

**The Academic and Socio-cultural Adaptation of Chinese
International Students Studying in the Netherlands during
COVID-19 Pandemic**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the academic and socio-cultural adaptation of Chinese international students studying in Dutch universities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the significant number of Chinese students that attend Dutch universities during COVID-19, it is important to see how they adapt to life in the Netherlands. This paper employs a mixed-method to examine difficulties Chinese students have encountered and factors that affect their cultural transition. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with Chinese students studying at Utrecht University and a survey was also released to Chinese students in other Dutch universities to provide a general picture of how different findings complement each other. The findings show that the difficulties in academic and socio-cultural adaptation are influenced by five factors which are language barriers, pedagogical difference, personality, prior overseas experience and COVID-19. The qualitative and quantitative analysis also reveals that the primary difficulty resulting from COVID-19 is closely related to communication and social interaction. Generally, Chinese international students can adapt to Dutch universities and society during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Chinese students have encountered difficulties in adaptation to academic learning and social life in the Netherlands, those issues cannot be generally blamed for the impact of COVID-19.

Keywords: Academic adaptation , Socio-cultural adaptation, COVID-19

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1. Introduction

With the development of globalization, more Chinese international students finished their studies abroad, including in the Netherlands. According to China's Ministry of Education, there were 662,100 Chinese studying abroad in 2018 (Zuo, 2019). In the Netherlands, the number of Chinese international students has drastically increased over the last decade. In the academic year 2018-2019, Chinese students are the third-largest group among all international students, with over 4,400 enrolled in Dutch higher education, whereas the number was 185 in the year 2000 (Nuffic, 2019). A report by Leiden Asia Center shows that the affection for Europe, the availability of various English programs and the cost-effectiveness of Dutch higher education are the three primary reasons for Chinese students to choose the Netherlands (Hong et al., 2017). Given the international character of the Netherlands, the presence of Chinese students is no longer a marginal phenomenon but has become a structural aspect of the Dutch higher education sector.

During the process of adapting to the host nation, overseas students face unfamiliar situations and experience many difficulties in almost every aspect of life. As Smith and Khawaja (2011) claim, the possible acculturative stressors international students have encountered are language barriers, educational difficulties, loneliness, discrimination, and practical problems associated with the new environment. Thus, compared with domestic students, overseas students need to pay extra attention and make an effort to socially adjust as their social networks are not easy to reach anymore (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Furthermore, Rienties et al. (2012) find that, at a Western university, international students with a western ethnic background perform better at academic and social adaptation than students with a non-western background. For instance, compared with French and British students in Canada, Chinese students report higher anxiety, lower social support and more adaptation and communication issues (Chataway & Berry, 1989). Thus, such cultural transition and adjustment issues are common across all international student groups and Chinese students' experience in

Western countries may be especially challenging.

Considering the influx of Chinese international students in universities, Chinese students are usually regarded as a macro community in the host countries and the issue of cross-cultural adjustment among them has become a research subject (e.g., Choy & Alon, 2019; Zhang & Brunton, 2007; Gu, 2009; Wand et al., 2012). Generally, most research regarding this subject is conducted in the US, UK, and Canada, which are positioned as the top three preferred study abroad destinations for Chinese students (Kennedy, 2019). However, there is limited research conducted in the Netherlands. As mentioned before, given the increasing number of Chinese international students in the Netherlands, greater attention should be directed towards the adjustment of Chinese international students.

Regardless of the breakout of COVID-19, a large number of Chinese international students still move to the Netherlands for studies; however, the research regarding the COVID-19 and cultural adaptation is not sufficient. Apart from regular difficulties caused by cultural transition, the disruption of society and education caused by COVID-19 may also have a huge impact on the cultural adaptation of international students who choose to study abroad during the pandemic. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, which has affected 219 countries and territories and led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide (Worldometer, 2021). More than a health crisis, such a global pandemic has triggered economic and social disruption. A report by the UN shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption in education, affecting around 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries (United Nations, 2020). To restrain the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the continuity of education, most educational institutions around the world have canceled in-person instruction and have started online learning and teaching. However, according to the report from European Commission, the switch from offline to online learning affects students negatively; for instance, they tend to be less motivated to engage in learning activities and feel more stressed and anxious when learning at home (Di Pietro et al., 2020). Such negative effects are likely to cause more transitional issues when newly arrived international

students attempt to adapt themselves to their host society, as they may be invisibly isolated by distance learning.

This research focuses on the socio-cultural and academic adaptation of Chinese international students studying in the Netherlands during COVID-19. To help Chinese international students better integrate into Dutch education and society, especially during COVID-19, more information on their experience of living and studying in the Netherlands is required. Thus, the prime goals of this research are to characterize the adjustment difficulties that Chinese international students have encountered during COVID-19, investigate influencing factors of cultural adaptation, and explore to what extent COVID-19 has influenced socio-cultural and academic adaptation. The research question and sub-questions are therefore as follows:

RQ: *How do Chinese International students experience the process of socio-cultural and academic adaptation in the Netherlands during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic?*

SQ1: *During the COVID-19 pandemic, what challenges do Chinese International students face in academic adaptation?*

SQ2: *During the COVID-19 pandemic, what challenges do Chinese International students face in socio-cultural adaptation?*

SQ3: *Which factors influence the process of socio-cultural adaptation of Chinese International students in the Netherlands?*

SQ4: *Which factors influence the process of academic adaptation of Chinese International students in the Netherlands?*

The study finds that while Chinese students have some adaptation difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, they can generally adapt to learning and living in the Netherlands. COVID-19 has impeded socialization with professors and fellow students in Dutch universities, which directly or indirectly affects the process of academic and socio-cultural adaptation.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter elaborates concepts relevant to the study and the conceptual explanations given here are to give insights and guide the research. First, the notion of cultural adaptation is introduced; second, the general overview of academic adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation is explained. The following section is a discussion of factors that may affect the process of cultural adaptation. Last, previous research regarding the cultural adaptation of Chinese students is presented.

2.1 Adaptation, Adjustment, Acculturation and Assimilation

In the research associated with changes in adaptation to unfamiliar cultures, there are several important terms including adaptation, adjustment, acculturation and assimilation that appear similar and sometimes are even employed interchangeably. Without clear differentiation, these terms may lead to difficulties in understanding the issue; thus, the following review provides a brief summary of these terms.

Acculturation and assimilation are employed to describe changes that occur as the result of living in a new cultural environment (Hannigan, 1990). According to Berry (2005), acculturation is defined as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p. 698), while assimilation is regarded as the process of giving up original identity and becoming part of society (Chen, 2009). Simpson (1968) claimed that "Assimilation and Acculturation are sometimes considered synonymous, but more often the view is that of Assimilation encompassing Acculturation." (Hannigan, 1990, p. 92). Unlike acculturation and assimilation that tend to refer to groups rather than individuals, both adaptation and adjustment are usually used to describe individuals (Hannigan, 1990).

