviewer:** Oh, from the students, yeah.

**Emilia:** Yeah, well, from the people I met.

**Interviewer:** Cool, cool, \*nice\*.

**Emilia:** \*Mostly\* Indians (general laughter).

**Interviewer:** Good food (more laughter).

**Hani:** Like, for me the the primally...uh, primary change is my mind-set, \*actually\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Hani:** Because I am not the person, like, talk a lot, like, I prefer, like, listen to their story, and that's why they change my mind-set. And because of the environment as well, like, everyone is safe, and then they are very confident, individualistic, so I become more, like, independent and more, um, how can I say is like, confidence, like you, you want to go out, like, yourself, only for one day, like, without friends, something like that, because you want to explore, you want to have more, like, personal time, something like that. Yeah, and you get to know more about yourself because others will ask you, "Oh, what is the famous food in Malaysia?", and "What is your main culture?", something like that. So, normally when you are in your own country you won't think more about this, but when you come to here you have to, "Oh, I think the, the most important thing in my country is...", or something. \*So\*...

**Interviewer:** \*So you\* learn about other people's culture but you're also, kind of...

**Hani:** Yeah, \*like for myself\*.

**Interviewer:** ...\*rethinking yours\*.

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. Mhm.

**Lena:** Uh, well, I become more open-minded, like, every time I go to, um, the campus, and, um, yeah it's, for me, like, I want to find a place to live for me, so I, (laughs) it's good to live abroad and, like, in the UK and I know if I want to, what I like about here and what I don't like. And, uh, and, uh, also about different countries. So, it's good to have, like, your own opinion, than, than listen about others, okay, like, Arabic countries are, people are bad, it's good to meet them in person, so, it's...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so you can form your own opinion.

**Lena:** Yeah.

**Eila:** That's true, because you generalise usually \*and then\*...

**Lena:** \*Mhm\*.

**Eila:** ...for us, t...I mean, not being racist, I'm not trying to offend anyone, for us like, um, Iran, Iraq, and, \*like\*...

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*.

**Eila:** ...Arab countries is just, like, I think because the news, and I think, is built up the whole, um, uh, you know that whole notion of "it's not safe." But, uh, I have, like, a really, really nice Iranian flatmate and when I talk to her it's, like, Iran is not Iraq. Because for me, back at home, I think Iraq and Iran are, like, almost the same (assent from Dhara), but it's not. So a lot of things you learn about the people, their culture, the general notion which is, like, created by the world and the media is just gone (assent from Lena).

**Interviewer:** Interesting, yeah. Okay, um, how do you feel about the label of "international student" that you get from the university? So, do you feel like you fit nicely into this category? Um, now for the EU students, you guys aren't necessarily "international students", um, according to the university, because it's UK and EU, and international students, but you can respond, like, if you feel like you are one, or, you know, do you feel like you fit into the category?

**Eila:** It just feels posh (general laughter).

**Interviewer:** Posh?

**Eila:** I...yeah, like, uh, it feels nice, like, you know, you're like, in a secluded, uh, category (general laughter). Back in India, for international, you're given, like, so much, like, attention and respect because you come from another country. So, I just feel like, it mayb...it feels a little bit posh, you're, like, put in a category where, like, you're important, you're, like, your needs are different, kind of a thing.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Eila:** Yeah, but, um, \*yeah I think, but Leeds\*...

**Lena:** \*Yeah, (unintelligible)\*.

**Eila:** ...University is more like an international...

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Eila:** ...(unintelligible), and there are very few Brits. Like, mo...more Asian if I se...like, you know, if I see people, like more Asians. Very few Brits. But it's nice 'cause it's like, yeah, compared to Beckett and, Trinity, other universities, Leeds seems like a more mix of international. But Asian is higher.

**Dhara:** The label helps at times (laughs), you get, like discounts and everything (Dhara and Eila laugh), uh, but apart from that, like, I hated it, because I had to take that, like, compulsory essay writing classes. Uh, we called it “English for Dummies”, because, like, it was useless, like, just because we were international students we had to, like, go and sit and attend it for, like, one whole month, it was a completely useless class. That is the only thing I hated because of being an international student. Apart from that it’s okay, I guess.

**Interviewer:** Did the class help at all?

**Dhara:** Not at all, \*not at all\*.

**Eila:** \*Um\*, um, one more thing is the fact that, um, just ‘cause we’re international it doesn’t mean they can boost up our fees to up t...up to double. \*Like, I only realised that\*.

**Dhara:** \*It’s triple!\* Three times.

**Eila:** I only realised that after coming here, I’m like “it’s double”, like okay, yeah, fifteen per cent or twenty per cent, thirty per cent, makes sense.

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Eila:** But, that’s...I don’t know why we should pay, we’re not getting any other luxury, um.

**Interviewer:** That’s the thing, is you do get extra but is it \*enough\*?

**Eila:** \*Is it worth\*? No, not at all.

**Hani:** But, for me I have no idea (laughs) on this label, so, because I feel like my whole classes is, like, only one or two British citizen. So, is not really affect me because, like, everyone seems international \*students\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*. Mhm.

**Hani:** \*Yeah\*.

**Emilia:** \*Yeah\*, since it’s so multicultural, I, I couldn’t feel the difference. I mean, everybody was so nice, like, at the university staff. They didn’t really make difference, they helped and, and it was, it was quite okay.

**Lena:** Yeah, I have the same experience.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay. Um, all right. How connected to the university do you feel as a student? Do you feel very proud to be a Leeds University student, or something different?

**Eila:** I don’t know, I mean it’s too short to tell, like, all these things, because, um, like, yeah, you are half the time in the university, and the rest half, but, like, mm, no I, th...there is no connection, like, I don’t know, I still haven’t got that feeling like, “Oh, I’m from Leeds University”, I probably wouldn’t, like, boast about it. Not yet, at least (laughs).

**Dhara:** Um, I feel very attached because I keep on buying these things from the gear shop (laughs) at the university which has, like, “Leeds University”, written everywhere. So, yeah, if I am doing that then that means I’m definitely attached (laughs) to it.

**Interviewer:** Do you know why you’re doing it?

**Dhara:** (laughing) No, not really.

**Interviewer:** Fair enough.

**Emilia:** Yeah, I'm still to buy that (general laughter). And I will if the shop is open. But, um, well I think I spent too less time to feel, like, really attached to it. But yeah it, it's, I feel, I feel good to talk about that "I studied at Leeds University." I feel more proud than talking about my home university (laughs). Probably because it's, you know, UK and, um, it's high standard, like, it's all around the world it's, if you studied in, in the UK then you must be good, or something. People have this in mind, and, and you, you will not have problem with, uh, English. They don't ask for, um, English certificate and it's way easier.

**Interviewer:** So, you mean if you're applying for a job and they \*see\*...

**Emilia:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...that you studied in the UK...

**Emilia:** Yeah, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...\*they\* don't ask for any English \*certification\*?

**Emilia:** \*Yeah\*. Yeah.

**Dhara:** Yeah, I think that is the case in India, as well. So, if they see a home university and they see a UK university they'll be like, "Oh, like, you have, like, an upper hand compared to others."

**Eila:** That's true.

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hani:** But, in Malaysia, I don't how to explain, like, because even though it's a minority people, like, coming in, for the study in the UK, but they will still compare, like, um, okay, like, compare Leeds to Warwick, maybe they have their preference. So, i...it doesn't mean that, if you compare with the local university, of course you will have the privilege, but if there is two candidates from, like, uh, both from UK and they will start comparing the, which university is better, something like that. So, I, I, I feel like a low attachment with University of Leeds, and sometimes because I am studying business, that's why I think, uh, some campaign, or activities, or the slogan that they provide is a marketing skill (general laughter). So, for me, it's just a business thing.

**Interviewer:** I see.

**Hani:** Yeah.

**Lena:** How, well, for me it was nice to study here, 'cause, uh, my department was the best, uh, mechanical department in, uh, UK. Don't know how is, uh, in compared to Europe, but, uh, not specific University of Leeds. Um, I think not too many people could care about it. So, just the fact that I studied in the UK was important for me.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Two more questions. Okay. How do you think your experience would have been different if you had been at the university to complete your undergraduate degree? So, you would have been younger, and here for longer.

**Eila:** Mm, I think, um, I'd feel more Brit, four years (general laughter), or three years being here, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Eila:** I...it w...it definitely, like when you say the connected bit and stuff, and then you'd feel a lot more connected, you'd probably make this your home by then. Three, four years is a really long time to be away from home, as well. And, also, like, um, then you no longer look at an international because you've literally, like, been away from home. You have lived here, you made this place your home.

But, um, yeah, and also you're young, so, like you said, you're a little vulnerable, so I don't know, anything can happen, in those three, four years, like...

**Interviewer:** Do you think it would have been a good thing?

**Eila:** Um, honestly, like, if you ask me now, I probably wouldn't recommend to anyone to come abroad, for your undergrad. Um, it's a very young stage in life.

**Dhara:** Yeah, \*yeah\*.

**Eila:** \*Yeah\*. A lot of things are changing, it's coming too fast...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Eila:** ...so...

**Interviewer:** So, you might not have been ready, but now...?

**Eila:** Yeah. If I had my, like, if I, I have kids I'd like to send them, I wouldn't, not for undergrad, yeah.

**Dhara:** Yeah. Oh, um, I've noticed, like, the undergraduate, like, department, they are filled with, like, British students, so I would, I'm sure I would have felt, like, side-lined, lonely, something like that. And, like, interacting, making friends would've been a big challenge then. Also, I would've been younger so, like, my level of tolerance towards other cultures wouldn't have been that much developed, or so. So, I am sure, like, I would have had great troubles, like, adjusting to the UK \*way\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Dhara:** ...of life, so it's better to come in for a PG course. You are, like, have matured a lot more, you are more open to accept newer things, so it's better to come in as a PG student rather than a UG student.

**Interviewer:** Interesting.

**Eila:** Uh, also your priorities in life are a lot different \*during undergrad\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*.

**Eila:** \*So\*.

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*, I have a friend who started in first year here...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Lena:** ...and she wanted to quit after the first semester because she couldn't, uh, \*fi\*...

**Interviewer:** \*It's just too much\*.

**Lena:** Yeah.

**Emilia:** Yeah. Yeah, I think it's \*the same for\*...

**Lena:** \*It was difficult for her\*.

**Emilia:** ...all of us, like, I, I am glad that now, during my masters I'm here, because I would have been lost at \*the beginning\*.

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*, it was hard enough to, uh, start studying in another city, and then (general laughter) (unintelligible) \*in another country\*.

**Emilia:** \*I, I remember\* my first year back then, uh, bachelors...

**Lena:** I didn't know how to \*cook pasta\* (laughs).

**Emilia:** ...\*even, I knew\*, I knew the city, but I, I was, like, so into many things, and, like, if you go abroad \*and\*...

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*.

**Emilia:** ...(laughing) no time for studying actually, like, and, and you have to, like...

**Dhara:** Yeah, I mean it's the same way, like, the other way around as well. I mean, now that we are more tolerant and open to things it's the same with the, like, UK citizens as well, because I have been to seminars where there's been, like, both UG and PG students. I have seen that UG students they form a close group of their own, they are, like, cracking jokes, laughing at others, making fun of the, like, other international students. But, in this very same room, there have been, like, PG students who \*have\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Dhara:** ...been, like, more welcoming, talking to other international students, telling them (assent), "This is generally how a seminar is, like, organised, this is what you can expect", which the UG will not, like, it's, like, they become, like, sort of bullies there.

**Interviewer:** Wow, \*okay\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*. So, after seeing that I am, like, more convinced that it was a good decision to come in for PG and not for UG, like, programmes, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Uh, I don't remember who spoke. (To Hani:) Do you, do you want to add?

**Hani:** Yeah, I, I know that it's quite difficult for us, like, coming for UG, but somehow I think that it's a very good, uh, chance for them, like, I found that a lot of the Hong Kongese they try to come here, like, even during the high school. Yeah, so. But, mm, when I look at their profile or something they seems like they, they have not really, umm, th...how can I say it, like, they can mix to their friends, like British friends, so, but I never talk to them. I never talk to them like, "Is it good for you, or do you feel alone or something?" But, from what I see it's, like, this is a, uh, advantageous from them, like, as compared to us, because we are just come and explore, but, for them they have built something inside, like, they have a widened mind-set, and then it's good for them to come, like, earlier.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hani:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Next question. How often, um, when you're talking to someone from another culture, how often does the conversation topic of "the differences between your culture" come up? \*Does that make sense\*?

**Eila:** \*Very often\*.

**Lena:** Mhm.

**Dhara:** Every time (general assent).

**Eila:** And every conversation (more assent). Probably in the, like, within the five minutes of the conversation, actually (general laughter). \*Yeah\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Really\*?

**Eila:** ...it's very often (general assent). It just, like, switch to something else, but, yeah. E...every aspect, like, music, or even, like, s...anything, like sayings, the way you write, the way you talk, anything.

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Is it with a specific group of people, or just kind of anybody who's not from your country?

**Eila:** Um, yeah anybody (general assent). Even if I meet a person for the first time, they'll be like, "Oh, you're from India", so this, this is (unintelligible) until it just moves on to, like, culture topics, \*yeah\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*. Like, even if the person, like, is saying something, automatically after two, three minutes I am like, "Oh, you know in India it happens like this, this is what we do, this is what we don't do." So, yeah, every time we're, like, interacting with anyone the differences do crop up, like...

**Emilia:** Yeah, but maybe not between Europeans. I mean, I, I experience it less, uh, but there is, like, it comes after time, like, 'cause you have more things to talk about which are common. But then, the differences come, and then, okay, oh, this is, this is similar, and, um, sometimes you discover similar things, which are also cool.

**Lena:** I like mentioning differences, how it is in Poland and what I heard about different countries, so, often.

**Interviewer:** Often?

**Lena:** Mm.

**Hani:** Like, for Malaysia I think, as a Malaysian we are quite special, like, we absorb a lot of the culture, you know, like, when Indians talking about their culture, we, \*we will know\*...

**Dhara:** \*Yeah, mm\*.

**Hani:** ...a bit. And then when Chinese talk, and Malaysia...

**Lena:** You don't talk back?

**Hani:** Yeah, we...(general laughter). That's why, when you asked this question I was like, mm, I don't know, like, i...it was part of our life, you know, like, even though we are in Malaysia we have the same thing, like, "Oh, when in Chinese, we are Chinese and they will do this, this", so. Yeah, it's quite often.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, last thing, uh, basically pretty open ended. Is there anything else, uh, about your experience as an international postgrad student at the University of Leeds that you feel should be said, and that hasn't been covered? Um, if not, that's okay, but just kind of opening it up.

**Eila:** I think, um, uh, since you're, like, looking at the whole, trying to change, uh, whatever, like, I think the whole fee structure should \*probably be a little\*...

**Dhara:** \*Yeah, fee structure\*.

**Eila:** ...different. Or, if, at least, like, have more scholarships for international students, 'cause, uh, for countries like us, we're developing countries, the currency's really high, and to, like, it's really expensive. And, if they reduce it, there are a lot more scope of, like, more number of students from other countries coming in. And, I mean it just helps them, and the UK government as such, yeah. That's one thing. Yeah, and, um.

**Dhara:** Yeah, and even the, like, way of, like, judging scholarships because, like, we have different kind of education systems so our grades are, like, completely different to what UK grades are. And, like, whenever we are considered for a scholarship I'm pretty sure, like, the, like, level of judging is,



like, same for everyone. So, if they can, like, change it according to the country, then it would, like, helps everyone. So they can have, like, okay five for this country, two for this country, like number of scholarships per country. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Anything else?

**Hani:** Like, for me, I have one question in my head. Like, even though we are very interacted in class, but after the class we are still separate, like, I don't know how, like, European always a gang and then, like, Asian always a gang, like, this wall, like never break within this year (general assent).

**Eila:** It's true.

**Hani:** That's why I'm thinking, like, whether there, there is any ways to help in these things, like, maybe because of topic, like, I say common topic, \*the lack\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Hani:** ...of this.

**Eila:** I think it could have something, I mean I know they have something called "Fresher's Week", but then it's just like um, um, showcasing what the union does, what the university does. They should add I think, like, have, like, activities involved, because the first few weeks are very crucial when you get to know people, but it's, like, like she says, it automatically, like, the walls are built. Like, the Asians just get together, and then, the other European and UK people just get together, so it's, like, it's really sad. It would be nice because they don't, like, everyone has something to say, and everyone has something to contribute but yeah, something, some event, like a competition, every class, which is compulsory for everyone to participate, something very small (assent), but which breaks the whole, um, you know, and then just start to, like, talk, yeah. That would, like...

**Interviewer:** So, a more interactive event? I mean, because they do hold events, but what the university has found is that a lot of postgrads don't feel like it's for them, so they don't go.

**Eila:** Yeah, yeah.

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Eila:** That's because it's filled with undergrads, like (general laughter), and they are no...like, you are nowhere to be seen. Also, like, it's a huge university, so if you have, like, a union event, you're hardly gonna, like, s...spot your classmates. But the whole feel again is to, like, know every classmate of yours. 'Cause in business school your class is, like, hundred, two hundred people in the class, and it's difficult. But, um, yeah I think, like, if you hold class events the first two, three weeks of the, just to, like, give, like the Best Fresher person, or something like that, just for introduction, would help (assent).

**Interviewer:** So if these were specifically for postgrad, or \*for your class\*?

**Eila:** \*For classes, even\*. That would work, I mean (assent), and, not, like, if we could all know every classmate, and, like, to be able to converse and be good friends, then that should be enough. Hard to, like, know other courses.

**Emilia:** Maybe some competition would help (general assent) like forming groups of different, not, not mainly your classmates but from different, uh, classes, uh, I mean \*different cour...schools, yeah\*.

**Dhara:** \*Different schools, as well\* (general assent).

**Eila:** \*They could do that\*.

**Emilia:** \*And then\*, yeah competitions as well are the best because then you have to work together, and then...

**Interviewer:** So, like, fun competitions? (general assent)

**Emilia:** Yeah, like, like \*extracurricular\*...

**Dhara:** \*I mean\*, a group competing against another \*group\*...

**Emilia:** \*Yeah\*.

**Dhara:** ...and each group is made of, like, different international students.

**Hani:** Like, maybe they c...they can start from the accommodation. Like...

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Hani:** ...this is the easiest way, and then maybe, like, competition among the c...uh, accommodation residents.

**Eila:** I feel there's, they already do that, uh, uh, I don't know, like, at least in my flat it's, like, we're all from different...

**Dhara:** Yeah.

**Eila:** I don't know if they purposefully do that or did it just, like, \*happen\*...

**Dhara:** \*No, I mean\*, like, \*it happens\*...

**Eila:** ...\*but, I feel like they do\* try to mix, mix us (general assent), \*yeah\*.

**Dhara:** \*Yeah\*, probably.

**Eila:** But that's a good point, actually.

**Interviewer:** I think Grayson Heights is kind of, uh, uh, one of the better ones with that, \*because\*...

**Eila:** \*Yeah\*.

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...other people I've spoken to have said that in their accommodation they do, even separate nationalities, which \*I think\*...

**Lena:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...is crazy (general assent)

**Eila:** And remember we had the first dinner at Grayson Heights? That was really nice, and that's what, I think I first saw Dhara, if not spoken to her. So at least you recognise people you see, so, if you have more events, the face becomes familiar, you have more ti...like, you know, opportunities to converse (assent), so, things like that. Yeah. At least they can host it, they, they don't have to sponsor the event, but (general laughter)...I mean it's not possible to do it in every hall, maybe not.

**Hani:** Maybe they will have the money for that (general laughter).

**Interviewer:** So, okay! That's, that's it, thank you so much.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from Focus Group #3**

**Participants (in order of appearance): Raiko, Ume, Keung, Daiyu, Luli, Mihael**

**July 6, 2015 at 14:00, Baines Wing**

**Duration: 48 min 41 sec**

**(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So to start I'm just going to ask you to please say your full name, uh your c...home country, and what you study at University of Leeds.

**Raiko:** Okay, um, my name is Raiko, and I'm from Japan. I'm studying MA Professional Language and Intercultural Studies.

**Ume:** My name is Ume, I am also from Japan, and I'm studying MA Applied Translation Studies.

**Keung:** My name is Keung, uh, my home country is China, and I study MA Conference Interpreting here at Leeds.

**Daiyu:** My name is Daiyu, I'm from China, and I'm studying Conference Interpreting and Translation Studies.

**Luli:** My name is Luli, and I'm from China. I'm studying, um, Professional Language and Intercultural Studies.

**Mihael:** My name is Mihael, uh, I am from Slovenia, and I'm doing a PhD in Mathematics.

**Interviewer:** Great. Why did you choose to study at University of Leeds?

**Raiko:** Um, 'cause I wanted to study Jap...uh, translation between Japanese and English, and I heard that Japanese studies here, um, the city of Leeds, is very good. So, I chose this course.

**Ume:** Um, I also wanted to learn something about translation, and in the process of learning, studying something the industrial current affairs, I heard the CAT-II is the very necessary knowledge to know, and, uh, Leeds University is really famous for teaching CAT-II the technology. So that's why I chose, uh, Leeds University to study.

**Interviewer:** How do you spell that?

**Ume:** CAT-II?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Ume:** CAT-II...CAT is a abbreviation of Computer Assisted Translations.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ume:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Thanks.

**Keung:** Yeah, so I also want t...I want to, uh, become a interpreter, so I choose to study this programme here. And, um, to be honest, I had two schools in, uh, as, I mean, I, I, I, I applied for two schools, and then I get in, got admission from one of them, so I, the only choice I, I had is to come to Leeds.

**Daiyu:** Yeah, I basically came for the same reason. I chose between two universities in the UK, and Leeds running top thr...one of the top three courses of interpreting in the UK. That's, um, and also I think the course would be better than the other school, so, I came here.

**Luli:** Um, the reason that I chose Leeds is because, um, you know, I'm interested in Interculture, and, uh, there are several universities, um, that offer su...such kind of major here in, in the UK. But, some of them just, uh, belong to the m...communication schools, but, uh, the University of Leeds here, um, it belongs to the, maybe the Language School, so I think it's, I'm interested in that, yeah.

**Mihael:** So, the advisor I wanted to work with works in Leeds, and al...I mean Leeds, Leeds has one of the biggest logic groups in UK, so. And also they gave me grant, so (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Great. Okay. How important was it to you to try and establish relationships with UK students when you got here? Was it important to you? Not important? \*In between\*?

**Daiyu:** \*So, an\* open question?

**Interviewer:** Sure!

**Daiyu:** Um, well of course it's very important to me. 'Cause for me, people are more important than the place. So, I like people, then I like the place. So, before I came here I, the presumption is that I'm...I'm gonna make friends here. So, yeah I guess it's part of my life here.

**Mihael:** Yeah, quite important, 'cause I'm gonna be staying here for thr...at least three years, and masters students go away after a year (laughs), so, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Makes sense. Anyone else?

**Raiko:** Before coming here, I thought, I want to make British friends here, but after coming here, I found that, I don't know, being friends with international student is also important for me as well, because I don't know, we can share the problems, or, yeah, I don't know, yeah. It helped a lot for me to have international friends.

**Keung:** First I thought I would be making some British friends, but then I think I only met a few of them at the bar, but then after that we sort of, uh, lost in touch. And I think so far mostly the friends I make are people from my same, uh, course, so mostly they're Chinese.

**Ume:** I, I personally, I didn't really disting...um, how to, distinguish between the British student or other nationals, because I, for me it's mo...more the personality is important, not, uh, nationals, so I didn't really expect that I want to expand my, my network in the British, I don't know, friendship. Yeah.

**Daiyu:** Eh, for me, I think, oh, \*sorry\*...

**Luli:** \*No\*. \*You, you\*.

**Daiyu:** ...\*you can go first\*.

**Luli:** Yeah.

**Daiyu:** Because I felt like \*she was\*...

**Luli:** \*No\*.

**Daiyu:** ...going to saying something (laughs).

**Interviewer:** (to Daiyu:) Why don't you start?

**Daiyu:** Eh, for me, it's like nationality does mean something. 'Cause my work here is of course to, of course, do my uni work, but I also want to experience the local life. So, I will deliberately choose some British friends to make. It's just part of my life. Eh, I don't think I'm kind of, you know, shut out other friends, just I want to make some British friend because I want to know the local life, know the culture. It's also one of the reason why I came here, otherwise I, I could of just studied in China.

**Luli:** Oh, I think maybe, um, yeah, you know I am a little bit shy, I'm not so open, and I think, uh, the British, maybe, most of the British they are, s...same maybe (laughs). I think they are, they are friendly, but they are just not so open to, um, maybe, to say hello to you, to play with you. Yeah, but they are nice, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, this is sort of a similar question. Uh, how important was it to you to try and establish relationships with other international students when you came here? (To Raiko:) You started to talk about that already.

**Raiko:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So it was important to you?

**Raiko:** Yes, it's very important, and I don't know, maybe 'cause I didn't expect that there are a lot of international students here, and I think for MA or a PhD, there are more international students than, I don't know, British students. So, it's (laughs) I don't know. Sorry.

**Interviewer:** No, that's okay.

**Raiko:** I'm confused. Someone go first.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Raiko:** Sorry. (laughs)

**Ume:** Uh, I, uh, this is my personal story, but, uh, twelve, twelve or thirteen years ago, I studied one year in Amsterdam, and at that time, I just, like, uh, (indicating towards Daiyu)...

**Daiyu:** Daiyu.

**Ume:** ...Daiyu, uh, I deliberately tried to, tried to be a friend with, um, other nationals. Not, I try not to be closer to bunch of Japanese people. Then, I finally, I always, I was surrounded by other foreigners, and, mostly international student, no, no Asian at all, and I was really happy about that. So after twelve or thirteen years now I'm here, and I'm, I got aged and I noticed that I felt, I personally felt more comfortable to be surrounded by Asian international student, especially, I don't know, somehow Taiwanese people. And I don't really feel uncomfortable being, I don't know, surrounded by other nationals, but, mm, I found, I don't know, the culture closeness makes me more comfortable. \*Yeah\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Sure\*.

**Ume:** ...I noticed, so.

**Interviewer:** Anyone else?

**Mihael:** I mean, I made a lot of international friends here, uh, it just, uh, it's, the, the only problem I really had is there's a lot of friends, uh, whom I, whom I met here, are, are moving away. And I'm s...I'm stuck here and I'm going to basically go through the same procedure in September (laughing). It's slightly, it's slightly depressing to think about it actually (general laughter).

**Daiyu:** Yeah, that's gonna be a problem.

**Mihael:** Yeah. Still, it's, I w...I wouldn't, I wouldn't disagr...I wouldn't say I don't like meeting international friends. I just, from my perspective now it's sort of, I want at least bit of stability in my social life (general laughter).

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

**Daiyu:** That makes sense. And for me, making British friends and making international friends don't really make difference because I'm going to probably leave, very likely leave, after this year's course.

Eh, but the thing is, um, I think, I think you're right, personality is a problem. 'Cause for me, it's, it's more comfortable being around, wi...with my Western friend rather than, rather than my Chinese friend, for most times. So, um, that's why I spend some time with my Western friends, but I don't want to, like, leave all my Chinese friends behind, it's just, personality.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Luli:** Yes, I think so, I think, maybe personality is more important than na...nationality.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Luli:** And so I don't, I won't mind if, where do you come from, just uh, if you are easy-going, and you can, um, respect each other. I think that, that's fine...

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Luli:** ...for me.

**Interviewer:** Um, (to Keung:) do you have anything you want to say?

**Keung:** Yeah, and also it's, uh, not just about personality, I think, um, for each and every one of the international students we are pretty much studying in the same place, we are in the same situation, more or less. Because we are all, like, leaving our country, and, I guess, in a new country studying, uh, leading a new life. So, a lot of the problems that we face are the same.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Keung:** So, I think that, um, instead of talking more to British students, I think we have more in common to talk about, um, between the international students.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, next. What do you like to do in your spare time and with whom? (silence then laughter) Outside the university.

**Keung:** Outside the university?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Keung:** So ou...outside of class?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, exactly. So, your free time.

**Keung:** Oh.

**Daiyu:** Shall I go first (laughs)?

**Interviewer:** Yeah! (general laughter)

**Daiyu:** Em, I like to go to Chinese restaurants, explore Chinese food with my Chinese friends. 'Cause we all love Chinese food (general laughter). And this is the one thing that I can't change as a Chinese, 'cause I love my (laughing) country's food. And I also love my country. Em, I like to spend time with my Western friend in pubs, and, em, sometimes go to gym with my Chinese friends and Western friends, whatever it is. And, um, go out, do some outdoor ac...um, exercise, um, which is more likely to be Western friends 'cause they are more, like, outdoor kind of people (laughing), yeah, true. So, yeah basically that.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (long pause) Oh, It shouldn't be, like, difficult question (laughter).

**Raiko:** Mm. I, like, have a, like, kind of a party...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Raiko:** ...which everyone bring one dish or two dishes...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Raiko:** ...so, I like to explore the different kinds of food, and yeah.

**Interviewer:** Nice.

**Mihael:** Well, okay. Uh, I, uh, I mostly spend my free time with, with friends, either in bars, or pubs, or etcetera. Uh, I've, uh, recently got involved with a couch surfing society, which is a great way to meet locals, and, uh, foreigners alike, which is, uh, kinda fun.

**Interviewer:** Is that couch surfing, um, like, the same as the international couch surfing?

**Mihael:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Where you just...?

**Mihael:** Yeah, so basically you host people in your, in your, in your flat.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Mihael:** And, uh, but the couch surfing community itself organises, like, events every, every week. So it, like to go, I like to go to those. I've made some grea...some great friends. So, yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's cool! Wow. Anyone else?

**Ume:** I, mm, I think I have a, I have a really good friend, friendship from my pre-sessional course, I attended a pre-sessional course. And I shared one flat with other four people, fou...five people. And, uh, we, we are really good friends and still those, um, it consists, uh, two Taiwanese, two Japanese, and one Chinese, but, uh, one Japanese already returned to Japan. And, still I, and other t...two Taiwanese, we are really, I don't know, strong friendship. And we quite often have a cooking together, and just, uh, confirming each other's life developing. And that is, to meet them, is a one thing. And, uh, another one is I just came across one old British lady in the cafe and we became a friends. And once a week I visited her house, and to have a cup of coffee, to have talk, so, that's, most of the time I did, I am doing.

**Interviewer:** Very nice.

**Ume:** Yeah.

**Keung:** Um, I think, uh what I did the, this past year was mostly travelling with my Chinese friends to different cities in England, or in, in UK. And, uh, during the winter holiday, I went to visit London, Edinburgh. Uh, so mostly what I did outside of class was to a couple of different places, try all their restaurants, visit the site, um, d...different landmarks. And, uh, in Leeds I'll usually call my friends and ask them to go to either restaurants, or museums, or galleries with me.

**Interviewer:** Great. Uh, Luli?

**Luli:** (laughing) Yeah it's just, um, I like the small towns and villages in the UK very much, yes. And, uh, also I, uh, in my spare time, sometimes I go to, uh, small towns, to explore, and, uh, for example Durham, and, uh, and, uh, York, and, uh, some places like that. And I'm going to explore more places in UK. This (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, what helped you the most to make new friends here in Leeds? Anything in particular? (silence) 'Cause I'm guessing \*most\*...

**Mihael:** \*Well\*...

**Interviewer:** ...of you came here...yeah, go ahead.

**Mihael:** Yeah, so the first two weeks or week and a half or whatever it was the, the international café and the, the, there were cer...there were certain events organised before the start of the courses by the union, uh, which, which were a great icebreaker, I think. So, I still, I s...I'm still friends with a lot of people I met in the first week, actually.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great.