By reviewing previous definitions of adjustment, Hannigan (1990) summarized

that "adjustment is characterized by social applicability of behavior and an ability to successfully reach outcomes desired in one's dealing and interactions with others" (p. 91). Furthermore, Ward and Kennedy (1993) proposed that cross-cultural adjustment can be divided into two domains: psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment. The psychological dimension refers to "feelings of well-being and satisfaction" (Ward & Searle, 1991, p. 450) and a stress and coping perspective would best explain an individual's psychological adjustment (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006); while sociocultural adjustment, in contrast, refers to the "ability to 'fit in' and negotiate interactive aspects of new culture" (Ward & Searle, 1991) and it indicates the connections between individual and the new society (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

The concept of adaptation is usually considered as an umbrella term that incorporates other similar but narrower terms, such as cultural shock, adjustment, acculturation and assimilation (Kim,1995). In Johnson and Sandhu's research (2007), the definition of cultural adaptation refers to the fact that individuals increase the level of adaptability to meet the demands of a new cultural environment. Drawing from definitions of adaptation cited by other researchers (e.g., Nash,1967; Klein,1979; Grove & Torbiorn, 1985), Hannigan (1990) summarizes that "adaptation encompasses cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral and psychological changes in an individual who lives in a new or foreign culture" (p. 92). Furthermore, Hannigan (1990) proposes that all definitions of adaptation deal with the same factors which were discussed under the definition of adjustment or included as a component of adaptation. Thus, adjustment and adaptation overlap to some extent or are synonymous for some theorists.

In short, the terms adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and assimilation are used to describe changes that occur when individuals or groups interact with a different culture; the results of those will provide a satisfaction, an improvement of cultural and social performances, a development of interaction with local people and a feeling of acceptance (Hannigan, 1990). In this study, the researcher views adaptation as a broader concept. The term, cultural adaptation, would be used mainly to describe the general

process of adaptive change including both academic adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation.

2.2 Academic Adaptation

Academic adaptation refers to the degree of students' success in dealing with various learning requirements in an educational context (Rienties et al., 2012). As relatively short-term visitors to a foreign country and with the purpose of pursuing academic success, international students are considered as a special case of sojourners. In the process of academic adaptation, international students not only need to maintain a balance in a new academic environment, but also try to meet the new learning requirements of the university (Feng & Li, 2002). They must face difficulties communicating in class, especially online; while dealing with their perceptions of various professors' views and responses (Rienties et al., 2012). Research by Wang and Hannes (2014) also shows that Asian international students usually experience academic adjustment challenges in curricular-related activities. Therefore, academic adaptation to the host university is an important aspect for international students.

2.3 Socio-cultural Adaptation

Socio-cultural adaptation is a major issue for people who migrate to a new society. It is essential for international students to adjust to life and cultural differences when studying abroad. The term "socio-cultural" involves the meaning of both "social" and "cultural." According to Rienties et al. (2012), social adaptation refers to "how well students deal with the interpersonal-societal demands of a study, such as making friends, being part of social activities or being able to work in groups" (p. 687). Cultural adaptation is related to the process of "how a foreigner fits into new cultural environments and also of cultural shock, and interactional effectiveness" (Sivtceva, 2016, p.20). Generally, socio-cultural adaptation can be summarized as the fitting process of how individuals get used to a new social and cultural environment through

studying and applying the host country's knowledge and skills.

2.4 Factors Affecting Cultural Adaptation

As sojourners surrounded by a different culture and society, international students are confronted with various problems as they are adjusted to the new surroundings. Research by Hsu (2011) indicates that factors related to globalized influences have significantly affected the transition experiences in academic learning and sociocultural life. In this study, many key factors have been identified as affecting cultural adaptation: communication with professors, interpersonal communication, language barriers, discrimination, pedagogical differences, personality, expectation, previous experiences and COVID-19.

2.4.1 Communication with Professors

Communication plays an important role in the learning experience of Chinese international students. Research from Tian and Lowe (2009) and Holmes (2004) reveals that the learning experience of Chinese international students is closely related to their interaction with their tutors and communication is the key to assisting them to conquer academic difficulties. Tian and Lowe also (2009) claim that the language barrier is one of the main learning difficulties of Chinese international students; however, findings from Zhu & Gao (2012) indicate that the primary factors behind learning difficulties are external and internal communication and cultural barriers, rather than English language proficiency.

2.4.2 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is considered as one of the crucial factors affecting cultural adaptation. Interpersonal communication includes interactions and friendships an international student forms with locals and other international students as well. Previous research report that many international students are not satisfied with their multicultural relationship (Choi, 1997) and express the need for local assistance with

sociocultural adjustment (Todd & Nesdale, 1997). The emphasis on socializing with host nationals positively influences sociocultural adjustment (Swami et al., 2010). Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune (2011) also indicate that international students who report more interpersonal relationship with host country individuals claim to be more satisfied, content, and more socially connected. On the other hand, Gillette (2005) claims that interactions with co-national peers can also aid in the adjustment process.

2.4.3 Expectation

Many international students have high expectations about their life abroad before arriving in the host country. Unfortunately, there is a gap between their expectations and the reality of the journey. Weissman and Furnham (1987) indicate that a student's mental health is closely associated with the large differences between expectation and experiences in reality. Report by Pitts (2009) reveals that student sojourners studying in France experience significant gaps in terms of language expectation, social expectation, culture expectation, travel expectations. Previous research has found that having accurate expectations positively affects cross-cultural adjustment (Caligiuri, 2001).

2.4.4 Discrimination

Discrimination or biased stereotypes are also recognized as a common challenge that affects the cultural adaptation of international students. Discrimination not only makes international students feel unwelcome and unsafe in the host country, but also decreases their motivation to interact with local people (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Past research indicate that international students from Asia, Africa, Latin American and the Middle East experience more acculturative stress than those from Europe, because they encounter more racism and discrimination (Araujo, 2011; Hannassab, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Additionally, the report from Pew Research Center shows that the racist views toward Asian Americans is more common amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

2.4.5 Language Barriers

It is not surprising that the language barrier is a dominant factor in cultural adaptation. "Language skills are important because they affect the quality and quantity of intercultural interactions" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 190). The research conducted by Ward and Kennedy (1999) has shown that a better understanding of the host country language made the sociocultural adaptation process easier. Communication skills and language ability corresponding to a new environment are keys to assimilating and adapting more quickly to the new culture. In the academic domain, language competency can impact the understanding of lectures, written examinations and communication with fellow students (Chen, 1999). In English speaking countries, English proficiency strongly relates to the academic success of international students (Mori, 2002; Kim, 2006). Many international students with strong academic performance in their home countries might be struggling with courses that are new to them. Findings from Poyrazli and Kavanaugh (2006) indicate a significant relationship between the English language proficiency of Asian international students and their academic achievement. Furthermore, in non-English speaking countries, international students suffer from language barriers not only of academic English but also of the host country's native language. The results from Meng, Zhu and Cao (2017) have revealed that local language proficiency in non-English speaking countries not only has a positive effect on social and academic adaptation, but also effectively facilitates the communication with host-nationals and reduces acculturative stress.

2.4.6 Pedagogical Difference

The learning difficulties that Chinese international students encounter has been reported intensively in researches related to the learning experience and academic adaptation (Gu, 2005; Spencer-Patey & Xiong, 2016). Gu (2005) summarizes the negative learning experience as 'learning shock' which refers to the intense and unpleasant feeling and difficult experiences that cross-national learners have encountered. The pedagogical difference is the main reason for the learning shock. The search (Meng, Zhu & Gao, 2012; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995) indicates that the learning

approach of Chinese students is usually described as obedient, memory-based, lack of critical thinking; while western learning style is more student-centered and instructors act as a guiding role to encourage student's independence (Zhao & McDougall, 2008; Chan, 1999). Thus, for Chinese students, switching to a new teaching paradigm may be a huge challenge.

2.4.7 Previous Experience

It is generally believed that people who have cross-cultural experience are able to adapt well to a new culture. A common assumption is that prior knowledge from cross-cultural experience or training facilitates adjustment, although some cultural shock may occur (Arensberg & Niehoff, 1966). Church (1982) emphasizes that "the nature and quality of ... previous cultural experience or host culture exposure may be more important than the quantitative amount of previous exposure" (p.549). However, some research present a different view that there is no significant relationship between previous experience abroad and general adaptation (Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991). Nicholson and Imaizumi (1993) even hold an opposite view that lack of experience can be conducive to adaptation because "it is more likely to convey the assignment the benefits of being a completely new and exciting experience" (p.128).

2.4.8 Personality

Personality characteristics also help an individual cope with a physical, social, and cultural environment. A survey conducted by Hu et al. (2020) reveals that a proactive personality contributes to facilitate cross-cultural adaptation and it is positively related to social adjustment, under the high, rather than low, levels of cultural distance (Hu et al., 2020). Moreover, the results from Kour and Sharma (2017) also show that proactive personality traits positively affect the cultural intelligence which refers to the capability to function effectively in a diverse cultural environment (Earley & Ang, 2003).

2.4.9 COVID-19 Related

The COVID-19 pandemic is transforming education in profound ways. Because of

the pandemic, educational institutions have to suspend face-to-face teaching and switch to distance education. The obstacles to distance education affect actual communication and disrupt students' learning experience (Jones, 2010). The difficulties that arise while communicating with others online can occur because of the absence of a sense of emotional connection and real-time feedback (Kim, Liu & Bonk, 2005). Similarly, Ku and Lohr (2013) indicate that a lack of immediate feedback and insufficient interactions among students and instructors are the main reasons that students dislike online-course. Compared to in-person interaction, it is more difficult to create a similar sense of social presence and avoid communication problems regarding social interactions online (So & Brush, 2008). On the other hand, Zhao and McMougall (2008) reveal that Chinese students experience fewer language barriers in distance education as they are not required to speak in the online environment. Besides, during COVID-19, the quality of student's interpersonal relationships was positively related to their school adaptation (Zhang et al., 2021)

2.5 Cultural Adaptation among Chinese International Students

Most of the research regarding Chinese students' cultural adaptation is conducted in the US, UK, New Zealand and other 'so-called' Western countries. Wang et al. (2012) find that over 20 percent of Chinese students remain consistently distressed after three semesters in the US. The stressors that affect their mental health are language barriers, social isolation, academic and financial pressures, and acculturation stress (Choy & Alon, 2019). More specifically, the result from Zhang & Brunton (2007) reveals that Chinese international students have fewer opportunities to make friends with local people in New Zealand due to communication difficulties and cultural distance. However, by investigating the pedagogical, sociocultural and psychological challenges that Chinese students have encountered in British universities, Gu and Maley (2008) indicate that most students are able to overcome various struggles and adapt to academic conventions of the host country.

Although most research concerning Chinese students' cultural adaptation is conducted in countries that are popular among Chinese international students, few reports are conducted in the Netherlands. However, Long et al. (2009) explore that emotional stability, cultural empathy and open-mindedness appear to be positive predictors for social and psychological adjustment. More specifically, Yin (2017) conducted qualitative research at Tilburg University to explore Chinese students' integration process from four aspects: academic integration, societal integration, personal-emotional integration, and institutional integration. The results show that Chinese international students are able to adapt to the demands of the Dutch educational system although they may be confronted with difficulties in the beginning; in terms of societal integration, they report barriers to making friends with their fellow Dutch classmates (Yin, 2017).

Nevertheless, researchers have concluded that Chinese international students still suffer from various stressors, even in countries such as Japan and Korea, which have a relatively similar culture to China (Ikeguchi, 2012; Kwon, 2013). The findings from Ikeguchi (2012) reveals that the major difficulties during their stay in Japan are language barriers, Japanese indirectness, lack of knowledge of the character of Japanese people. Similarly, for Chinese students enrolled in Korean universities, the challenges in sociocultural adjustment are perceived cultural distance, language competence, low level of interaction with host nationals, and biased stereotypes (Kwon, 2013).

To conclude, based on previous studies, Chinese students have encountered various adjustment issues during their stay in the host country, whether in similar or different cultural contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Mixed Method

This research employed a mixed-method approach to achieve a fuller understanding of the cultural adaptation issues that Chinese international students have encountered. Mixed-method research is considered an approach of increasing the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research and improving the validity of the research (Dörnyei, 2007). This research will start by conducting interviews with Chinese international students to gain insights into their adjustment regarding socio-cultural adaptation and academic adaptation. Because of the non-representativeness of typical samples (Dörnyei, 2007), qualitative data gained from interviews cannot inform researchers to what extent transitional issues exist in the rest of Chinese international students studying in the Netherlands. To investigate the generalizability of the findings from interviews, the researcher will conduct a survey as well. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research is designed to "broaden the research perspective and thus provide a general picture or test how different findings complement or corroborate each other" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 172).

3.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Case study is an excellent method that "allows researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 155). In this study, Utrecht University was selected as a case example. The reason is that Utrecht University is pursuing internationalization and engagement among international students. Nuffic data showed that Utrecht University was the least international Dutch university in 2019 (Waterlander, 2019), and the Council of Utrecht University has been struggling for years with how to become more inclusive (Van Elven, 2020). In order to engage international students and increase

diversity, there is a need to identify the difficulties international students have encountered while studying at Utrecht University. As a growing group of international students, it would be interesting to explore adaptation problems of Chinese international students.

3.2.1 Participants in Interview

In this research, academic and socio-cultural adaptation is uncovered among Chinese International students; thus, participants are Chinese international students studying at Utrecht University. To explore the impact of COVID-19 on cultural adaptation, the researcher narrows the target groups to Chinese international students who have experience studying at Utrecht University during the pandemic. When looking for the respondents to conduct the interview, the researcher applied the snowball method, getting in contact with key informants in the beginning and then letting them invite other suitable Chinese respondents (Dörnyei, 2007).

In this study, eight Chinese international students participated, including six females and two males. All participants started their master's programs at Utrecht University and studied in different departments. Among the interviewees, there are two respondents who have started studying at Utrecht University before the breakout of COVID-19; and the rest of the respondents arrived in the Netherlands during COVID-19 and have been living in the country between one month and six months. For the purpose of confidentiality, all the real names of respondents are changed. More detailed information about the participants in the research is shown in the table below (see Table 1).

Table 1: Information about interviewees

| | Name | Gender | Age | Major | Length of stay | Degree | Interview language |
|---|------|--------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1 | GC | Female | 25 | Drug Innovation | 6 months | Master | Chinese |
| 2 | WY | Female | 23 | International Development Study | 6 months | Master | English |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|--------|----|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| 3 | XY | Female | 27 | Intercultural Communication | 1 and half year | Master | English |
| 4 | FX | Female | 25 | Financial Management | 6 months | Master | Mixed |
| 5 | WW | Male | 25 | Medical Imaging | 6 months | Master | Chinese |
| 6 | CY | Female | 26 | Science and Business Management | 1 and half year | Master | English |
| 7 | MR | Male | 23 | Climate Physics | 6 months | Master | English |
| 8 | XP | Female | 25 | Applied Cognitive Psychology | 1.5 months | Master | Mixed |

3.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews are an important way to collect qualitative data for gaining insights into challenges in the process of socio-cultural and academic adaptation. In the semi-structured interview, the interviewer will prepare an interview guide as a template for the discussion and adjust the process according to the specific situation during the interview (Dörnyei, 2007).