**Daiyu:** I think for me, it's kinda different, 'cause yeah I went to the Global Café and int...some international students organi...activities in the first couple of weeks, em, last semester, but I didn't really stay in contact with them for a really long time. Em, most of them just lost in contact. Em, I think most friends I made from flats, eh flatmates, and also from the course.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Keung:** Yeah, from the course, too, because I think, um, those are the people that I have most in common with. Um, we take the same c...classes, we, uh, have the same, uh, instructors. So, in our spare time, what we discuss about most is our classmates and our teachers, and our assignments, our school, yeah.

**Daiyu:** And also because our course is very intense, so we don't really have, like, that much spare time to spend with different kinds of people from other courses or other places so, probably just be safe, (laughing) stay with your close friends.

**Raiko:** My close friends are also from flatmates. They are like family, and my older sister or mother.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Raiko:** So, (laughing) I really like that.

**Interviewer:** Nice.

**Ume:** I also, yeah, my friendship is, uh, expanding just based from, based on the flatmate. So flatmate friends became my friends, and so on. (general assent)

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ume:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And you said that you live in St. Marks, right?

**Ume:** Yeah, St. Marks and, I think more my pre-sessional time, the Montague Burton.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ume:** Yeah, that time. Yes.

**Luli:** I don't have something to say.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That's all right.

**Luli:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds? Good, bad, anything?

**Daiyu:** My love to Leeds is growing (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Oh, yeah? That's good. Okay, good. Why is that? (laughs)



**Daiyu:** Um, uh, I still remember I didn't really like England when I first came here, 'cause I felt people were kind of indifferent, kind of withdrawn, 'cause I'm not really good at dealing with withdrawn people, I mean, in the first, like, at the first sight. They're not really withdrawn, they're just not familiar with talking to strangers. And then I found out from my flatmate that they're actually just be educated, um, with the notion that they shouldn't talk to strangers in a very friendly and open way. So I tried to understand them. And then, well, that helped a lot. And, also because of my friends here, so, I think life's getting fun (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Anyone else feel different from when they came?

**Mihael:** Not really (laughs).

**Interviewer:** No? Okay, \*that's fine. Yeah\*.

**Mihael:** \*Not really, no\*.

**Raiko:** I found that I, I love Japan (laughter).

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so \*(unintelligible) different\*.

**Raiko:** \*More\*, yeah. In terms of food, I can't get really, um, Japanese ingredient here, so, I pre...I really miss Japanese food. And also I, I realised that my family was, is so important to me, because it was my first time to live separate from them, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (to others:) What about you guys?

**Keung:** Well, I feel like, um, I feel like I, I've, I've learned a lot of new expressions of English. And I feel like I've learned a lot of knowledge about different areas of subjects like history, politics, and economics. Those are what I learned from school, and what I learned about people, well, I mean, what I learned about myself is that maybe I, I'm getting more used to the British accent here. (Daiyu laughing) Uh, because, well even though nowadays it still feel like quite uncomfortable listening to the various types of British accents, I feel like it's, uh, my ear's more attuned to those instead of when I just came and I couldn't make out even one word of what they say.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Keung:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's an important change (laughter).

**Keung:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Luli, do you feel \*any different\*?

**Luli:** \*I think\* it's the same, similar ones, yes, with Keung, yes. I really, I, I cannot, um, understand the, the British accent, um, in the first, maybe, s...several months. But gradually, yes, I began to get, uh, used to that, and, uh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. \*Mm\*.

**Ume:** \*Mm\*, (laughs) sorry. I think I'm, mm, I'm more interested in politics and some world, some issues, because I think when I was in Japan, I think Japan was quite nicely isolated from other countries, so we, we didn't, we are not, I was not so interested in, mm, Islamic issue, or some religious conflict, or European Union's issue. But since I came here, I really started to be so interested in, yeah for instance Greek, what's going on in Greek, and also Islamic thing, and that's the \*big change\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Ume:** Th...another one is, um, thanks to the friendship with my old British lady, I really notice, um, on this we are kind of living in develo...developed country, even if we are different nationals, I think our sort of values are quite similar, and, mm, in Japan I also like to interact, um, elderly people, or some people who has some experience, and I notice, I think, mm, they are quite similar, and some parts I really can, I don't know, feel, I f...I can find some similarities, so. And now I don't really find so much difference between the local peoples and also Japanese people. That's, uh, mm, quite surprising, surprise me. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Interesting.

**Ume:** Yeah.

**Daiyu:** And, also for me, em, just want to add one point. Eh, living with two English flatmates and also two Chinese flatmates make me more realise about the culture differences between the cultures. Sometimes you can go into real conflicts in flats, but you can see the, ho...how different people communicate to each other, at some point, so.

**Interviewer:** Did it usually work out okay, or...?

**Daiyu:** I, I was always the middleman (general laughter). That was exhausting, but I had to do that, \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Daiyu:** ...yeah, that worked out okay, but still when my Chinese flatmate moved out, they still couldn't understand some part of Western culture. But they tried to, and at least I, I hope they, they \*would make\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Daiyu:** ...efforts later, 'cause they will come back.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Ume:** \*But do you\* think you can attribute the conflict to nationals or it's just personality. Can you \*attribute to\*...?

**Daiyu:** \*I think\* sometimes it's not only personal...I think sometimes it's not personality at all. \*Sometimes it's just\*...

**Ume:** \*Internationalities\*.

**Daiyu:** ...about \*ways of\*...

**Ume:** \*Culture\*.

**Daiyu:** ...communication.

**Ume:** Mm.

**Daiyu:** It's just culture.

**Ume:** Mm.

**Daiyu:** Yeah. You can't really blame people f...why they do that, just this is the way they do that here, and this is the way they do that in, in the east. So, you \*can't really blame them\*.

**Ume:** \*Mm\*.

**Mihael:** \*I just\*, I just need to ask this. But, do you think that your English flatmates, uh, adapted to Chinese culture? \*Why is it\*...

**Daiyu:** \*Eh\*...

**Interviewer:** \*I was gonna ask that too, yeah\*.

**Mihael:** ...why is it (assent)...why is it necessar...why is it necessary for, for the, for \*your friends to adapt to the British ways\*?

**Daiyu:** \*Yeah, yeah, yeah\*. I think, I think, eh, fr...I'm not, I don't think that they should adapt to the English culture.

**Mihael:** Yeah.

**Daiyu:** But one thing for them, just for their good is that they're here in England.

**Mihael:** Yeah.

**Daiyu:** If they want to make friends, if they want to, like, go out and hang out, if they want to know local culture they should know the attributes of English culture. This is what I've told them. I've also told my English flatmates that you shouldn't really blame people doing that because it's just the way we do that in China.

**Mihael:** Mm.

**Daiyu:** I also let them know. But the thing is, you know, English people are very lazy here because they are in their own \*countries\*...

**Mihael:** \*Yeah, yeah\*.

**Daiyu:** ...so they don't want to be changed. If they go to China I'm sure they will change. So you can't really, like, plot this kind of information into their mind by saying you should, you should understand Chinese culture. They understand it but they won't do as you said.

**Interviewer:** So when, since you were the middleman, so when you were trying to resolve these conflicts was it most often, um, saying to your Chinese flatmates that this is kinda the way things have to be done, or, or \*was it somewhere in between, or\*...?

**Daiyu:** \*Yeah\*, yeah, kin...kinda sometimes, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Daiyu:** But sometimes have to bring them to the table and really talk. Well, that works out really well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, interesting. All right, um, okay. How do you feel about the label of international student that you're given by the university? Do you feel like you fit neatly into this category? Um, you know when you arrive and they have all these events, or resources for international students, is that you?

**Mihael:** Uh, so, uh, it's, it's, it's interesting, uh, watching the international students from outside of EU versus international students from E...inside of EU. Obviously I did take part in the events in the beginning because, like I said, I made friends there. But to be honest I had, uh, absolutely no problems regarding bureaucracy or anything, so, regarding the whole administration part of international student services I haven...I've never used those. Uh, but I have a lot friends who are like, from Mexico, or, uh, Colombia, etcetera, and they have a lot of problems with visas, uh, the Schengen visas, (unintelligible) visa, (unintelligible) visa, working rights, etcetera. I, it's just, yeah. So it's, it's a bit like, yes, we're all grouped under the international students' flag, but, it's, to be honest it's quite a bit different, like, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Especially\* with countries from the EU \*as you said\*...

**Mihael:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you know, because technically the university doesn't even see EU students as international \*students\*.

**Daiyu:** \*No\*.

**Interviewer:** \*When it comes to\*...

**Mihael:** \*No, especially with\* tuition, right, \*yeah\*.

**Daiyu:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** Yes. So, that's interesting. So, still in some ways, but not completely, then?

**Mihael:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Cool. (to others:) How about you guys?

**Keung:** I'm quite, uh, I'm quite comfortable being labelled "international student" here, or at any university, um, because I'm pretty sure as long as I'm outside China studying I'm always gonna be an international student. I think the only part that I'm not so comfortable with is the tuition amount that I have to pay (Daiyu laughing). Uh, it's usually three to four times it's the, uh, off the ori...off the, uh, home student here.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Keung:** And, um, other than that, it's fine. I mean, being an international student you can also relate to other internation...national students here, so you can make more friends, you can, um, I guess broaden your view a little bit more.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Daiyu:** I agree.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Daiyu:** Just agree (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay, fine. (To others:) \*You guys\*?

**Ume:** \*Me too\*. I agree with him too.

**Interviewer:** Also agree? (general laughter) Luli?

**Luli:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so, do you guys feel like you're all fitting into the category "international student" pretty well? (general assent) Okay. Um, okay. Do you feel that the university has provided the right kind of support for you as an international student here? Or, enough support? Um, do you feel like you were supported by the university?

**Daiyu:** Em, I think they gave us a welcome pack that was very useful.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Daiyu:** But, em, still, sometimes I feel like, em, kind of really different from students here, in terms of tuition fees is one example. And another thing is sometimes you feel, um, not sure if it's the university or it's just peoples, you feel, like, different, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Daiyu:** Don't...

**Interviewer:** Did you get support that you needed or...?

**Daiyu:** Em, I didn't really go to university to, for support or something.

**Interviewer:** I mean, like, if you had a problem, \*they would help you\*.

**Daiyu:** \*Yeah, our tu\*...our tutors are fine.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Daiyu:** Uh, because our tutor is also from China, so I think, em, she's more familiar with our culture so she could provide support. If that's the case for every course I think it's a pretty, pretty good \*because\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Daiyu:** ...you got a tutor from the same cultural background.

**Luli:** Uh, I think, yes, they provide some supports for us, but maybe because of that's, eh, some culture differences because, or maybe it's just personality, because I don't, I think it's, sometimes it's a shame to ask for help. So, (laughing) ma...maybe it's because of my s...eh, because of my own personality. Um, so I really, um, tried to sort the problem myself. But, yes, I found, oh, yes, there is some resource I can use, but, oh, still I, I don't think I, I should ask for help (laughing).

**Interviewer:** I see.

**Luli:** (laughing) It's a problem, yeah.

**Raiko:** Sometimes I think university is not good at, like, improving the communication between international students and British, British students. Because, I went to the, um, event that's called World's Unite Festival, something, and then it's for like, um, improving the comm...intercultural thing in the UK...in the, um, campus. But, the thing is there are, most of them are only international student, and I rarely saw the, um, British students. It's difficult to, yeah, see, um, I don't know, say, intercul...recognise if he is British or not. But, it seems like Asian or, I don't know, international students so (laughing), I felt it's not, like, successful or something.

**Interviewer:** I think that's, that you can relate that to a lot of things, like, all of the international events you see, very few British people who are there (general laughter), so yeah. I think it would help, definitely, yeah. (To others:) What do you guys think? You felt supported if you have a problem, the university supports you?

**Ume:** Yes. I think so, but sometimes I'm, mm, if I go somewhere, some office to, to get some advice, sometimes I'm dis...so disappointed by being said, "Oh, there is a, on the website..."

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Ume:** ...or, "Check website", or just...

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Ume:** ..."Keep url", yeah. \*To save url\*.

**Interviewer:** \*You'd rather have\* someone be talking to you about this, \*right\*?

**Ume:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Ume:** Yes, so, mm, yeah, it sounds not so helpful, but they say always they put all information on the internet, or website. But sometimes it's not really helpful. I need some personal support, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ume:** \*Mm, yes\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Oh, interesting\*. (To Keung:) What do you think?

**Keung:** Uh, I'm not sure, I'm not quite sure if there's, like, an international student office here at Leeds because I remember back in my undergraduate university, the international student office quite a big part of the school. 'Cause, uh, it holds a lot of different activities, lot of language conversation class, different writing classes, and a lot of social activities. Uh, here, I, I, I think I only saw some fliers about social activities at the beginning of the school year, where there was, like, uh, in the orientation week there was a lot of different activities, but since then, uh, I didn't see or didn't participate in any kind of, uh, activities organised by the school. Um, and also I think another problem that I feel that is different from my undergraduate years is that I think, uh, being a master or PhD student here, we are more, uh, isolated, more alienated in a way, because for undergraduate students, they have four, they have three years, uh, here to make friends with. But, for us, we usually have just one year. For masters, that is. Uh, so whatever friends we make, uh, we might just lose them after one year. Um, so I feel like the connection between people, and the connection, uh, between us and the school here, it's less, \*yeah\*....

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Keung:** ...than I thought it would be.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, \*um\*.

**Mihael:** \*So\*.

**Interviewer:** Go ahead.

**Mihael:** It is just one complaint I need to make. And this is maybe a bit more, uh, it's maybe just for me, but I feel like accommodation services here take advantage of international students (general laughter). 'Cau...no, because if you look at the market prices of renting, versus what we're paying for accommodation...for student accommodation, is ridiculous. It's, it's about a quarter to one third more, and we are not getting the service we, we, we're basically over-paying for. And it's, it's, it's, it's, the problem I have it, with, with this is, because, basically take student accommodation because you're a foreigner who probably cannot co...come to Leeds before to, to check the, re...the flats on the open market. So, just, "Okay, I'm going to go with student accommodation because I'm sure the accommodation will be okay." But then you end up paying five hundred fifty pounds a month for a, for a one, for a, for a one bedroom in a five bedroom flat. Which is ridiculous! This is Leeds, I'm paying more for my rent in Leeds than I was paying in Paris.

**Daiyu:** Wow.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I, I agree with you. I mean, I picked the cheapest student accommodation \*I could\*...

**Mihael:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...find, and I got here, and it's, like, it's, I, definitely I picked it for the same reasons, you know, like, student accommodation, I've never been here before...

**Mihael:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...they know what they're doing, and, like, \*surprise\*.

**Mihael:** \*And it's\*, it's even, like, me and my flatmates are even in a slightly worse position, because we're not technically inside of Leeds student accommodation. They bought some contracts from Downing, so I'm paying to Leeds University, but then technically renting from, uh, another corporation. So, if I complain, if, if I have a complaint I need to complain it to Leeds s...uh, Leeds student accommodation office, they just tell me, "Oh, no, no, you need to redirect that to Downing." So there is \*nobody\*...

**Daiyu:** \*Woah\*.

**Mihael:** ...sorting anything out.

**Interviewer:** Wow, okay, yeah. Good point. So they, they just send you back to Downing \*each time\*?

**Mihael:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Wow. Okay. Yeah, it's a good point. Um, all right. Um, (to Keung:) you started to talk about this before, actually. How connected to the university do you feel as a student? Do you feel proud to a University of Leeds student? Do you not feel much connection? Somewhere in between? What do you think? I mean.

**Keung:** Yeah, as I said, uh, as a masters student here I don't, I don't have much connection, I don't think. Uh, except for the friends I make, uh, in our course, because we, we do everything together, so we kinda share the same experience. But other than that, um, friends outside our, our course, I'm, I'm not quite sure if, like, our, our friendship will last how long. And, uh, connection-wise with the university, uh, because personally I don't, I don't even think I'm gonna come back to attend the graduation ceremony. So, I don't think I'll have much connection with the university, \*so\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mkay\*.