The format of a semi-structured interview included six general questions and the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate more on certain issues regarding seven influential factors (see Appendix A). The interview questions were based on the research questions that were developed after reviewing the literature (Chang, W. H., 2016; Chen, S. H., 2009; Van der Knaap, 2017. Ren, P.X. & Mao, S., 2017). The interview questions were designed from two aspects, socio-cultural adaptation and academic adaptation. Within these aspects, there were seven relevant factors, including previous cultural experience, expectations, discrimination, interpersonal communication, pedagogical difference, communication with professors, and language barriers, to assist in exploring the difficulties Chinese international students are facing during the pandemic.

3.2.3 interview procedure

The interviews in this study, based on mutual respect, aimed to build a rapport between the interviewer and interviewees. Overall, eight interviews were conducted

with Chinese international students who had experienced studying at Utrecht University during COVID-19. The researcher conducted three individual interviews via Zoom and five interviews in person. Each interview lasted for 25 to 35 minutes. Prior to participating in the interviews, participants were asked to review and sign a consent form (see Appendix K). After a Chinese introduction, informing the interviewees about the research goal, the expected length of interview and recording permission, interviewees chose their preference of interview language. Four interviews were conducted in English, in two of these interviewees answered questions in Mandarin Chinese to fully express their experiences; while two interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese in their entirety because of the comfort of speaking their native language. The interviews were recorded, via either a phone recorder or virtual communication platforms, with the permission of participants. All recordings were transcribed into text (see Appendix C-J). Since four interviews were conducted in Chinese, the researcher translated transcriptions into English with the help of Google Translate, which is a weak point as information might be missed in translation.

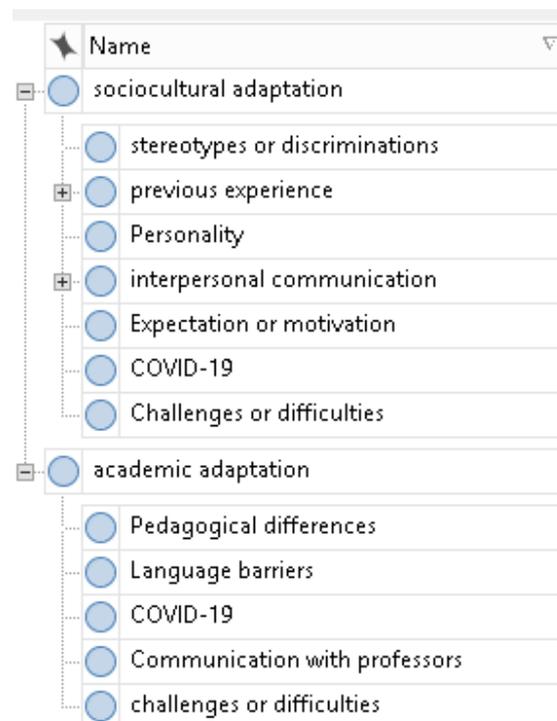
3.2.4 Coding Procedure

The interview data were coded into categories, sub-categories and influencing factors by the researcher. The researcher utilized the detective coding method wherein a codebook was developed to guide the coding process (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Each expression from participants about their experience and perception relative to their stay in the Netherlands was coded based on academic adaptation and socio-cultural adaptation. The contents of these two categories were re-coded based on general difficulties and seven influencing factors, including previous cultural experience, expectations, discrimination, interpersonal communication, pedagogical differences, communication with professors and language barriers. During the process of coding, two other distinct influencing factors, personality and COVID-19, also emerged as they were mentioned several times in interviews; thus, the researchers used the inductive coding method (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) and created new codes

to categorize certain expressions from participants. With the help of Nvivo (version 10), interviews were initially coded to identify the adaptation issues and influencing factors contained within the statement provided by respondents (see figure 1).

Figure 1:

The screenshot of Nvivo coding



After the initial coding process and distinct themes emerged, the researcher re-organized the sub-categories to provide future insights and constructively explain the different experiences of Chinese international students. The taxonomy of categories presenting the relationship between categories, sub-categories and influencing factors in the qualitative data will be shown in the results section.

3.3 Quantitative Data Collection

Survey studies aim to describe the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of a certain group (Dörnyei, 2007). For the quantitative portion of this study,

the researcher utilized a survey instrument to gather data about Chinese international students' socio-cultural and academic transition to life in the Netherlands. The purpose of the quantitative research in this study was to explore the general picture of Chinese international students' academic learning experiences and daily life experiences in the Netherlands.

3.3.1 Survey Procedure

The design of the survey was guided by the results from interviewing Chinese students studying at Utrecht University. The questionnaire survey was composed of questions drawn from previous qualitative results and divided into six sections. The first section aimed to collect the demographic data from respondents and the relevant items included age, degree, and length of stay in the Netherlands. The following five sections were intended to encompass five sub-categories based on the categories of qualitative data, communication with professors, professional learning, interpersonal communication, discrimination, and expectation. The last section consisted of questions regarding the general situation of sociocultural and academic adaptation of Chinese international students. Except for open-ended items on the demographic section and four questions under the section of interpersonal communication, all other items used a 5-point Likert scale, asking students to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statement (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Totally agree), to reduce the frustration level of respondents and increase response rate (Sachdev, S. B., & Verma, H. V., 2004).

This study used a survey instrument, which consists of 52 questions and the complete survey can be found in the Appendix (see Appendix B). The instrument was digitally implemented through Wenjuanxing, a Chinese online survey platform and participants were able to respond to the survey questions via the Wenjuanxing link. The survey was released in four WeChat groups whose members are all Chinese international students studying at Dutch universities.

3.3.2 Population and Sampling

The population for this research consisted of Chinese international students

studying in the Netherlands. The total population was 52, including 15 males and 37 females, and 40 Chinese students were selected as a sample. The sample size was chosen based on the length of stay in the Netherlands as some participants reported that they did not have any experience of living in the Netherlands. Eight responses were deleted because they did not stay in the Netherlands, and four responses were removed because more than half of the total items have been left open, which left 40 valid responses.

The participants in this research consisted of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students. Moreover, participants represented students from different Dutch universities such as Utrecht University, Radboud University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, University of Amsterdam and others. The average number of months that participants have been living in the Netherlands was approximately 15 (M=14.875, SD=16.64); 65 percent of participants have stayed in the Netherlands for less than one year; while 7 percent of participants have stayed for over two years. The detailed demographic information about the chosen respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic information about respondents

| Data | | n | % |
|---------------|----------|----|------|
| Gender | Female | 28 | 70 |
| | Male | 12 | 30 |
| Age | 15-20 | 2 | 5 |
| | 21-25 | 24 | 60 |
| | 26-30 | 9 | 22.5 |
| | 31-35 | 4 | 10 |
| | 36-40 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Degree | Bachelor | 6 | 15 |
| | Master | 25 | 62.5 |

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----|------|
| | PhD | 9 | 9 |
| Length of stay | Less than 1 year | 26 | 65 |
| | 1-2 year | 7 | 17.5 |
| | More than 2 year | 7 | 17.5 |
| University | Utrecht University | 20 | 50 |
| | Radboud University | 10 | 25 |
| | Amsterdam University | 2 | 5 |
| | Erasmus University Rotterdam | 2 | 5 |
| | Others | 6 | 15 |

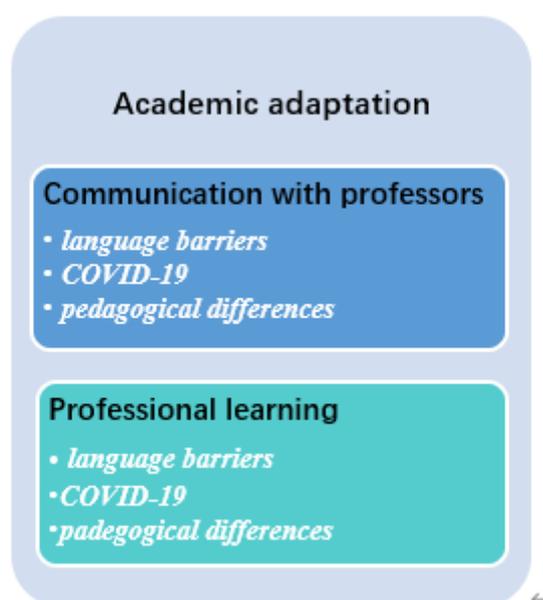
4. Results

4.1 Academic Adaptation

Figure 2 below illustrates two sub-categories of academic adaptation and influencing factors that emerged in the data. Chinese international students reported that they had encountered adaptation difficulties in communication with professors and professional learning in the Netherlands. Both sub-categories consist of three same influencing factors, which are language barriers, COVID-19 and pedagogical differences.

Figure 2

Sub-categories and influencing factors of academic adaptation



4.1.1 Communication with Professors

COVID-19 related

Table 3 below gives information about the impact of COVID-19 on communication with professors. In table 1, 65 percent of those surveyed totally agreed that they mostly communicate with their processors via virtual platforms during the COVID-19

pandemic. With a high average score of 4, participants revealed a strong preference for in-person communication. The majority of them (70%) agreed that COVID-19 had negatively affected their interaction with professors.

Table 3: The impact of COVID-19 & communicate with professors

| To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: During COVID-19, I ... | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
| Communicating via email or other digital platforms | 0% | 2.5% | 5% | 27.5% | 65% | 4.55 |
| Prefer to communicating face-to-face | 2.5% | 7.5% | 12.5% | 42.5% | 35% | 4 |
| Perceived negative impact of COVID-19 | 5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 40% | 30% | 3.775 |

Participants from interviews had a similar perception as well. Six out of eight interviewees reported that they did not contact their professors frequently. They also had trouble communicating with their professors because reaching out via email or other virtual platforms had made communication less efficient and broadened their sense of distance from their professors. The sample of the statement from interviews are provided as follows:

Example 1

“Because of the COVID-19, you cannot meet your supervisor in person and I really need that in person talking to understand how I need to write my thesis. That’s a big problem.” (Interview 3)

Both qualitative results and quantitative results explain that email or other digital platforms are an inefficient communication medium. The COVID-19 pandemic has prevented the circumstance from frequent face-to-face communication with their professors.

Language barriers

As presented in table 4, participants reported a higher score (2.6) in speaking than

other English language skills, which implies that they had encountered greater difficulty in oral English when communicating with their professors. However, as the average score for each item is lower than three, the majority of respondents did not agree there were huge linguistic difficulties in academic communication.

Table 4: Language barriers & Communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English ... have impeded my communication with my professors

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Speaking | 25 % | 30% | 15% | 20% | 10% | 2.6 |
| Listening | 22.5% | 30% | 20% | 22.5% | 5% | 2.575 |
| Reading | 32.5% | 30% | 22.5% | 12.5% | 2.5% | 2.225 |
| Writing | 25% | 25% | 32.5% | 15% | 2.5% | 2.45 |

In interviews, one participant revealed that they preferred to communicate with their professors via email due to the low English language proficiency and another participant from interview six also gave priority to email even without COVID-19. However, the rest of the participants from the interviews did not cite language barriers as a communication problem with professors.

Example 2:

“Because my English is not very good. If I have to ask questions in person, face to face, even though I can express myself clearly, I probably will not understand what he said. So, it is better to send him an email so that I can take my time to read and understand it.” (Interview 1)

Example 3:

“I probably still use email to communicate with professors if there is no pandemic.” (Interview 6)

As illustrated in previous examples and quantitative results, the language barrier is not a primary factor that hindered Chinese international students’ academic communication with professors.

Pedagogical differences

In table 5, the average score for each item is higher than the neutral response, which indicates the majority of respondents agreed that their professors in the Netherlands were more amicable than those in China. Approximately 40 percent of participants agreed that their professors in Dutch universities were friendly.

Table 5: Pedagogical difference & communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: Compared with professors in China, I feel my professor in the Netherlands are ...

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|---------------|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|---------------|-------|
| Less distant | 2.5% | 27.5% | 25% | 22.5% | 22.5% | 3.35 |
| Nicer | 0% | 15% | 40% | 27.5% | 17.5% | 3.475 |
| More friendly | 0% | 17.5% | 25% | 37.5% | 20% | 3.6 |

Also, five out of eight participants mentioned that their professors in the Netherlands were student-centered and willing to help when they encountered academic problems. Some participants perceived more support and affirmation from their professors in the university. Participants from interview 3 claimed that she tends to be “more active, bolder, and braver to ask questions” in the class as the relationship between students and professors in the Netherlands is more casual than that in China.

Example 4:

“Most importantly, our mentor is very responsible. He will give a plan and teach to explore what you are interested in. It's a huge difference, in my opinion.” (Interview 8)

Example 5:

“The biggest difference is, I mean, at here, professors are more encourage you to do things independently.” (Interview 2)

Thus, based on the results above, participants did not report negative attitudes towards professors and they agreed that their professors were helpful in their academic study in the Netherlands.

Summary

In summary, difficulty in communicating with professors is one of the inconveniences caused by COVID-19. Digital communication is regarded as an inefficient way of interacting with professors. Although the language barrier, to some extent, is also a problem for some participants, it cannot be considered as a primary factor negatively affecting communication. Besides, friendly professors and casual student-professor relationship is a positive influencing factor that helped participants adapt to academic requirements in the Dutch university.

4.1.2 Professional Learning

COVID-19 related

About 40% of participants firmly believed COVID-19 had a negative effect on their academic learning (see table 6). During COVID-19, the majority of participants were taking online courses as the average score is higher than 4, whereas participants preferring to take online courses, particularly online seminars, is not higher than 20 %. This implies that there is a gap between reality and their inclination towards the way of taking courses. However, the average score is very similar to the neutral answer when it comes to opting to take lectures and exams online.

Table 6: COVID-19 & professional learning

| To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: During COVID-19, I ... | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
| Take lectures online | 5% | 2.5% | 12.5% | 20% | 60% | 4.275 |
| Take seminars online | 5% | 2.5% | 15% | 22.5% | 55% | 4.2 |
| Take exam online | 2.5% | 5% | 22.5% | 20% | 50% | 4.1 |
| Prefer to take lectures online | 22.5% | 20% | 17.5% | 20% | 20% | 2.95 |
| Prefer to take seminars online | 35% | 25% | 12.5% | 10% | 17.5% | 2.5 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| Prefer to take exam online | 22.5% | 22.5% | 15% | 20% | 20% | 2.925 |
| Perceived negative impact of COVID-19 on my study plan | 10% | 7.5% | 17.5% | 25% | 40% | 3.775 |

Seven interviewees confirmed that they only took online courses during COVID-19, and COVID-19 had a negative effect on those who had to do an internship (see example 6). However, participants had divergent views on the effect of COVID-19 on distance learning. In interview 5, for example, interviewees disclosed that she was easily distracted in online classes; however, the participant in interview 4 agreed that the online course was beneficial in the academic study because it can be recorded and viewed again.