**Daiyu:** I don't feel like I have connection with the university at all. I'm not sure if it's because I didn't participate in activities, em, or something else, but I don't feel the connection is there.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Mihael:** I mean, I do feel a certain connection to the university. Um, I guess more than what I just heard (laughter), but, uh, to be honest I, I don't think that that's because the university itself fosters...fostered it, it's just because of the people I met here, and my advisors, etcetera. It's not really something that the university did, it sort of happened (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, I know what you mean, yeah. (To Raiko:) Do you want to add to that or...?

**Raiko:** I also develop, like, a deep relationship with my supervisor, \*so\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Raiko:** ...that's the only thing I can feel connected to at the university.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Raiko:** Yeah.

**Ume:** I think I, the, the knowledge skills which I got through the university study, it's a kind of, a connec...I can call it a connection with university. And also I feel, in a way, mm, the status as a student at Leeds University can really secure my position outside of university. Especially when I met

some British, really local people, not student, when I said, "Oh, I'm a student at Leeds University", and they said, "Oh!" So I think they, I feel they trust on me and we can start some conversation from that point. So, I feel in that sense university can really kind of, mm, secure and hoist my identity or status here.

**Luli:** I, I think I feel something in, in the middle.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Luli:** Not very much connected and not very much isolated (laughing). Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay.. All right. Two more questions. Um, how do you think your experience would have been different if you had been at the university to complete your undergraduate degree? Once again, we kinda started to talk about this already, but, you would've been younger, you would've spent more time here. Do you think it would have been a good thing? A bad thing? Something else?

**Daiyu:** I would definitely feel more connected with the university if I were undergraduate here. And I would definitely have made lots more friends, I would definitely have, well I think that would change a lot, that would change the whole attitude you have to the place, to the university, and I would definitely have participated in a lot of more activities, and contributed more to the social life, or to the societies in the university. Now because I'm leaving anyways I probably won't even make a effort to do that.

**Interviewer:** Oh, so because you're only here for a year, you think, like, there's less of a point to go out and do these things?

**Daiyu:** Em, it's not less of a point. If you have time, yeah, but, but if you, running out of time, and you choose between, like, you know, making connection there or just doing things that you enjoy yourself, I would probably just choose the latter, 'cause I will leave anyway.

**Interviewer:** Okay. (silence) As an undergraduate, (to others:) what do you guys think?

**Raiko:** Do you include that kind of exchange student, or...

**Interviewer:** Sur.

**Raiko:** ...like four years here?

**Interviewer:** Um, I was thinking more like, spending, uh, the three \*undergraduate, yeah\*?

**Raiko:** \*Oh, three (unintelligible)\*. In terms of getting a knowledge or studying, I think masters here for one year is very, I don't know, intense, so I think I can more focus on studying and, like, which is very important for my career, yeah, so I think it was good t...right choice to come here for masters.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Luli:** I will be really happy to, if I can spend, uh, my undergraduate here for three years, because, you know, I'm very, I'm always slow, uh, for everything (laughing), slow to adapt myself to the life here. So when I just realised, "Oh, I'm, oh", I, I began to, um, adapt myself to the life here, "I'm, I'm going to graduate soon!" So, if I can spend three years for undergraduate here, that will, uh, be much helpful, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Luli:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** (To Ume:) What do you think?

**Ume:** I'd also, I, if I have had, uh, three, two more years as a undergraduate student I think definitely I try to know about history, of Leeds and Britain outside of my study. So, I think now I'm always, I have



to spend my, all of my time to, to my study (assent), my course study, yeah. But maybe I can find something else which I really want to learn, yeah, if I had two more years.

**Interviewer:** Right, okay.

**Ume:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. (To Mihael:) What do you think?

**Mihael:** Um, I don't know, I mean, knowing me after three years of undergraduate studies I would be probably going insane and trying to get away from Leeds (general laughter). 'Cause that's, that's what happened with my \*undergrad\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm.\*

**Mihael:** ...and that's what happened with my masters (general laughter), so it's just like...

**Interviewer:** Did you do both of them in Slovenia?

**Mihael:** No, so I did my ba...so, I did first two years of bachelors in Slovenia, then Germany, and then I did masters, which is two years, in Paris.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Okay, right. Interesting. Okay. Um, when you're talking to someone who is from another culture than you are, how often in the conversation do you talk about the differences between your culture? Does that make sense? \*Like if some\*...

**Mihael:** \*(makes a sound as if intending to speak)\*

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Mihael:** Yeah, I mean, quite often, I mean, that's, that, that's why, that's one of the reasons, fo...for example, why I joined couch surfing, because I do like meeting people from other cultures, and exch...comparing cultures is one way of exchanging informations and viewpoints, and it's definitely an interesting exercise \*when\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Mihael:** ...meeting people.

**Interviewer:** So it comes up a \*lot\*?

**Mihael:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** I guess you put yourself in that situation, so.

**Mihael:** I do like to put myself in that situation, 'cause it's, it's an in...it's an interesting conversation to have.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Okay.

**Daiyu** Yeah, I agree, 'cause, em, but I found it's quite difficult to talk, talk about this with British friends (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Daiyu** Em, I, I don't know, um, I'm not sure if it's that, you know, Chinese culture is *too* different (laughing) from the Western one, or, um. With international friends, yes, because people are in the same situation, so we all like to meet people, we all like to exchange our culture experiences because we are new here. But for my British friends, yeah, if they study culture or culture related courses, of

course they are interested, but otherwise they are, they are more interested in wines (general laughter), pubs, lots of Western stuff.

**Mihael:** I think, \*I think\*...

**Daiyu** \*It's not part of\* Chinese culture, so there, there's nothing that I can tell you about. So, I would just sit there listening, "Okay, yeah". And (laughing) when it comes to some point, and 'cause, like, relating to culture, so yes this is odd, this is the roles I should play.

**Mihael:** I think, I think it's, uh, it has to do, do with, also how, how much you've travelled in, in your life. \*'Cause\*...

**Daiyu** \*Yeah\*.

**Mihael:** ...just experiencing c...different cultures first-hands makes you, makes you more attuned to \*less\*...

**Daiyu** \*Yeah\*.

**Mihael:** ...I say, I would say less, uh, to be, to be, to be less subjective about it, to be le...to be less, like, "Oh, my culture is better." But rather, "Oh, this is different, let's see how, uh, what I can learn." (assent) Yeah.

**Daiyu** Yeah, true. (assent) Travellers are more, more easy to accept new concepts.

**Interviewer:** I agree. (To others:) How about you guys? Does it come up a lot in conversation?

**Raiko:** I think I have, I ask a lot of question about difference to my flatmates. \*For\*...

**Interviewer:** \*So you\* bring it up a lot.

**Raiko:** Yes, for example I do make friends in this way, or something like that. So, yeah, I think \*it's not, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*That's always\* a good one, the rice (general laughter). (To Ume:) What do you think?

**Ume:** I think cooking with, uh, as, as Raiko said, cooking is a really good (assent from MT) clue to understand the starting point to talk.

**Raiko:** Yeah.

**Ume:** Yeah. And, also I noticed, uh, especially British people, just at the beginning of a conversation, they always ask some culture top...something topic. "Oh, what do you think of the difference between, yeah, your culture and, yeah, British culture, what's the difference?" Or, "What is your religion?", or those. I, I regard that's a culture question. Yeah, and I noticed they always, just a s...quite superficial conversation, but, so, so, they, they start their first conversation just putting some culture issues. I, that's my impression.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Ume:** So.

**Interviewer:** Great. (To Keung:) Um, Keung?

**Keung:** Yeah, um, like, uh, Mihael said, um, Mihael, right?

**Mihael:** Yes.

**Keung:** Yeah, uh, yeah, like having travelled to different countries make you more familiar with the culture there, and if you run into some people from, from those countries you can, can, it's, it's more,

it's easier to strike up a conversation with them, talking about, "Oh, I've been there, I've, uh, tried this, and do that." And it's easier to talk with them, and then maybe they will ask you some, you know, something that they feel interested about your culture. So, that's one way of, um, exchanging information on culture, by having travelled there. And another observation that I want to make is that, um, I feel like, um, for, between internationals, in...international students here, we are more likely to talk about, um, the differences in our culture. And if I, if I wa...if I talk to a British student here, um, he or she probably, uh, feels like this is not something much to talk about. So, it's, it's rather difficult to talk with them about the culture. It's like, I feel like they probably already have talked about that for millions of times, so, uh, they don't want to, you know, start the conversation again with another whole new stranger. Uh, whereas we, uh, we international students, we, we share the same experience, we share the same problems. Um, so, um, emotionally I think we are more, uh, alike, uh, to talk about our past experiences which easily leads into another conversation on culture.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great. Um, (to Luli:) Luli?

**Luli:** Nothing.

**Interviewer:** Okay, um. Lastly, just, uh, did you have anything else that you wanted to say that we haven't covered about your international student experience at Leeds University? Something, some burning, uh, (general laughter) desire to speak on something? If not, that's okay.

**Daiyu:** Not really.

**Interviewer:** You guys all right? \*Yeah\*?

**Mihael:** \*Yeah\*, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay great!

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from interview with Nadia**  
**June 20, 2015 at 10:00, Baines Wing**  
**Duration: 13 min 18 sec**  
**(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** Okay so just for, just for the recording in the beginning, um, can you just say your name, your home country, and what you study at University of Leeds?

**Nadia:** Okay my name is Nadia, I am studying Linguistics, and I am from Saudi Arabia.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Why did you choose to study at the University of Leeds?

**Nadia:** Because I hear, uh, I doubt about it, I mean, um, the programme of Linguistics was very interesting. I, I like it. And also my friends were studying there.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, alright. How important was it to you to try to establish relationships with other UK students?

**Nadia:** Uh, actually it was difficult. I mean, mmm, most of the students in my class are international students. There are only about two students who are from the UK and it was difficult to establish relationships with them.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Did you, did you want to?

**Nadia:** Yeah, actually I want to improve my English. And also I found, when I came first here I found difficulty, difficulty understanding the British, umm, the British accent, so, so it was difficult for me.

**Interviewer:** Right okay. When you learned English was it a different kind of English that you learned?

**Nadia:** Yeah, I learned American English.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay. Umm, so how important was it to you to try and have relationships with other international students?

**Nadia:** Uh, I think it's very important. Um, with other international students or UK students?

**Interviewer:** Uh, with international students.

**Nadia:** Yeah, it's very important because uh, I mean, they, they know the problem of each other and they help each other...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Nadia:** ...about the difficulties.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Oh, great. Um, okay. Uh, what do you like to do in your free time, and with whom?

**Nadia:** Uh, at the university?

**Interviewer:** Uh, just in your free time. So, not the university.

**Nadia:** Ah, in my free time. I usually spend my free time with my family. Yeah, I will usually go shopping, uh, or the city.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Nice. Uh, let's see. What has helped you the most to make new friends here in Leeds?

**Nadia:** Can you say it again?

**Interviewer:** Sure. What helped you the most to make new friends here in Leeds?

**Nadia:** Um.

**Interviewer:** When you moved here.

**Nadia:** Actually I don't have a lot of friends here. Actually I, I mean, my friends help me in the studying.

**Interviewer:** In studying?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you feel like making relationships in the classrooms...

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...is really helpful?

**Nadia:** Yeah. Very helpful.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** Yeah, I mean, if I have, uh, problems, especially at the university if I don't know where to go, um, they help me.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. I understand that. Um, okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Nadia:** Yeah. I notice a lot of changes. I mean, I have, uh, how can I say it, I don't know how to say it.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe...?

**Nadia:** Uh, I mean, I mean, I, I feel a lot of change in myself, but I don't know how to, to express it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, um, what kind of changes, like in your, the way you think? \*Or the way you act\*?

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*. Yeah. The, the way I think. I mean, when, before coming here, I, I am not accustomed to read, uh, books, and, uh, to do, um, to do essays, to write essays. \*Uh\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Nadia:** ...it was, I mean, I, before coming here it was like (unintelligible) to write an essay. But when I came here it was very simple, I mean, uh, by the end of the year it was very simple to write three thou...three-thousand essay, three thousand words, in a essay, in one week only. \*(unintelligible)\*

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*. So you didn't, before you came here you didn't have to do a lot of writing like this?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, and how about, in the way that you think? Is there a difference that you can tell?

**Nadia:** Yeah. Before coming here I don't think about criticising what I am reading.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Nadia:** But after, after studying, I think, I, whenever I read a paper I start to criticise it.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah \*do\*...

**Nadia:** \*It helps me a lot\*.

**Interviewer:** ...do you like that?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** It helps me a lot.

**Interviewer:** Oh that's good! That's good. And how about, like, in everyday life outside the university? Do you feel any different?

**Nadia:** Uh, yeah it was, yeah. It is, I mean, uh, my country is very different from here, and uh, uh, in my country we used to go by cars, and we don't, we are not accustomed to walk. But I, when I came here it was, uh, when I first came here it was very difficult to, to walk for long distance.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Nadia:** But the end of year, of the year, it was very simple. So we, we spend most of, uh, our time walking around the city.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay. So do you like walking...?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...instead of...? Good! Okay. Um, let's see. How do you feel about the label of international student? Do you feel like you are fitting into this category that the university has?

**Nadia:** Uh, international students, no, no, actually, uh, I haven't, uh, visited the international student, uh, \*office or\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Nadia:** ...centre.

**Interviewer:** But you know, like, how they advertise for, like, certain programmes, or \*certain\*...

**Nadia:** \*Mmm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...seminars for, or certain advice for international students?

**Nadia:** Mmm.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like you, that's, that's you?

**Nadia:** No.

**Interviewer:** Okay, why not?

**Nadia:** Uh, because most of the time they are, uh, most of, most of the time they are, uh, I mean they don't suit our cultures, in my country. And that's...

**Interviewer:** They don't suit your culture?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Uh, can I ask why?

**Nadia:** Because in my country we, I mean, uh, we, uh, how can I say it? (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Take your time.

**Nadia:** I mean, uh, we are not accustomed to go on trips from the university...

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Nadia:** ...with other international students. (unintelligible) I mean, if I, if I want to go on a trip with the university, I have to go with my husband.

**Interviewer:** Right, right.

**Nadia:** It is not allowed to go alone, uh, for long distance.

**Interviewer:** Right. So you feel like the university doesn't really think about, like, these other \*factors\*?

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*. I think that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. Oh, interesting. Um, do you feel like the university has provided enough, and the right kind, of support for you as you come here and you adjust into this new life?

**Nadia:** Uh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** You, you like that they've, you feel like they've really helped you adjust?

**Nadia:** Um, yeah, when I first came here, um, um, they help me only at the university, I mean, they did, um, they did, uh, give me advi...advice about where to live, and the places where to live in the city.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Nadia:** Um. So, I just, uh, I mean they help me just about the university, and the place at the university.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Nadia:** But they don't help me about the city, they, they don't give me information about the city, where to live, the city's places to live.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Like life outside the university?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Um, so did you find \*that\*...

**Nadia:** \*About the fares\*, we don't about the fares, how to use the busses, how to use the fare, the trains.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Nadia:** Yeah. \*How to\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Um\*.

**Nadia:** ...get the tickets, and, so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Definitely. Um, so did you find that, just, figure it out on your own?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Just from living here?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** Also from my, uh, uh, friends who, my friends who were living here.

**Interviewer:** So you had friends who were living here before you came here?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Was that really helpful?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Nadia:** Oh, the...they are, they are, um, I just (unintelligible) from them. I mean the university didn't help me about the life, uh, outside the university.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Okay, okay. Um, and are they students as well?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** At the university?

**Nadia:** Uh, yeah, they have, uh, I mean they are, uh, doing their PhD degree.

**Interviewer:** PhD, \*okay\*.

**Nadia:** \*So\*, they, um, they have been, uh, here for about three years.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** That's nice to have.

**Nadia:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Um, how connected to the university do you feel as a student? Do you feel like you are a student of the University of Leeds, or do you feel like you don't really \*fit\*?

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*, I feel, I, I like the, I like the university, and I am proud to be a member of this university, yeah. \*(unintelligible)\*

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*. Good! Good. Um, okay. Just two more questions. Do you think this experience would have been different if you were here to complete your undergraduate degree? So if you were younger...?