Example 6:

“Looking for internship is quite difficult. But it is also part of the study.”
(Interview 3)

Example 7:

“I don't like taking courses from me from zoom link or from Teams... sometimes I feel I am not listening at all ... and also because the lecture is usually recorded for my study, they're kind of demotivated me to pay a lot of attention during the meeting, because I know I can re-watch everything.”
(Interview 5)

Example 8:

“To be honest, I prefer online because it can be recorded. Then when I re-watched it, I can find some points that I forgot” (Interview 4)

On the one hand, COVID-19 has a detrimental impact on participants' study plans, especially for those who need to do an internship; on the other hand, participants also benefit from it in terms of the academic study to some extent.

Language barriers

The degree to which participants experienced linguistic problems in academic learning is shown in table 7. Although the average score for each item is lower than the neutral answer, more than 35% of participants admitted that their English writing and

listening skills hindered their academic studies.

Table 7: Language barriers & Communicate with professors

| To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English ... impeded my communication with my professors | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
| Speaking | 25 % | 22.5% | 10% | 35% | 7.5% | 2.775 |
| Listening | 27.5% | 17.5% | 20% | 30% | 5% | 2.675 |
| Reading | 22.5% | 25% | 25% | 22.5% | 5% | 2.625 |
| Writing | 17.5% | 22.5% | 17.5% | 37.5% | 5% | 2.9 |

Five out of 8 interviewees claimed that their academic English language proficiency was not good enough to fulfill the academic criteria, particularly when they first arrived in the Netherlands, based on the qualitative results. For example, interviewee 7 explained that adapting to English teaching at a Dutch university took a while since his previous courses were taught entirely in Chinese. Furthermore, one participant's comment corresponded to the survey findings, which indicated that participants had more difficulty speaking and writing English (see example 10).

Example 9:

“When I was first being here, English is the biggest challenge for me. Because my previous studying was completely in Chinese. So, I need to find more time to get used to this language environment.” (interview 7)

Example 10:

“I think my spoken English is very poor. In terms of writing, I feel that writing something like email is totally fine, but sometimes academic writing is very difficult.” (Interview 8)

Participants believe that English speaking and academic writing have hampered their professional learning to some degree, according to both quantitative and qualitative findings. However, the survey findings cannot prove that the majority of participants feel they have a serious linguistic issue in terms of academic learning since

the average score is not high.

Pedagogical differences

The high score for each item stands out in table 8. The majority of those surveyed believed that independent study, creative thought, and teamwork were more significant in Dutch universities than in Chinese universities. However, their adaptation to professional learning was not hindered by pedagogical disparities, as they claimed that they appreciate such a learning method.

Table 8: Pedagogical differences & Professional learning

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: Compared with courses in China, I feel studies in the Netherlands require higher ability of.....

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Independent learning | 0% | 7.5% | 22.5% | 25% | 45% | 4.075 |
| Innovative thinking | 0% | 7.5% | 25% | 40% | 27.5% | 3.875 |
| teamwork | 0% | 5% | 20% | 30% | 45% | 4.15 |
| I am enjoying this way of study | 2.5% | 5% | 25% | 42.5% | 25% | 3.825 |

Six interviewees reported that they identified a significant difference in pedagogy and had optimistic attitudes toward it, although only two of the interviewees stated that they favored the Chinese style of teaching. For example, interviewee 4 stated that the teaching methods used in Dutch universities perplexed her during the academic studies (see example 12).

Example 11:

“You want to be a confident, independent researcher or scholar, instead of just like a student. But in my home university, professors more like the babysitter, they will offer you a specific idea.”

Example 12:

“But I still feel that I am more comfortable with exam practice.....The teacher (at Utrecht University) said that this is an open-ended answer, which

makes me feel confused sometimes.” (interview 4)

Although the teaching methods in the Dutch university are somewhat different from those in China, the majority of participants are nevertheless able to respond to the pedagogical differences, according to both quantitative and qualitative data.

Summary

In summary, in terms of professional learning, the challenge that participants encountered is the pressure from study, as many participants reported in the interview that the study in Dutch universities was much more difficult than expected (see example 13).

Example 13:

“I think our courses are difficult and it is a bit stressful.” (Interview 1)

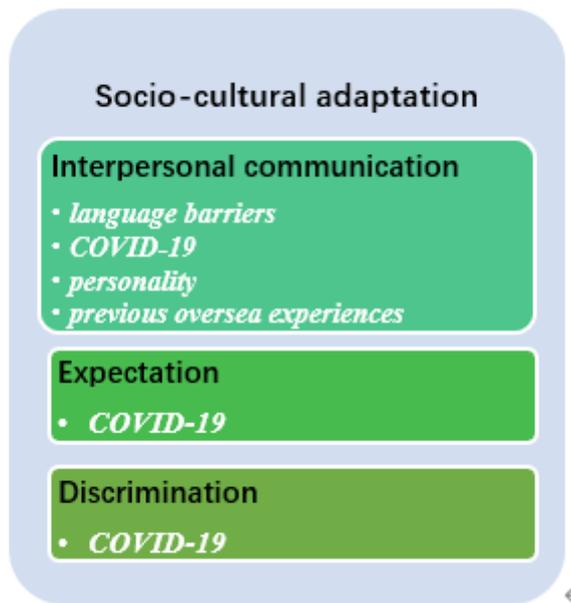
The influence of COVID-19 and a lack of English writing and speaking skills can be seen as detrimental influencing factors to some extent; however, pedagogical disparities cannot be identified as a major source of adaptation problems since most participants appreciate the teaching methods in Dutch universities.

4.2 Socio-cultural Adaptation

Interpersonal communication, expectation, and discrimination are three sub-categories closely related to socio-cultural adaptation, as shown in Figure 2. Four variables shape interpersonal communication, but COVID-19 is the only one that affects interviewees' expectations of life in the Netherlands and perceptions of discrimination.

Figure 2

Sub-categories and influencing factors in socio-cultural adaptation



4.2.1 Interpersonal communication

Socialization with Chinese students, other international students, and Dutch students received average scores of 3.75, 2.95, and 2.75, respectively (see table 9). This means that participants communicate with co-national students more frequently than other students.

Table 9: Socialization & Interpersonal communication

| To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I usually socialized with... | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| | Mean |
| Chinese students | 3.575 |
| Other international students | 2.95 |
| Dutch students | 2.75 |

Interviewees' statements corroborate the survey results (see example 14). Furthermore, five out of 8 participants said that they did not establish any close relationships with their Dutch peers and that their interaction was primarily for academic purposes.

Example 14:

“I think, the best relationship is with Chinese students. And second is with some international students and then Dutch.” (Interview 7)

Example 15:

“I don't feel very engaged with the Dutch people.....Dutch students make groups with Dutch students and international students make group with international students.” (interview 7)

As a result, it is not difficult to establish friendships with Chinese students; however, a challenging aspect of socio-cultural adaptation for participants is making new friends with non-conational peers, especially local students.