**Nadia:** Yeah, it would be very different.

**Interviewer:** How do you think it would be different?

**Nadia:** Yeah because, uh, I think it is better to, to, to know how to read, how to criticise, uh, er...er...earlier, uh, than, I mean, at the undergraduate, uh, degree it is better to start re...to read and to criticise at undergraduate still. So I think, uh, my, I would be able to write a good dissertation, um.

**Interviewer:** So you think it would have been better...

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...if you had come earlier?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, um, when you're talking to someone from another culture, how often do you talk about the differences between your culture? Does that make sense?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Does it come up a lot, or do you just speak about other things?

**Nadia:** Yeah, we first speak about, uh, about, uh, education \*in my country\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Nadia:** ...and her country. About the, eh, about the, our, our, uh, um, how to say it, about the subjects, \*uh\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Nadia:** ...in our country. And, and my university, and my country and, uh, her university and her country. Also we speak about, uh, life. Um, and that's it.

**Interviewer:** Is that with a particular person? Or is that with just any international student?

**Nadia:** Actually with students who are studying with me.

**Interviewer:** Who are studying with you. Okay, okay. Um, okay. And then, the last thing is, uh, is there anything else about your experience as an international student at the University of Leeds that we haven't really talked about, that you think is important?

**Nadia:** Uh, I have, I have extra problem here in the university because I am international student and because I, I think, mm, I, I don't speak very well. But I am good at writing, but point is I can't speak, I can't speak, uh, very well. So, one of the lecturers, was, uh, I mean, suspect that, uh, somebody help me with my essay, because when I speak with her, she, she noticed that my speech is not like my writing.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nadia:** So, this was, uh, a problem, I mean, why do, do they think that because we are international students we can't write good essay?

**Interviewer:** Oh, really?

**Nadia:** Yeah. So I think it is a problem. I mean, uh, I think it is not, not just me, um, another, another student, uh, my friend, uh, has the same problem. Because when we speak we, we are, we don't speak, like, I mean, our, we don't practise a lot of English.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Nadia:** But, uh, when we speak we don't know, we, I mean my sp...my sp...our speech is not like our \*writing so\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*. It's definitely different in \*conversation\*.

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*. Yeah so, um, they, our essays, they that feel somebody have helped us.

**Interviewer:** Really?

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, some of your lecturers \*have\*...?

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*, one. Only one. But, um, actually I, I got on, on my, uh, on the subjects I got distinction on this and this, on this and this, uh, subject. I think because she feel that, I, uh, somebody helped me because when I speak to her, I mean, there is difference between my speech and my writing.

**Interviewer:** Oh, wow. That must be really frustrating.

**Nadia:** Yeah. So I have, uh, uh, I, I am planning to, to send her an email after finishing, to tell her that I got distinction on all my subjects, even in the exams, I got the highest marks in the exams, I got, uh, even over 80 marks so *nobody* helped me with my exam.

**Interviewer:** Good for you!

**Nadia:** Yeah, so this, this was my problem. This, the, the biggest problem I faced here.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like you've overcome it? Like you've accomplished...

**Nadia:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...what you wanted?

**Nadia:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that's so good!

**Nadia:** Yeah, so I just, uh, this, I mean, this a problem to look at international students that they can't write, they can't write, so good essays. They can't, uh...

**Interviewer:** So just the, the mentality that they have that you, \*you can't\*...

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...write \*the essay\*?

**Nadia:** \*Yeah\* you can't, you are, you are an international student and I, uh, also they think my speech is not like my writing. So, this was my biggest problem here.

**Interviewer:** So the language thing...

**Nadia:** Yeah, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...\*and\* expectation. Okay. Um, that's great.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from interview with Miyu  
June 30, 2015 at 16:30, Baines Wing  
Duration: 30 min 22 sec  
(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So, first question, pretty easy. Um, just please say your name, your home country, and what you study at the University of Leeds.

**Miyu:** Okay. My name is Miyu, from Japan, and I study language and culture.

**Interviewer:** Great. Next question. Why did you choose to study at the University of Leeds?

**Miyu:** It's a long story.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** But, my first in...intention is to learn interpretation, but my score is, was not enough.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** But, uh, after studying about this university, this MAPLIS course, uh, may fit my, eh, aim in my life (laughs), I don't know, at that point, so that's the reason.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great. Okay, how important was it to you to try and establish relationships with other students in the UK? So, UK students, how important to make friends with them?

**Miyu:** There, uh, there are a couple re...reasons I think, but unfortunately I have not had a lot of UK friends.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** But I think in terms of, um, learning British English, and broadly culture, how they think in a particular situation, how they behave, and yeah.

**Interviewer:** So was it important to try and make friends with UK \*students\*?

**Miyu:** \*Yes, yes\*, yes definitely.

**Interviewer:** It was, okay.

**Miyu:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, so then this is the same question, but was it important to you to make, um, friendships with other international students?

**Miyu:** Yes, very important.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Why is that?

**Miyu:** In my experience, they help me in, to, uh, situations. Firstly, it's, um, in my li...in my, uh, li...daily life. How to sort out the problems is different from mine, than I h...I ha...I had been helped and had learned a lot, I think. Then secondly, em, in academic situation. In my belief, um, European students are basically better than me (laughs) in study, I think. Then, uh, they usually offer helps anytime, willingly, they, they do, so, \*yes\*.

**Interviewer:** \*So\*, academic support?

**Miyu:** Yes, academic support.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, great. Um, \*next question\*...

**Miyu:** \*Mainly\*.

**Interviewer:** Sorry?

**Miyu:** Mainly.

**Interviewer:** Mainly, \*right\*.

**Miyu:** \*There are\*, there are some other reasons, \*of course\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Sure\*.

**Miyu:** Friendship, yes, (laughs) but, mainly.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Miyu:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Um, next one. What do you like to do in your free time, and with whom?

**Miyu:** In Leeds?

**Interviewer:** Mhm. Here. What do you do in your spare time?

**Miyu:** Oh, I want to go to Edge, and hopefully, and swimming, but I don't have a swimwear. And, then my health condition is not good (laughs) at that moment. And, with, um, classmates and sometimes alone, and flatmates.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. What do you normally do, when you're not in university?

**Miyu:** Yeah, mm, I just stayed, uh, in the morning I read books.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Or, read books. And cook lunch. Read books. Cook dinner. S...(laughs)

**Interviewer:** So lots of reading?

**Miyu:** (laughs) But I, y...yeah. (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Okay. That's fine. Uh, okay. What helped you the most to make new friends here, when you got to Leeds?

**Miyu:** Uh, they, uh, help me a lot to, mm, to, broadly to live better in Leeds, because as an international student, I had, uh, a lot of hardships. For, personally.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Um, the daily living and studies and, e...everything is more difficult than expected. Then, f...f...for me, laughing out loud (laughs) is very important. Sometimes, uh, I realise at the end of the day that I haven't laughed ye...uh, a lot.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** A day. I search, uh, some interesting sites to try to laugh (laughs) alone.

**Interviewer:** That's great.

**Miyu:** Yeah. But it is easier for me to do that with my friends. To, to do laugh. And they make me laugh. And, they are very helpful when I feel depressed, or some, in, in some difficult situations, they naturally, or, help me. Mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** How did you find your friends? Um, did you make friends through university, was it somehow, some other way?

**Miyu:** Uh, in the university or outside, you mean?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, when you came here, um, how did you meet most of your friends?

**Miyu:** At university.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** And, s...in rare case, I met some of them on the road. They help me when I was in trouble, \*on the road\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Miyu:** So, I felt people in Leeds are so kind (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Then, um, some other crucial people I met at church.

**Interviewer:** Church.

**Miyu:** I don't occa...uh, I just occasionally go there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** But I, \*uh\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Which\* church is it?

**Miyu:** St. George...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** ...I think.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so some from university, some from church, and...

**Miyu:** Some from road.

**Interviewer:** ...and road (laughs).

**Miyu:** Yeah (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Nice! Okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Miyu:** Yes, I, I, I believe I have become a bit more mature. Mat...with the word mature I mean that I don't care about too much things.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Mm, because basically people in the UK seems like they don't mind small details (laughs), I don't know how to say.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Um, I'm the opposite person. \*I have been\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Uh-huh\*.

**Miyu:** ...the opposite person. I'm the person of details, details, details, and, and in, for example, in my life, the things, I know in my head that things don't turn out the way I planned. But, I want them to turn out the way, exactly the way I plan. But now I don't mind, I just, I think I can enjoy anything happens in my life, that's what I've learned...

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Miyu:** ...through study and life, because in the end, my study was fine.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** I, I am waiting for two more results but, I think it should be fine (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Good! Good. So you feel more, free, I guess?

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** A little more relaxed?

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** \*That's good\*!

**Miyu:** \*Yes, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Good. Okay. Uh, the next question is about the university's label, "international student". Do you think that you are the university's "international student"? Like, when the university, um, says something towards an international student, is that you, do you think?

**Miyu:** I haven't minded about this \*a lot\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Miyu:** But I feel a little bit uncomfortable, but it's just a little bit.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** So...

**Interviewer:** Why is that?

**Miyu:** I don't know, uh, I'm not sure, and I, I'm not sure, i...if it helps, my, my comment.

**Interviewer:** Sure!

**Miyu:** (laughs) I'm not sure but I, mm, okay.

**Interviewer:** Well I asked the question, so yeah, go for it! (general laughter)

**Miyu:** Um, in my accommodation, there have been some troubles, \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Miyu:** ...every time it happens between international students. And, really it, uh, some, uh, British students made some trouble. But every time it's sorted out s...so quickly and they, um, wh...what I felt is they, they know, they respect other people. But in my accommodation...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...I...I...it's limited situation. International students, s...some of them are very, very unrespectful.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Unrespectful. Then in some cases I have been sore-hearted, then every time I have to explain the situation to Unipol, Unipol do you know? Um, I have to, I always used "international students" was problem (laughs). International, so I use this word...

**Interviewer:** Huh.

**Miyu:** ...as a bad example, in my particular case and in my accommodation.

**Interviewer:** Mhm. \*So you\*...

**Miyu:** \*So...\*

**Interviewer:** ...don't feel like this includes you then, right?

**Miyu:** Um, somehow (laughs). But I don't really care, basically.

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Miyu:** So.

**Interviewer:** So you don't pay attention really to the label?

**Miyu:** B...basically.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Like, you know when you arrived and they had all of the, um, resources available to international students, when you arrived?

**Miyu:** Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:** Did you feel like that was helpful for you?

**Miyu:** Oh, what kind of?

**Interviewer:** Um.

**Miyu:** Uh.

**Interviewer:** Just advice for international students, or...

**Miyu:** Oh.

**Interviewer:** Um.

**Miyu:** Yeah, I felt it was very helpful (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** And it is understandable. It means exactly me, \*so\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Miyu:** It was \*okay\*.

**Interviewer:** \*So you feel like\* that's you? Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay. Right. Okay, um, do you feel that the university has given you the right kind of support, and enough support when you came here to Leeds?

**Miyu:** Uh.

**Interviewer:** Did they support you enough?

**Miyu:** Y...in some areas...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...their support has been more than expected.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Mm, but particularly in my accommodation I felt many times that they are lazy, and they are irresponsible, and what I realise that accommoda...running accommodation is their business...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...not their support. So basically they have no intention to support students. They, mm, what they do is to treat me as a part of their business. So, in that situation, only in that situation, they are not really helpful. And they require students many money (laughs), for example if you, um, don't, eh, don't return your book, it could be, it's just a mistake, but they, uh, you have to pay.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** A lot. And it happens wi...during my trip. It means I couldn't do anything. Then after ten days or so, I think you know what I mean. So, Leeds University is such a, I heard one fourth of the Leeds city's earning is from university.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Miyu:** So, such a, I think it's too big (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay. Too big.

**Miyu:** Sorry. It's a \*different\*, (laughs).

**Interviewer:** \*No it's\* okay, yeah. So, besides accommodation, and, um, the other thing that you said.



**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Um.

**Miyu:** Uh, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*You feel\* supported generally? So besides fees and accommodation?

**Miyu:** Mhm. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** When you moved here did you feel like they were helping you?

**Miyu:** Mm, you mean accommodation or \*in general\*?

**Interviewer:** \*Just the\* university, \*yeah\*.

**Miyu:** \*Univer\*...I th...mm, I, I clearly remember that I felt they're so help....I mean, they fac...I think it's facility.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** It's very, mm, modern facilities (laughs) I think. The, I, what I thought is it might be more, it might be impossible at other universities. I d...don't, I don't know why I felt, but, mm, then, mm, people are helpful at anywhere. Uh, just after I, I arrived here, I ha...I was just a s...stranger then, uh, everywhere, the ba...the bank, but it's not something to do with university, \*sorry\* (laughs).

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*. No, it's okay. It's okay.

**Miyu:** But anything. Uh, they are basically kind...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** I thought.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yes, great. Okay. How connected do you feel to the university as a student? So, how much of a student at the University of Leeds do you feel like? Do you feel like you are a proper student, or do you feel something different?

**Miyu:** Uh, myself?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** How about you? (laughs) Because I want to understand clearly the question.

**Interviewer:** Right, right. Um, do you feel like you belong...

**Miyu:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** ...in this school? \*Do you feel\*...

**Miyu:** \*Ahh\*.

**Interviewer:** ...like pride to be a student here? Things like that.

**Miyu:** Uh, I think I felt it many times. And g...I think a good example is, uh, the, the first floor Brotherton, do you know the, the column \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Miyu:** ...the, that is, that is chos...one of the beautiful architecture.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Arc...eh, eh, among other award university. \*Ah, no, no\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Miyu:** ...libraries. Then I expect to see that. But, the, the fact is, every time I go to Brotherton, is I'm uh, how to say, I'm, I'm in hurr...I'm in hurry. I'm push...

**Interviewer:** You're in a hurry? Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yeah, or, "I have to study", "I have to borrow that book", "I have to, like, I have to do something."

**Interviewer:** Stressed out?

**Miyu:** Stressed out. Then I don't have enough, every time I, uh, but at least I look up the ce...ceiling \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Miyu:** Yes it's beautiful. Yes, I'm honoured to be here. But, I'm busy (laughs). Something like that. But, so, I think that means, I feel, I'm honoured to be a student, eh, but when I'm too tired, or too busy, I tend to forget.

**Interviewer:** I \*see\*.

**Miyu:** \*Even\* though, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. But \*in general\*...

**Miyu:** \*But yes\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you feel...

**Miyu:** ...yeah I think so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Good. Okay. Okay, so how do you think your university experience would have been different if you had been here to complete your undergraduate degree? So if you were here for undergraduate...

**Miyu:** No.

**Interviewer:** ...how would it, uh, if you were.

**Miyu:** Oh, sorry.

**Interviewer:** How would it be different? \*You\*...

**Miyu:** \*W\*...

**Interviewer:** ...know you would be younger, \*and\*...

**Miyu:** \*Uh-huh\*.

**Interviewer:** ...be here for longer. How do you think it would be different? Or would it \*be different\*?

**Miyu:** \*Ahh\*.

**Interviewer:** Do you see what I'm asking?

**Miyu:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay.

**Miyu:** Umm.

**Interviewer:** Would it be any better, any worse, or...?

**Miyu:** Yeah, I came here to st...to study (laughs) of course. But I, I believe that I would do better than, than the results than fact. But if I been there, been here for long time...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...I, uh, em, I would have developed my English proficiency or, I don't know, communication ability, or, how to, yeah, how to, how to do in two hours timed test or something. \*Then\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Miyu:** ...I think I would have been, uh, to have better, to have done better, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Even\* if you would have been younger? It's okay?

**Miyu:** What do you mean?

**Interviewer:** To do your undergraduate?

**Miyu:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** You know, if you were here, to do undergraduate...

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...you would be, \*you know eighteen, or\*...

**Miyu:** \*Oh, it's a\*, it's a situation of undergraduate...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** ...or not. Oh, sorry. I, I mean, what I thought, eh, what I said is about as a \*postgraduate student\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Miyu:** ...but with an experience of undergraduate.

**Interviewer:** I \*see\*.

**Miyu:** \*Ah\*, so, (makes gesture of pushing something aside) (laughs). So, okay as a under...ahh. As a undergraduate, um, (clears throat).

**Interviewer:** So if you were here for undergraduate, it would be different than it is now, right? Or, maybe not?

**Miyu:** My life, now?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, \*and your\*...

**Miyu:** \*If I\*...

**Interviewer:** ...experience.

**Miyu:** So, what I have to do is to talk about now.

**Interviewer:** Basically, if you had decided in the past...

**Miyu:** Uh-huh.

**Interviewer:** ...to come here...

**Miyu:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...for your undergraduate degree, how that would be different than now?

**Miyu:** Ah, than now. Ah (laughs). N...now as a student, or...?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** As a student.

**Interviewer:** Or as a person.

**Miyu:** I think I would have become more typical, h...how do you say, how do you say, stud...students who's born in, born abroad.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** How to say?

**Interviewer:** I'm not sure.

**Miyu:** Yeah. Yeah. Like for...foreign-born children (laughs) I don't \*know\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*, okay.

**Miyu:** And I have been, I, I have, um, admired foreign born children because they can speak English, and (laughs) because in my childhood, especially the US is the target of my whole admiration. \*Yes\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Miyu:** ...and my friends. Because everything is connected to, I don't know, happy, peaceful life in, uh, peaceful, I don't know, but happy value, American value, so a...anyway the foreign-born children (laughs), uh, I admire them. Then, if I c...if I come here, I would become to pretend like there, because...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...I, I can speak more. I can express more. Then I can feel it more, how to say, I will show off, I would show off that I studied, I've studied three or four years as undergraduate...

**Interviewer:** So you would \*be proud\*?

**Miyu:** \*In the UK\*.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Proud, but in bad way.

**Interviewer:** Oh, \*oh I see\*.

**Miyu:** \*Yeah\*, yeah, like, mm.

**Interviewer:** So not a good thing?

**Miyu:** Not good thing \*I think\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*, \*okay\*.

**Miyu:** \*Yes\*, I can, I don't know be better at, ac...in academics...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** ...perhaps. But, as a person, it's difficult to explain, sorry. Uh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** It's okay.

**Miyu:** Something like, so...something too much.

**Interviewer:** So you think you would be a bit arrogant?

**Miyu:** Yeah!

**Interviewer:** Yeah?

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Like typical, typical, like, please don't have a bad impression of...

**Interviewer:** No!

**Miyu:** ...for...foreign-born children. They are basically nice but, kind of, because they are, not arrogant but...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...if I try to become like them...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...I would be arrogant. Th...they are not arrogant but because, \*sorry, it's difficult\*.

**Interviewer:** \*You think you would become arrogant\*.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Because I am just pretending. They are natural, but I'm (unintelligible), so...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** ...yeah, \*so\*.

**Interviewer:** \*So\* for you, um, speaking English is really important, it seems.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And learning, and getting better...

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...in English? \*Yeah\*?

**Miyu:** \*Yes\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, well, let me just ask you. \*Are you\*...

**Miyu:** \*Yes\*.

**Interviewer:** ...planning to return to Japan \*after, uh studies\*?

**Miyu:** \*Mhm, yes\*. Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, um, can I ask why learning English is so important, if you will be going back home?

**Miyu:** Um, uh, English speaker, especially f...fluent English speaker, like, foreign-born children...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...are good, uh, well-treated in job market.

**Interviewer:** I see.

**Miyu:** So they have, uh, more value.

**Interviewer:** So you think that if you speak English you'll have better chance at a good job?

**Miyu:** I s...uh, actually I don't really believe that, because in my experience, even though I don't speak English fluently, I have, I don't know why but I, mm, many times I, uh, I haven...um, I was accepted by very good companies, so.

**Interviewer:** So you already got good job offers?

**Miyu:** (laughs) Sorry?

**Interviewer:** You already got good job offers.

**Miyu:** Before.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** So, I don't really believe in, so, but peop...I know people expect me to become a fluent English speaker because you study difficult, uh, very strict British university, you should speak English \*fluently, like\*...

**Interviewer:** \*I see\*.

**Miyu:** ...(laughs) the fact is that it's not true, so, mm.

**Interviewer:** So people expect that you speak English and \*so\*...

**Miyu:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you want to, you want to not disappoint.

**Miyu:** Yeah. And speaking English fluently is my childhood dream.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** And in my plan, I've already achieved it. But I now calculate that it will be, mm, my, at my gran...eh at my granmo...I mean sixty (laughs) when I become very old, then I will achieve. But I just don't give up (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Excellent. I don't believe that (general laughter). Okay. Um, this one is a bit more complicated.

**Miyu:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** So basically, when you're talking to someone who is not from your culture...

**Miyu:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** ...when you're talking to them, how often do you speak about your different cultures?

**Miyu:** Uh...

**Interviewer:** And how often do y...is it just normal speech or do you talk about, like, your different cultures?

**Miyu:** Is it the first time to see each other?

**Interviewer:** Um, no. Let's say, you're friends \*from other cultures\*.

**Miyu:** \*Ohh\*.

**Interviewer:** How often do you talk about differences in culture?

**Miyu:** If, if, if, if, uh, if that person and I are not very close...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...even though it is a friend. Like flatmates.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Just acquaintance.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Miyu:** I think I will speak about each others' culture a lot, even though, we, we, have seen a couple times. But if we are closer, mm, one or two times.

**Interviewer:** So it \*gets less\*?

**Miyu:** \*At on...\*, yeah, \*get less\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*. Okay.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** So, it's maybe something that's easy to talk about with people you don't know very well?

**Miyu:** About culture?

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So it's easy if you don't know the person, to talk about...

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** ...culture.

**Miyu:** Yeah. \*So first\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Miyu:** ...thing. Every time.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay, interesting. Uh, let's see. Oh, one more. Uh, so, we've talked a lot about your experience as an international student here.

**Miyu:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like you have anything else that you want to say about your experience, that we haven't talked about?

**Miyu:** International student.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. If not, that's okay.

**Miyu:** Mhm.

(long pause)

**Interviewer:** Can you think of anything else? If not, it's okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah, it's okay.



**Interviewer:** It's okay?

**Miyu:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. We've talked about everything important, right?

**Miyu:** Important (general laughter). I, I, I,i...i...if y...if you don't think, uh, it needs, just delete it. But I, my accommodation (laughs) \*is\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Miyu:** ...is divided to international student and British students.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** And male and female.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah. I, I don't know why they divided into international and British student.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Miyu:** Mm. Because in my, only in my experience, it's more comfortable to live i...with British students.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** I don't know why. Maybe some, my flatmates around me, i...it's just, mm, a bit complicated people \*I guess\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Miyu:** ...but.

**Interviewer:** So do you think that they should mix \*the students\*...

**Miyu:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...more?

**Miyu:** Yeah in, in, eh, in, in that, um, in accommodation, th...there's no point to divide them.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Miyu:** Yeah, so, mm.

**Interviewer:** So more, um, association with other kinds of \*people\*?

**Miyu:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay. \*Yeah\*.

**Miyu:** \*Yes\*.

**Interviewer:** Um, do you feel like you're too stressed out about school that you can't enjoy your experience here?

**Miyu:** As a international student?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, as a student, I mean, because you said that you're, you get very stressed about your work.

**Miyu:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Um, do you think at the end you're going to say, "Oh, that was a good experience", \*or\*...

**Miyu:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...will you say, "Oh, I was miserable for a year"?

**Miyu:** Oh.

**Interviewer:** Do you think...?

**Miyu:** S...sometimes I felt it's really hopeless, and, it was like I was collapsed or something (laughs), really hopeless. But if I overcome those situations, I definitely can feel that I have, mm, grew up...

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** ...or I, I got the power to sort out this situation with, on my own, so, it depends.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** Yeah. I, I, it depends on my attitude.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** But when you come across difficulties and you can overcome them, then you feel better, right?

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** Yeah. And good thing is, I will, I feel like, I was forced to sort out on my own...

**Interviewer:** Uh-huh.

**Miyu:** ...yeah, even though I don't want to (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Miyu:** I was like, "Oh, oh my God I can't do it."

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Miyu:** "Please help me, someone, I need hel...someone, someone's help!" But situation didn't allow me to ask help for other.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Miyu:** Yeah. It just, I don't know, sometimes, mm, like accommodation phone call is not, it was too busy, then I can't ask for help. It's just an example, but, I don't know, I, I think, in my country, yes I have, mm, my family member, and my friends, and my co-workers, they always help me, and support me. Then I, um, uh, always, naturally, unconsciously expect them. But here, I felt like, um, not, I

can't, uh, mm, I can't have a lot of support. Because I know, even though my classmates they are busy, then they might have the same kind of problem with mine. Mm, so, so the situation made me to solve the situation by myself, so, it's good.

**Interviewer:** In the end, you think it's good?

**Miyu:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Miyu:** It's good.

**Interviewer:** Okay! Interesting.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from interview with Romi  
July 7, 2015 at 23:00, Grayson Heights  
Duration: 12 min 44 sec  
(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So, we'll start easy. Can you just say your full name, your home country, and what you study here at Leeds.

**Romi:** Uh, I am Romi, uh, and I'm from Iran. I'm studying Engineering Project Management.

**Interviewer:** Great. Why did you choose to come to study at University of Leeds?

**Romi:** Um, to be honest, the first reason was to improve my, uh, confidence, because I didn't have, eh, any self-confidence back home. I wanted to go to somewhere that the university would be much better than the universities in my country, and, uh, I, I also wanted to, uh, improve my English. So, and my brother was also studying here, so I thought that it's a good opportunity to come here and do all of these together, and also I knew that the Leeds University is a good university. I checked the ranking and the ranking was really good, so.

**Interviewer:** Great, yeah. So your brother's still studying here?

**Romi:** Uh, he's in UK, not, not in Leeds. But, uh, he's, uh, in Warwick University.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Romi:** So we are kinda close and we can, you know, meet each other.

**Interviewer:** That's really nice.

**Romi:** Yeah, yeah (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Awesome. Okay. When you came, how important was it to you to establish relationships with UK students?

**Romi:** A lot, but unfortunately I was not successful...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** ...because, um, I mean, they're, they're most of the times, uh, lot of people together, British people, they, they do not communicate with, uh, international students. They, I mean, rarely they do. And they are not really warm (laughing) so, I couldn't really make, eh, friends, but, eh, it was really important for me, mm, because I wanted to, you know, improve my English, and I wanted to learn their accent, because I really like British accent. But, eh, I was unsuccessful.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, this is a very similar question. How important was it to you try to establish relationships with international students?

**Romi:** It was also really important, I guess, because, you know, you want always to learn about the, uh, international cultures and, em, know diff...people from different parts of the world. I guess it's always interesting.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay. Um, what do you like to do in your free time, and with whom?

**Romi:** Here in Leeds?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so when you're not in uni.

**Romi:** Uh, difficult question (laughs). Um.

**Interviewer:** Or, maybe you're studying for uni a lot?

**Romi:** Sorry?

**Interviewer:** I mean, you've been travelling.

**Romi:** Yeah, I have been, uh, I have been travelling in UK a lot, I have gone to York, Manchester, so many cities. And then, em, I have some Persian people, uh, friends here from home country. Sometimes I spend time with them, we go to bars and drink, or dance, like that. And, uh, in, at university, I guess the union, maybe sometimes I go to Old Bar, to the Hidden Cafe, like that.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you're mostly...

**Romi:** Oh...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Romi:** ...the gym.

**Interviewer:** The gym?

**Romi:** I, I go to gym a lot (laughs).

**Interviewer:** To the Edge?

**Romi:** Yeah. \*Did you go\*?

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*, it's really nice, isn't it? Yeah. Um, so you said mostly with, uh, other Persian friends?

**Romi:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah? Okay. \*Um\*.

**Romi:** \*Not mostly\*, maybe half.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** Like that.

**Interviewer:** So, other international students as well?

**Romi:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Right, okay. Um, right. When you came here, what helped you the most to make new friends?

**Romi:** Most?

**Interviewer:** What helped you to make new friends?

**Romi:** Oh.

**Interviewer:** Like, how did you make friends?

**Romi:** (laughs) Um, I don't know, I'm, I'm kind of warm person, you know, I like to communicate, to have new friends, and, mm, if they also, I see that they are also warm and they, they are, eh, enthusiastic to, to communicate, you become friend, I don't know (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. So did you meet people, uh, through your course in uni, flatmates, or...?

**Romi:** Mm, both flatmates, from my uni...from the civil faculty that I'm studying, or, uh, from the university's fa...mm, uh, Facebook page. \*Uh\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Oh, really\*?

**Romi:** Yeah, yeah. The first day, I wrote, eh, eh, something on the Facebook that I'm, eh, feeling alone, uh, is there anything to hang out? And then, eh, four other people also replied, and then after that, we became really good friends.

**Interviewer:** That's really cool!

**Romi:** (laughing) Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh wow. Oh, I like that a lot. Cool. Um, okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Romi:** A lot. A lot, yeah. I can say that my self-confidence has improved a lot, I can really say that. And, um, I guess my English has improved much, much better. The first month I came here, I really couldn't talk properly. Now, I can communicate, I, I understand people what they're saying, but, I remember the first week in the kitchen, the, my flatmates are, they are talking and I was just like, "What are they talking about?" (laughs) I couldn't understand anything.

**Interviewer:** Wow.

**Romi:** Yeah, so.

**Interviewer:** It's really good now!

**Romi:** (laughing) Yeah, it's, it's really good.

**Interviewer:** Wow!

**Romi:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, those were the two reasons why you came, \*right\*?

**Romi:** \*Yeah\*, yeah. The two main reasons, you know. Because I could study any...there were re...uh, also good universities in my c...country also, I could attend them, and it was really much, much, much, much cheaper. But I prefer to come here because of these two reasons.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, that's great! You got what, yeah, \*that's great\*.

**Romi:** \*Yeah\* (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Um, right. Okay, how do you feel about the title "international student"? Do you feel like you fit into this category, like, this is you? You are an international student. You know, when, uh, the university has special, uh, advice or events or courses for international students, do you feel like that's you?

**Romi:** Uh, yeah, I guess I am, I am considered here as international student. And, uh, sometimes there are differences between us and the, the home students. Eh, and yeah, I guess, I fee...I don't know what to say (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Yeah, so you feel like you do fit, right? \*That's you\*.

**Romi:** \*Yeah, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, okay. so, um, do you feel the university has provided enough support for you since you came here to Leeds, when you were adjusting to the new life?

**Romi:** Uh-huh. Not really (laughs).

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** It was good, but not, uh, enough. Em, I remember the first day I came here, eh, in the accommodation, um, I was really thirsty and hungry. I reached here at twelve o'clock at night, and, um, the, I, I asked the reception man where I can buy water because I was really thirsty, and, uh, he didn't even tell me that you can drink the tap water! I didn't know that the, the tap water is drinkable here. He didn't even tell me. And, uh, that night I slept really thirsty and hungry. And the next day I wanted to go to university, I didn't know the ways, they didn't help me at all. And, uh, I guess, um, for getting scholarships and funds also for international students is really bad here. And, yeah, in some aspects it has been good, but \*not enough\*.

**Interviewer:** \*So\*, once you were adjusted to the school, do you feel like the help was there when you needed it?

**Romi:** Um.

**Interviewer:** I mean, I guess once you adjusted you didn't need help as much anymore.

**Romi:** Um. I guess, no, the help is not enough. For example, when you are really, eh, searching for a part-time job, em, I went to the, what is... Career Centre. They, the only thing that they did was giving me the link of the websites that I can, I can go.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Romi:** Which, come on! I, I can even Google it (laughs). \*It's, it's really\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*!

**Romi:** ...easy. They didn't do anything. I mean, when you read the university website, there are so many things written that "We do this, we do that, we do this", so when you come, you see that, no, it's not really like that. They don't do.