Language barriers

Table 10 demonstrates that oral English language proficiency is an obstacle to interpersonal communication with other international students, with over 30% of participants agreeing that their English speaking and listening ability hindered their socialization with international students. Furthermore, approximately 45 percent of those surveyed expressed a desire to study Dutch to integrate into local culture and society (see table 11).

Table 10: Language barriers & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English..... impeded my communication with International Students

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-----|-------|---------------|-------|
| Speaking | 17.5 % | 15% | 20% | 32.5% | 15% | 3.125 |
| Listening | 25% | 15% | 17% | 30% | 12.5% | 2.9 |

Table 11: Dutch & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I would like to learn Dutch to integrate into the Dutch culture and society

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|------------------------|-------------------|----|-------|-----|---------------|------|
| Willing to learn Dutch | 0 % | 5% | 27.5% | 45% | 22.5% | 3.85 |

Some interviewees have reported that speaking English has a negative impact on their ability to communicate. For example, in interview 8, the interviewee stated that she did not know how to properly express herself due to her limited English proficiency in speaking.

Example 16:

“I think one challenge is spoken English. If you want to communicate with others, you don't know how to say or what to say. Sometimes I feel like I think a lot, but I don't know how to express it.” (interview 8)

Apart from English, some interviewees agreed that Dutch was very important in interpersonal communication. However, two interviewees stated that speaking Dutch makes no difference to them since most Dutch citizens are already fluent in English. (see example 18).

Example 17:

“If you can speak Dutch, Dutch people will probably prefer to be friends with you” (interview 8)

Example 18:

“because the Dutch people are experts in English so we can talk to each other in English and they can understand.” (Interview 7)

In interpersonal communication with non-conational peers, language capacity in English speaking is crucial. Furthermore, respondents agreed that speaking Dutch is beneficial in interacting with indigenous people.

COVID-19 related

The majority of participants claimed the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on their interpersonal relationships, as seen in Table 12; the mean for each item is greater than 3. Over 40 % of respondents thought that COVID-19 had hampered the development of friendships with non-conational peers, especially with Dutch students.

Table 12: COVID-19 & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: COVID-19 has a negative impact on my socialization with

| | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---------------|------|
| Strongly disagree | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Chinese students | 17.5% | 15% | 20% | 22.5% | 25% | 3.225 |
| International students | 7.5% | 5% | 10% | 45% | 32.5% | 3.9 |
| Dutch students | 5% | 2.5% | 10% | 40% | 42.5% | 4.125 |

The results of interviews also show that participants have a tougher time making friends with Dutch students or other international students. Six out of eight interviewees were disappointed with their interpersonal relationship during COVID-19, resulting from fewer opportunities to partake in social events where they could encounter new people. Apart from that, one interviewee from interview 8 said that there was a chance of infection, despite her desire to establish a friendship with other international students (see example 20).

Example 19

“Before there were more, but after Covid-19, there is none. No people, I mean no Dutch people are available to talk.....if there's no COVID-19 and I continue to go, I think we could definitely be a good friend.” (interview 3)

Example 20

“When you want to meet them, especially when they don’t wear face masks, you will be scared ... even though I know there are some potential risks.” (interview 8)

According to the interviews and survey results, the majority of participants concluded that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their interpersonal contact, especially in terms of establishing and maintaining pleasant and close relations with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Personality

Table 13 shows that there is a significant difference in average shyness scores when socializing with Chinese and Dutch students. When interacting with local students, participants revealed a more introverted personality than when communicating with co-national students. Besides, participants also did not reveal a proactive personality when socializing with other international students.

Table 13: Personality & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel I am shy when I socialize with

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|---------------|-------|
| Chinese students | 42.5% | 22.5% | 17.5% | 10% | 7.5% | 2.175 |
| International students | 20% | 15% | 22.5% | 20% | 22.5% | 3.9 |
| Dutch students | 15% | 12.5% | 20% | 30% | 22.5% | 4.125 |

However, the findings of the interviews did not show that there was a gap between socializing with conational students and non-conational students. Only two of the interviewees described themselves as introverted and reclusive when socializing with others. The statements are presented as follows:

Example 21

“I am kind of introverted, and usually I don't take the initiative to chat with someone.” (interview 1)

Example 22

“Generally speaking, I am not very outgoing.” (interview 4)

Previous experience

22 participants had previous experience of traveling abroad and only 12 out of 40 participants had prior study abroad experience. The majority of participants agreed that their previous overseas traveling and studying experience is helpful in their interpersonal communication, particularly when socializing with other international students, as the average score for each item is higher than the neutral response.

Table 14: Personality & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel that my oversea experience is helpful in socializing with.....

| | <i>N</i> | helpfulness in socializing with other international students (Mean) | helpfulness in socializing with Dutch students (Mean) |
|--------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Oversea travelling | 22 | 3.5 | 3.25 |

experience

| | | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|-----|
| Overseas study experience | 12 | 3.54 | 3.1 |
|------------------------------|----|------|-----|

The results of the interviews, however, do not seem to match that of the survey. Only two of the interviewees who had previously spent more than a year studying abroad stated that their experience had enhanced their communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Other interviewees who had previously traveled overseas did not share this view.

Example 23:

“It not only about helps me to fit in or help me to enjoy like the Dutch system and Dutch society, generally, it helped me to know how to talk to people when people come from a different country come with a different educational background with you.” (Interview 2)

Summary

In general, the most challenging part of interpersonal communication is establishing and maintaining friendships with both other international and local students. Language barriers, COVID-19, and introversion are all factors that have a negative effect on participants' interpersonal communication. When it comes to communicating with non-conational peers, both oral English and Dutch language skills are crucial. For those introverted participants, personality, rather than the influence of COVID-19, makes a greater difference in their interpersonal communication. Prior international experience, however, will help participants communicate with others to some degree.

4.2.2 Expectation

COVID-19 appears to have had a negative effect on participants' expectations of their daily lives and academic studies in the Netherlands, as demonstrated by the high average score for each item (see table 15). COVID-19 has a greater negative effect on participants' expectations of daily life than academic study, according to the survey findings.

Table15: COVID-19 & Expectation

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel COVID-19 have a negative impact on my expectation of in the Netherlands

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|----------------|-------------------|------|-----|-------|---------------|------|
| Daily life | 5% | 5% | 10% | 40% | 40% | 4.05 |
| Academic study | 10% | 2.5% | 15% | 42.5% | 30% | 3.8 |

Although the expectations of the interviewees differed, the majority of them claimed that COVID-19 had blurred their vision in exploring the new environment of the host country. However, COVID-19 did not significantly negatively impact one interviewee's expectation for life in the Netherlands because her primary motivation was to receive a degree rather than immerse herself in the Dutch culture and society.

Example 24:

“I really wanted like to experience the European life or traveling around the Europe, but all of the things right now, I cannot really do that. So, the reality is such a shame.” (interview 2)

Example 25:

“Because I don't have high expectations, some people may have certain kind of expectation, but I think it's fine as long as I can graduate” (Interview 4)

As a result of the survey and interview findings, COVID-19 has a greater negative impact on those who expected to live a different life in the host country than those whose primary motivation is to obtain a degree.

4.2.3 Discrimination

Table 16 shows that over 30% of respondents barely experienced discrimination due to COVID-19, and over 20% never experienced discrimination resulting from COVID-19 while living in the Netherlands. The majority of respondents did not often experience prejudice, as shown by the low average score (2.45).