**Interviewer:** Interesting, yeah. Um. \*Okay\*.

**Romi:** \*And\* they lie sometimes on the website.

**Interviewer:** What do you...?

**Romi:** Like, uh, uh, for the, this accommodation, it was written on the website that it is just ten minutes, mm, walk far from university, but with bus it is at least fifteen minutes, so you cannot count on what is written on the website.

**Interviewer:** Until you get here and find \*out\*.

**Romi:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** I see. Okay. Um, how connected to the university do you feel as a student? So, are you very proud to be a Leeds University student, or do you not feel very connected?

**Romi:** No, I guess, I am kinda proud, really.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Romi:** Because I know that the university is really good university, the professors are really expert, and, em, the way that they teach is good, but, um, you know, not, uh, not enough. I mean, uh, for example for my course they could teach us more softwares, em, and, um, help us to prepare for the, for our future job, which I didn't find it, I didn't, I didn't see that they do it.

**Interviewer:** So, it was more classroom, like, theoretical things?

**Romi:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** It could be much better.

**Interviewer:** Okay. But overall, you feel happy, to...

**Romi:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Romi:** Overall, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, um, two more questions.

**Romi:** It's fine.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How do you think your experience would have been different if you were here for undergraduate? So, you would have been here when you were younger, and you would be here longer. Do you think it would have been different, \*any better, worse\*?

**Romi:** \*Yeah, I guess\*, I guess, it, eh, it had much more difference, because, um, you know, you had, um, more time to, to communicate, to find British friends, to, you know, to become part of the society. Now we are, I don't feel like I am the part of the society here, mm, and people, British people are really far from me. But, if I was longer here, I had the chance, I had the chance to improve my English better, I, definitely my, mm, self-confidence would be higher, and, um, I guess, um, the, if you also educate here from ba...mm, from undergrad, um, you're knowledge will be higher because I feel like they teach better than my country, so.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** \*Um\*.

**Romi:** \*Sorry\*...

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Romi:** ...my English is not really (laughs)...

**Interviewer:** No, it's great! \*It's great\*.

**Romi:** \*Really\*?

**Interviewer:** Um, okay. How often, when you talk to somebody from another culture, how often do you talk about the differences between your culture? \*Do\*...

**Romi:** \*A\* lot (laughs).

**Interviewer:** ...that make sense? \*Yeah\*.

**Romi:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay.



**Romi:** Yeah, I guess the first things that we talk about is the differences between culture. “We do this in our country, what do you do?”, and “This is like this in my country, how is it in your country?”, “The weather is...”, you know, everything, everything (laughs).

**Interviewer:** So, is that more with a certain kind of person, or is it just, kind of, \*every\*...

**Romi:** \*No, no, no, no\*, uh, every, every international student that I, you see, the first things that you a...talk about is these things.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. Um, okay, so, last one. Um, just kind of open question. Is there anything else, um, about your experience as an international student at University of Leeds that you feel like you wanna say that we haven't talked about yet?

**Romi:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** And if not, that's okay.

**Romi:** Em, I guess, just if they become a little bit more honest, and, uh, the, uh, not all the professors are good enough, a little bit if they improve with that pa...that aspect, it w...it would be really a great university.

**Interviewer:** Okay, \*okay\*.

**Romi:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Great, great.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from interview with Hua  
July 8, 2015 at 13:00, Baines Wing  
Duration: 16 min 17 sec  
(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So, first question. Uh, just please state your name, your home country, and what you study at University of Leeds.

**Hua:** Uh, I'm Hua, I come from China, um, currently I'm studying master in Professional Language and Intercultural Studies in University of Leeds.

**Interviewer:** Great. Why did you choose to come to study at the University of Leeds?

**Hua:** Uh, so, first of all, I think, uh, Leeds is much cheaper. Um, I heard about that Leeds is a big city in England, so I think life should, like, I can enjoy the real British life here, and it should be c...very colourful. And I also heard about that the majority of the students here are international students, so I think it would create environment for, for the international students, and because you can feel free at home here. Um, secondly, it's also because University of Leeds is quite famous in linguistics and translation in UK.

**Interviewer:** Right, \*okay\*.

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** How important was it to you to try and establish relationships with other students who were from the UK?

**Hua:** From UK or in the UK?

**Interviewer:** From the UK.

**Hua:** So, you mean the local students?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Hua:** Uh, s...sometimes I feel it's very difficult, because, like, most British students, they are very fr...most are very friendly, but they are al...they're personality are very also sometimes very indifferent, and they're too polite to talk. Um, when I, um, so usually we will, like, hang out together for a couple drinks, or watch movie, um, but generally speaking, I feel that it's very difficult to establish a real relationship with them, because they, they, uh, like, they care about ex...they care about distance between people, and they're not so easy to talk.

**Interviewer:** So, when you came here did you try, was it important to you to \*try\*...

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...and connect with them?

**Hua:** Yes, I try. Um, I have a very close relationship with my British flatmate, and I think she may be the, the on...the very f...one of the very few British friends here.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, similar question. How important was it to you to try and establish relationships with other international students?

**Hua:** Uh, well, as for this question I think it's very easy to answer because, like, for most international students, they, uh, they are more, how to say, they are more, like, they welcome different, they, they,

they, they easily accept other people from other countries too. And because I think they are more, how to say it, like, in terms of cultural communication, they're easily to talk about, and they are willing to share their real feelings. And in my f...mm, and importance to, of, like, relationship establishment with the others internationals students is to listen to their voice and share ideas, and you can also learn from them because most of them are very modest. And wha...we also have some similar problems and we can talk, like very easily to talk, open their heart. And I also have an, a, an access to unders...to really understand the other countries' culture.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah, it's good for my study.

**Interviewer:** Great.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what do you do in your free time, and with whom?

**Hua:** Uh, in my spare time usually go shopping, uh, travel around UK, sometimes I vis...I visit Europe, or I will go to some very small town with my flatmates, such as Harrogate, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Great. So that's usually with, uh, your flatmates then?

**Hua:** Yeah, flatmates and Chinese friends.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah, great. What helped you the most to make new friends when you got to Leeds?

**Hua:** Mm, I think the first tool I can make use of is social networking, such as Facebook.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Hua:** And, I can interact with my, with people at all, I, and, and, and I see at the very beginning, and then, like, interact online, um, uh.

**Interviewer:** So with Facebook, um, you meet the people first, and then you become friends, and then you get to \*know them better\*?

**Hua:** \*Yeah, yeah, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** So, usually these peoples, I meet them, like, in the same school, or, or in some workshop, and then we, like, be friend with each other on Facebook, so we can, like, uh, exchange some opinions or some ideas.

**Interviewer:** Great, \*yeah\*.

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Um, was there a second thing that you were going to say?

**Hua:** Uh.

**Interviewer:** I thought you said that there were too. If not, \*that's okay\*.

**Hua:** \*I'm sorry\*. Yeah, I think social networking helped me the most.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Great. Okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Hua:** Uh, yes, I think the most important thing is I become, I become more international because I will, like, em, become more tolera...tolerable, because before, before coming to, to, to UK, I may have some bias about some countries, or some places, or some group of people, but since coming here, studying here, I'm, I'm, I learn from my studies, and my, my life to become, uh, to become more easy, uh, easy going. And I try myself to understand, like, uh, get rid of my bias and try to really understand the other peoples' culture, and I'm more interested in culture. And I feel that for, for my programme studies, like, intercultural communication, it's not about study, it's, uh, a very fantastic art of life.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Hua:** So, I can use in my whole life, so.

**Interviewer:** So, this is because of a combination of your studies and just living in a new place?

**Hua:** Yes, yes, definitely, it's a combination, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Great. How do you feel about the label of "international student"? Do you think that you fit neatly into this category?

**Hua:** Uh, not really. I don't really, um, I don't really like this label, because, uh, uh, I have the feelings that they, they separate, they separate the international students out to local students. But I think, like, UK is a very multinational countries, so I think they should, like, internation...both international students and local students, they should be pes...like, they should be treated equally, because I can feel that, uh, for some opportunities to, to apply scholarship, or jobs, part-time job application, sometimes, um, some employ...employers, will, like, make it very clearly that, even though they didn't make it clearly, but we'll clearly know that it is only suitable for local students. So, I feel that being separated, so, I dislike this label.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah. And I don't think, uh, I think I fit neatly into, in, into this group.

**Interviewer:** Right. \*So you\*...

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...feel like you fit the cat...the label but you don't really like it?

**Hua:** Yeah, I don't really like it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel that the university has provided the right kind of support for you as you adjusted? So, when you came here, and you've been adjusting to life in Leeds, did you get enough support from school if you had a problem?

**Hua:** Eh, uh, when I come here, like, the very beginning registration process, I get some help from my Chinese peers, not from the school. So, I don't think the school do a good job in this section. And, uh, because I fly from, fl...I, fl...I flew from China to Manchester. So, I heard about that other British universities have the pick-up service for, like, for me, to pick up some international students. But, for us, like, for Leeds University, we need to order the pick-up service by ourselves. And, but for my supervisor, I think I get, gained a lot of he...support from him. I can, like, talk quite openly with him, and he's, I can even, like, he's quite open-minded and always give me some very useful suggestion. He is also straightforward. Mhm.

**Interviewer:** That's great, yeah. How connected do you feel to the university as a student? Do you feel proud to be a Leeds University student, or do you feel like you are not very connected to the university itself?

**Hua:** Uh, I don't really feel like I, I am connected with the university, because, like, I s...I, I am a masters student, I will only spend one year here. And, like, for most activities the school held are typically for, typically for undergraduate students, and then I can, I can, sometimes when I went to cafés around university, I heard many undergraduates will, like, mention themselves that we, like, mm, Leeds, come from Leeds. But I don't have these feelings, so, I can't really, like, have, feel connected with the university.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So, this is kind of similar to what you were just \*saying\*.

**Hua:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** How do you think your experience here would have been different if you had been here to complete your undergraduate degree?

**Hua:** Y...yes, I have d...I have a lot of things to say about, regarding this question because, uh, I do pretty good in my undergraduate, but, for my master, I'm not familiar the system. So, sometimes I feel very lost. Even re...after, even after reading the student handbook and talking with my teachers, I still have no ideas to, like, do my homework. And es...especially when I, when I talk with some British teachers, they, they expect a, mm, lot of thing, more th...more about...mm, they expect more from my assignments, but I don't, I am not familiar with the system, I don't know what they expect. So, someti...uh, so, for gener...for my ge...average scores of my master, I didn't do pretty good. So, I was very disappointed. So, I was thinking that if I can, like, come here to st...to, to c...uh, to, to have my undergraduates study, it would be much, much better. And I really think one year in U...UK, one year in mast...British master, is really too short.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Hua:** Yeah, I kinda regret not going to US, so I'm thinking that, uh, next d...master degree I definitely go to America, because I prefer American system. They are more clearly, and they are, they give you a lot of guidelines, and more straightforward.

**Interviewer:** Okay. \*And\*...

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** ...also, um, the fact that it's a, it would be a two-year programme, \*do you\*...

**Hua:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...like that as well?

**Hua:** Yes, I think one year only suits for those students have previous study experience in UK already. And for me, I, mm, English is not my, not my mother language, so, so I need to handle the, the, b...because linguistics is my new area of studies, so I need to, on the, on the one hand, uh, for once, uh, for one, for one thing, I need to handle the, the, of the heavy burden of my study, and the other hand, I still need to try to figure out the, the understanding of English. So, too many, too much literature to read, so it's really difficult for me.

**Interviewer:** Mokay.

**Hua:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Right. Okay. How often does the conversation topic of differences between cultures come up when you're talking to someone from another culture? Does that make sense? Like, if you're talking to someone from another culture...

**Hua:** Mhm.

**Interviewer:** ...how often do you talk about the differences between your culture?

**Hua:** Uh, it's quite often. Yeah, because, but we also talk ab...in my, because sometimes we were, like, for example, I was tal...I was having some free conversation with my flatmates, and we can tell the differences, the cultural differences between us. But, also we, it's quite amazing that we also find some cultural similarity.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Hua:** It's more about this cultural similarity, because most people think, oh, every culture have its, uh, disparity, and too ve...very unique, but actually, like, I think differences and similarity exist together, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*. \*Interesting\*.

**Hua:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** So you kind of bond more over the similarities?

**Hua:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Mm. Cool. Um, is there anything else that you want to say about your experience here as an international student that we haven't really talked about?

**Hua:** Mm. I think, mm.

**Interviewer:** And if not, that's okay.

**Hua:** I think being organised is very important for, for, uh, international students.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Hua:** Um, especially, um, try to open your heart, and accept different kind of things, and do when you come to UK, no matter how you'd...you, um, no matter how much you dislike the, how they handle the academic, like, for example, like, when you ask the teachers question, uh, especially if it is, uh, related to your assignment, they can give you some advice, but they can't really say that much, yeah. \*Because\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Hua:** ...it's about, it w...it will, it will become their ideas. So, but f...it's really different from my home country's practice. So, but, when, since we come here, we need to do their way, like, try to be smart and organised.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Hua:** Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. \*Good\*.

**Hua:** \*Yeah\*, thank you.

**Interviewer:** Thank you! **\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***

**Transcript from interview with Noa  
July 9, 2015 at 12:00, Grayson Heights  
Duration: 26 min 37 sec  
(\* indicates simultaneous speech)**

**Interviewer:** So, to start, could you just please say your full name, your home country, and what you study here?

**Noa:** Um, I'm Noa, I'm from Japan, and I'm studying Global Development and Education here.

**Interviewer:** Great. Why did you choose to study at University of Leeds?

**Noa:** Um, actually there are three reasons for that, and one is, like, I want to work in the United Nation in the future and there's so many people who have, like, master degree in UK, because UK is really famous for development. One is for that, and ano...the second is, like, actually there are some, like, university, like, where I can measure development as well, in Japan as well, but, it's not really good quality, I think, because I think the field of development is not progressed in Japan. Mm, and, yeah and, like, in und...undergraduate in Japan they have to, like, do job hunting that, before they graduate, so, like, not all of them, but, like, so many postgraduate in Japan decided to do postgraduate because they fail to get a job down in the, like, the universities there, and so, like, one of my post...one, one of my seniors, like, advised me to go to, like, foreign countries, because, yeah, you know, there is like, if y...if you go to, like, if I go to university in Japan, you may feel, like, how can I say, the gap in motivation with another student, so, that is second reason. And third one is, if I choose to study in, like, English spoken coun...English-speaking countries, like, I have to improve my English as well, like, mm, I can improve my English as well, so, that is, third reason, \*mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Great\*. Okay. How important was it to you to try and establish relationships with students from the UK when you came here? \*Did you\*...

**Noa:** \*Student from the UK\*?

**Interviewer:** From the UK, \*yeah\*.

**Noa:** \*British\* student?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Noa:** Um, it's, how can I say, I didn't feel any difficulty with, like, the building relationship with them, but sometimes, mm, I think it's doesn't because, whether they are from Britain or another country, but because of, like, their ages, 'cause, like, I'm studying development, so some student already got working experiences and, how can I say, they're really proud of that. And, like, they sometimes hesitates to communicate with the yo...the young student.

**Interviewer:** Ah.

**Noa:** Mm. I'm, I'm sure, like, I can't tell you why, because, like, it's their, how they feel, 'cause, mm, but, like, as long as the younger student are concerned, it's, it was totally okay.

**Interviewer:** It was \*okay\*.

**Noa:** \*Mm\*, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Was it important to you to try and make friendsh...friends with UK \*students\*?

**Noa:** \*Yeah\*, yeah, yeah, 'cause, like, mm, I s...I saw some, like, student, mainly from China or Africa, they always get together with African people and Chinese people, as well, in, in my department as well. But, like, it's be okay, they're studying in their countries, but, here in UK, and, like, discussing with international student would be, like, benefit for us as well. So, mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay. Uh, this is a very similar question. How important was it to you to try and make friends with international students?

**Noa:** Mm, in terms of, like, studying development, like, it's, it's really important for me to, because I'm fr...from developed country, so it's really important to me to hear fr...hear the opinions from those living in developing country as well. So, how they felt about the aid and support from developed country as well, because sometimes they don't, like, need it anymore. So, it was really interesting. I, I think I, if I was studying, if I was studying development in Japan, I couldn't get any, like opinions, like, such a critical opinion for that. \*And\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** ...mm, and also, like, as long as I live in Japan, like, I can't see any, like, cultural difference between Japanese people and foreign countr...the foreign people, as well, so, like, it's, how can I say, narrow-mind world, so.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** Mm. It's really important, especially, especially the, um, communicating with those, like, whose background are really different from me, like, in \*terms of\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** ...religious and culture as well. \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Noa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Right. That's great. Okay. Um, what do you like to do in your free time, and with whom?

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** So, when you're not in university?

**Noa:** In, uh, university?

**Interviewer:** When you're outside university.

**Noa:** Oh, okay.

**Interviewer:** In your free time.

**Noa:** Mm, I love travelling.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Noa:** Mm. And, and, like, but, when I don't feel like going out, mm, I spend my time reading (laughing) books, \*and\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Noa:** ...I wish I were, I could play, play piano here, but (laughs) I, I actually asked, like, the Department of Music whether I can choose, like, piano here or not, but they said, like, I can't.

**Interviewer:** Aw.

**Noa:** Mm, so it was a bit disappointing, \*but\*...



**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, and when you're in fr...with your free time, uh, do you spend it with, um, other international students? Other Japanese students? Students from your course?

**Noa:** Mm, yeah, mm, mostly international students and Japanese students as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Mm, 'cause, for example, travelling at, like, other side of UK, I go there with international student, because, mm, I was talking with other international student as well, because, like, some of them wanted to go, like, to other areas of UK with British student, but most of British student have ever been there, so, like, (laughs) it's totally different, it's difficult. So, yeah, I usually going out with international student. But if I have, like, serious problem, incl...in terms of my mental or, like, physical problem as well, I, mm, usually consult with Japanese friend, mm.

**Interviewer:** Right. Okay. Um, what (coughs) sorry. What helped you the most to make new friends when you got to Leeds?

**Noa:** S...say it again?

**Interviewer:** What helped you \*the most to make\*...

**Noa:** \*Mhm, mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...new friends when you arrived in Leeds?

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** How did you make your friends?

**Noa:** Well, mm, I think, um, um, in terms of making friends in my department, probably we ha...we have to do first essay in the beginning of November, and it was, you know, totally new experience, experiences for most of international student, like, probably the writing style of essay in their country including me and UK style are probably different. So, like, we have to, how can I say, help with each other. So it, it's, like I think it's facilitate our relationship in positive ways.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so through schoolwork, \*right\*?

**Noa:** \*Mm\*, mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. \*Anything else\*?

**Noa:** \*And\*, and, like, social as well?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** Like, it was always, like, British student who are like...who ki...who kindly organised it. Like, in their house, and other restaurant as well.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Yeah, it's also help me, like, develop...building relationship with other international student as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Um, are these people that you met from your course?

**Noa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Gotcha. Okay. Have you noticed any changes in yourself since you came to Leeds?

**Noa:** Mm, yeah, in terms of study, I think I could develop, like, critical thinking which is really thought much of here, 'cause, mm, 'cause, like, for example, in classes, like, mm, how can I say, in univer...in my university in Japan, the professor didn't try to develop students' critical thinking, because critical thinking itself is not so familiar in Japan. Like, we call it, like, banking education, like, they just, the professor just try to, like, how can I say, provide student with knowledge and worth, without, like, without letting them develop the meaning by themselves. So, so, like, I was so surprised, and scared when I attended the first lecture of British professor, and, like, she submitted, she, she gave us the report of UN, United Nation, and she said, like, "Read through and criticise it." And I was thinking, like, "I can't criticise it because it is UN's report, it's", and, I, I was thinking it's perfect. But now I can criticise, like, such kind of international organisations, and, like, report and project as well. \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*That's\* great.

**Noa:** Yeah, yeah. And, mm, and I, I ho...hopefully I (laughing) could improve my English as well here (laughs), and, mm, in terms of, like, friend...friendship with other student, I don't know why, but, there's so many Japanese student who feel inferior to Western people. Mm bec...I c...I can't say it's, like, I think there's so many reasons, and one is probably that they are so many, you know, fashion corporations, and they all, they always use the advertisement with, like, using the Western models, like, whi...which makes me feel like, like Japanese are a little bit inferior to Western people, because they are always models to us. \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*I see\*.

**Noa:** Yeah, and, mm, and I think there are also, like, historical perspective as well, because, mm, pr...probably the result of World War Second, I can't say, but, mm, so, like, even I communicate with, like, people from America and European countries in Japan, I sometimes feel like, it's also because of my, like, quality of English as well, but, a bit feel like their opinion is right, probably right, and my opinion is not so always good. Yeah, but, like, mm, after I came here and, like, especially discussing in class with British student and other European student, like, I, we, mm, I felt like, how can I say, it's empowered me, mm, in many ways, mm.

**Interviewer:** That's really good!

**Noa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Good, \*yeah\*.

**Noa:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** Nice. Okay. Um, how do you feel about the label of "international student"? So, do you feel like you fit into the category of \*international\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...student? You know have they have \*certain\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...resources, or advice, or events for international students, do you feel like that's you, \*completely\*?

**Noa:** \*Mm\*, categorise international student.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So when they advertise things for international students, \*do\*...

**Noa:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you think, "That's me"?

**Noa:** Uh, yeah, (laughing).

**Interviewer:** Yeah, \*you do, okay\*.

**Noa:** \*'Cause, 'cause I have\* no background in UK.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Noa:** Yeah, 'cause I'm totally international student here.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** I sometimes wonder how, like, for example, British Indian?

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** How c...how can I say it? Indian Brit...should I say Indian British?

**Interviewer:** Um, British Indian, \*I'm not\*...

**Noa:** \*Like\*...

**Interviewer:** ...exactly sure, but I \*know what you mean\*.

**Noa:** ...\*yeah, in...including\*, like, British Chinese.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** How they, like, think of them as Chinese or British.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. \*yeah\*.

**Noa:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Because I talked with a lot of people and, you know, some people from the EU say that they don't feel \*completely\*...

**Noa:** \*Mhm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...international, but, um, so you feel like you're an international \*student\*?

**Noa:** \*Mm\*, \*yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*. Okay! Okay. Um, right. Do you feel the university provided enough support for you as an international student when you came here, and this whole year? Have you felt \*like\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...they've supported you?

**Noa:** Like, es...especially for international student, no?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, like, you as international student, um, do you feel like, if you had a problem, uh, the university would support you?

**Noa:** Mm. Well, because in, in my department, I, there's some support for student, but I think the professors and staffs do, like, treat equally with British student and international student as well.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** And I didn't feel like there was some special support for international student, like, mm, at least in my department.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** But do you feel, like, supported by the university as a person, like, as a \*student\*?

**Noa:** \*Mm\*. Uh, yeah. Um, support from library, like, you know, academic support, it was a bit helpful for me.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** But I, I'm not sure whether it was only for international student, or \*British student\*...

**Interviewer:** \*That's okay\*.

**Noa:** ...as well. \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*. What about if you had problems with, like, adjusting to life in the UK?

**Noa:** Mm, I didn't feel any difficulty adju...adjusting myself \*to UK life\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*. So you didn't need to look for help?

**Noa:** Uh, but, like, um, but probably in September and October I had, like, difficulty in catching, like, British accent English, mm.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Noa:** Especially some professors who were from, from Scot...Scotland.

**Interviewer:** Ahh.

**Noa:** Yeah, and Manchester as well, especially my supervisor is from Edinburgh, and, like, now I can totally understand her English, but in September, I was like, "Wha" (laughs), "What's going on?!" (more laughter).

**Interviewer:** Okay, okay. And I guess there's not much that the university can do \*for that problem\*.

**Noa:** \*Mm\*. Yeah but actually I consult about it \*to the professor\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Oh, good\*!

**Noa:** I'm s...really sorry, but, because, like, she's in charge of education and development, and I knew that she was going to be my supervisor as well, so I'm, and she, (unintelligible) she speaks so fast, and, like, I actually told her, like, "I'm so sorry, but, like, um, to say that but, I sometimes cannot understand your English at all, and, like, it's go...it's help me a lot if, if you could speak a little bit slowly", or something like that. Like, and she said, like, she didn't get any angry with me, like, she just said "Oh, okay, okay, I'm sorry for that, because every year international student told me, like, to speak slowly and erase my bad habit." It was so kind of her and, like, it h...it helped me a lot.

**Interviewer:** Oh that's \*good\*.

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay, good. Um, okay. Three more questions. Uh, how connected to the university do you feel as a student? So, do you feel really proud to be a Leeds University student, or do you feel not much connection to university? \*Um\*...

**Noa:** \*Connection\*.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. \*Like\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*, yeah I'm really proud of being a student in Uni of Leeds, mm, 'cause this is my first choice, you know, the, Leeds is the, the best situation where I, I wanted to go, when I was, like, preparing and applying for universities in UK. So I was really glad when I was accepted for that.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** So, mm, and, yeah, and I, another reason's like, I love Leeds compared with, mm, London, because there are so many develop...like, university I can measure development as well. \*Mm\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Ahh\*.

**Noa:** ...probably because of people, and I can't say it, but, mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, \*makes sense\*.

**Noa:** \*Yeah\*, they are so kind. \*And\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** ...my flatmate was talk...was saying same things bec...like, people in London and people and Leeds, they are like totally different, and how they behave and, like, treat others, like...

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So that's really \*helped you\*?

**Noa:** \*Yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Great. Um, how do you think your experience would be, would have been different if you were here for undergraduate?

**Noa:** Um, yeah, that's interesting question because, like, um, she alre...alrea...she already went back to Japan, but there was one Japanese student, like, who belong to same university to mine as well, like, um, and she was, she was twenty years old. And she just came here as exchange student. Like, she was undergraduate, she is undergraduate here. And, like, mm, sometimes as postgraduate,

because our, our period is only one year, and I think we, we s...we talked about it in the first semester, but, like, i...I sometimes feel like it's difficult to make friend in postgraduate programme, because it's only one year. And especially British students, sometimes they feel like they don't have to make friends with, like, student who, who will stay here only one year. But, like, mm, but she said, like, she's really, how can I say, good, mm, she made so many friend here.

**Interviewer:** Mhm.

**Noa:** And, and she said it's probably because, like, most of undergraduate say, like, they stay here for three years, and, mm, like, how can I say, and (unintelligible) very young, and, like, they are so, like, for undergraduate, mm, how can I say, actually their sit...their situation changes every year because, like, as they proceed to next grade. Like, so they always really motivated to make new friends.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Noa:** Mm. \*But, like\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Okay\*.

**Noa:** ...I s...I sometimes feel like for British student and for some international student as well, like, postgraduate for one year is, like, something they just pass, mm.

**Interviewer:** So, they're not looking \*so much for\*...

**Noa:** \*They\*, they really don't find any significance in making friends. \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** \*I see\*. \*Okay\*.

**Noa:** \*Not o...not only\* between British and international student, but British and British student as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Right. Okay. Um, how often when you are talking to somebody from another culture from yours...

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** ...how often do you discuss the differences between your cultures? How often does it come up?

**Noa:** Mm. How often, mm. Mm.

**Interviewer:** Do you understand what I'm \*asking\*?

**Noa:** \*Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, yeah.

**Noa:** It's already come up when I having lunch or dinner with them, because, so...I didn't have any food which I couldn't c...I can't eat for religious reason, cultural reason. But, most student have at least one food, for example, like, pork for Muslim student, and, like, for, like, before they st...they having, uh, before we are having social, or, like, eating out, like, and choosing, while you're choosing restaurant, like, they sometimes say "No, I can't go to, like, steak or something because I can't eat meat, like, because I am vegetarian." So, like, it's, mm, it was interesting, and it's also cultural things. And, like, while, in addition to that, while discussing with other student in, like, in classes, I sometimes feel the difference, like, in how we develop our argument. Because it's typical Japanese way of speak, like, discussing and speaking, we, we, we always, like, put conclusion at the end. But, like,

British student, they say, like, "I think this, because badabadabadabadabada." But, Japanese student always say, "because badabadabadabadabada, I think like that."

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** (laughing) And sometimes British student, like, they were, like, irritated and angry at me (laughing), and they were not serious but just, like...

**Interviewer:** A bit impatient?

**Noa:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. "So, Noa, what is your conclusion?" (general laughter) So it was, like, mm, interesting to me.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** And I, I thought this skill is really important, especially I start to work in UN, or, like, mm...

**Interviewer:** Yeah, \*yeah\*.

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** So, um, also in, let's say, social settings, if you're speaking with somebody from another culture, um, do you tend to talk about the differences, or do you talk about other things usually?

**Noa:** Mm. \*You mean\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Because there's\* so many international students here.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Like, if you're speaking to, just anybody else from another culture, do you speak about, like, "Oh, you know, this is different in my country, and...", or did you just talk about just \*other things\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...like university, or...

**Noa:** It depends on what topic it is, because, like, for example, like, sensitive topics, like, um, like, for example, uh, one of my friend who is from Pakistan, like, um, he said, like, his sister, his young sister got married at the age of seventeen. And I'm not sure it's, like, early marriage, like, which, h...which probably, like, think le...like, disrespect by Western people and, or just, like, like, they, she had, like, lover, and she really want to get marry, married with him. \*I'm not s\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Noa:** ...I'm not sure, but I can't ask, like, is, is this, like, early marriage? \*Like that\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Ah, okay\*.

**Noa:** ...because, it's, like, very, re...really sensitive top...

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Noa:** ...sensitive topic. But, if it were food, or, like, mm, probably some aspect of religious thing, I think I could ask, \*and, like\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** ...we can talk with each other.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Oh, great.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Okay, um, last thing, uh, is just kind of an open question.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** If, uh, there's anything else, uh, about your experience as an international student at Leeds University \*that\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...you want to say that we haven't really talked about, that you think is important?

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** And if not, that's okay.

**Noa:** Yeah, I'm not sure my o...this opinion will help you or not, \*but\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Go ahead\*.

**Noa:** ...what I found interesting here is that in first semester, like, I see so many international student trying to, like, making, try to make, trying to make friend with other international, international student whose backgrounds are really different to them. For example, like, Japanese student try to make friend with African people, and Chi...like, other, not from east Asia but, like, mm, South Asian student as well. But, like, in second semester, I see, like, so many student always hanging out with, like, same nationality student, \*like\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mhm\*.

**Noa:** ...Japanese people and Japanese people. And, I was wondering what was happened here to them, like, mm, probably they realise that it's a bit difficult, or, like, mm, to, like, always getting out, always going out with, like, international student whose backgrounds are totally different to them, or, like, mm, I can't say, because, mm, like, mm, there are four Japanese student in my department, but in first semes...in first semester, we talked with each other and decided not to, like, hang out with only with us, because we are Japanese student so, like, we, we can hang out in Japan as well. So, like, let's, we have to, like, develop our relationship with other international students. So, like, but, and I think, uh, four of us, like continuing then, continuing the promise, but, mm, like, other, like African people, they always hanging out with African people, like, on their, they, they actually, like, try to develop their inter...relationship in the first sem...in the first semester with other international student, like, for example, in classes sitting with international student, so that they can hear another opinion from other perspective. But, in the second semester they're always sitting with African people, eh, which makes a bit sad, \*whi...which\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*.

**Noa:** ...makes me sad \*a bit\*.

**Interviewer:** \*Mm\*. So it seems like you had to make the effort \*to\*...

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** ...mix with other nationalities.



**Noa:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And, that most people won't make the effort.

**Noa:** Mm.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay.

**Noa:** They actually try to make the effort in the first semester, \*but\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Right\*.

**Noa:** ...like, I was wondering what happened to them \*in the\*...

**Interviewer:** \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** ...in second semester, they, mm, they found it difficult, or they really don't want to do that. I'm not sure, but, mm.

**Interviewer:** I think you're right. \*Yeah\*.

**Noa:** \*Mm\*.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that's really interesting. That's, that's perfect. Thank you so much.

**\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\***