Table 16: Discrimination & COVID-19

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I have perceived

| discrimination resulted from COVID-19 | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|------|
| Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always | Mean |
| 22.5% | 32.5% | 27.5% | 12.5% | 5% | 2.45 |

The results of the interviews further corroborate the findings of the survey, which shows that the majority of interviewees agreed that people they have encountered in the Netherlands are mostly friendly. Only one interviewee stated that she experienced prejudice caused by COVID-19 when she was paired with two other international students (see example 27).

Example 26:

“ Personally, I don't experience any discrimination, even during COVID-19”
(interview 3)

Example 27:

“The Italian girl has never come to the Netherlands because of the pandemic.....One family member of the Dutch boy has passed away because of pandemic.....They even emailed to our professor, saying that they did not want to be a group with us” (interview 8)

Thus, according to the survey and interview results, COVID-19 should not be considered a factor that contributes to discrimination and difficulty in socio-cultural adaptation.

4.3 General Academic Adaptation and Socio-cultural Adaptation

As seen in Table 17, participants claimed that the international side of Dutch culture appealed to them more than the local and indigenous side when it came to socio-cultural adaptation. Furthermore, approximately half of the participants agreed that they were able to adapt to the academic requirements of the Dutch university as well as Dutch culture and society, despite their impressions of the negative effects of COVID-19. Although the overall score is the same (3.7), the percentage of those who agreed that they could adapt to academic requirements (55%) is slightly higher than the percentage who agreed that they could adapt to socio-cultural requirements (47.5 %).

Table17: General academic and socio-cultural adaptation

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement:

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| I am satisfied with the study in the Netherlands | 0% | 10% | 37.5% | 30% | 22.5% | 3.65 |
| I can adapt to academic requirement here | 0% | 10% | 22.5% | 55% | 12.5% | 3.7 |
| The COVID-19 has a negative impact on my study here | 7.5% | 0% | 32.5% | 30% | 30% | 3.75 |
| I can feel the local and indigenous Dutch culture | 0% | 12.5% | 30% | 47.5% | 10% | 3.55 |
| I can feel international and diverse Dutch culture | 0% | 15% | 15% | 57.5% | 12.5% | 3.675 |
| I can adapt to Dutch culture and society | 0% | 7.5% | 30% | 47.5% | 15% | 3.7 |
| I can feel COVID-19 has negatively affected my socio-cultural adaptation | 7.5% | 5% | 15% | 47.5% | 25% | 3.775 |

The findings of the interviews are in line with the survey results. Three interviewees mentioned that they were exposed to an international and diverse Dutch culture. For instance, interviewee 3 said local people did not show too much Dutch aspect when socializing (see example 28).

Example 28:

“If this Dutch person is more like students or international or at your age, you will feel more comfortable, but that's not because they show their Dutch side that's because they are being somewhere in between. They tend not to show it too much Dutch side to you, because you are foreigner.” (interview 3)

Furthermore, the majority of interviewees stated that they were comfortable with

and willing to adapt to their academic studies in the Netherlands; however, some interviewees indicated that adapting into Dutch culture is not as easy as meeting academic requirements in the Netherlands.

Example 29:

“I think I can adapt to it (academic requirement) and the education here provides me new experience and insights of learning” (interview 8)

Example 30:

“I cannot really adapt to some cultures in the Netherlands. For example, they don't wear masks. I think it's dangerous, but they don't think it's dangerous They like to have parties very much, which I can't understand.” (interview 6)

Overall, both qualitative and quantitative findings show that, despite COVID-19's negative effects, the majority of participants are able to adapt well in terms of academic and sociocultural adaptation.

5. Discussion

The interviews and the survey results demonstrate that Chinese international students have faced difficulties in academic and socio-cultural adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and various factors affect their adaptation to life in the Netherlands. In this section, the data will be analyzed, and the research questions will be answered.

5.1 Difficulties in Academic Adaptation

In this study, the researcher identified two themes concerning student academic adaptation difficulties: communication with professors and academic learning. According to the results, one of the key difficulties in adapting to Dutch higher education is a lack of communication with their professors, as the majority of participants reported that their communication with them was inefficient and inadequate. Due to distance education, students mostly communicate with their professors via email and cannot get immediate feedback. The research from Tian and Lowe (2009) indicates that the general feeling of being less able to communicate contributes to a common sense of being marginalized. This perception may have alienated Chinese international students from their professors and discouraged them from attempting to learn through lectures. The participants in the current study are also aware of the difficulties of adapting to the academic requirements in Dutch universities without sufficient communication with their professors.

Besides, some interviewees in this study reported feeling pressured by intensive academic study and group discussions in their experience of studying in the Netherlands. Study pressure is a significant problem that Chinese international students in Dutch universities may encounter in their academic adaptation, as the study from Yin (2017) also reported similar findings in Tilburg University. Furthermore, in Belgium, Wang

and Hannes (2014) also pointed out that the most difficult aspect of participating in curricular activities was that participants were required to read extensively for their courses, and the study workload was very heavy. Some interviewees share the same view, but they also indicate they can gradually adapt to the demands of academic aspects.

5.2 Influencing Factors in Academic Adaptation

5.2.1 COVID-19 related

Regarding academic adaptation, three influencing factors emerged in this study. The first one is distance education resulting from COVID-19. COVID-19 is a special influencing factor that occurred after the outbreak of the pandemic. The majority of participants in both the interviews and survey agreed that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their academic adaptation, as they get distracted easily in distance education and cannot communicate with professors face-to-face. A report from the European Union (Di Pietro et al., 2020) also indicated that the adoption of distance education may negatively affect academic learning through the lack of learning motivation, which is in line with the statement from one interviewee that the recorded courses demotivated her. Furthermore, Ku and Lohr (2003) discovered that Chinese students disliked online courses due to the alienation and loneliness of online learning, unconstructive feedback from peers, the temporary absence of professors, and a lack of language and cultural interaction. A communication problem addressed in distance education involves the feelings of isolation felt by students as there is less interaction between professors and students in online courses. COVID-19 has caused barriers to communication with professors, which many participants in this research have also announced. Therefore, COVID-19 should be seen as an important factor that affected the academic adaptation of Chinese international students.

5.2.2 Language barriers

The second factor that may influence Chinese students' academic adaptation is the

language barriers. Even though several participants in the interviews generally attribute insufficient communication with professors and learning difficulties to their English proficiency, the survey results reveal that the majority of participants do not share the same views. Previous research has indicated that English language proficiency significantly influences the academic performance of Asian people (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2002; Kim, 2006); however, in this study, many participants claimed that the chance to contact professors was much more important than the language barriers, especially under the situation of COVID-19. As the average score is lower than the neutral response, most of those surveyed do not agree that they encounter linguistic difficulties communicating with their professors. This is in line with Zhu and Gao (2012) findings that it is the communication, rather than English language proficiency, that affects Chinese students' academic study. Also, Zhao and McDougall (2008) reveal that Chinese students perceived fewer language barriers because they are not required to respond in distance education immediately as in offline courses. A reduction of language barriers can improve Chinese students' comprehension of discussion topics, enable them to express themselves more clearly, and encourage them to participate more in online courses. As a result, they can achieve higher grades. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, English language ability was not the most primary difficulty that Chinese students are confronted with in academic adaptation while having opportunities to communicate with their tutors or professors should get prioritized.

5.2.3 Pedagogical difference

The pedagogical difference was also another factor that is investigated in this study. During the interview, some participants reported that Dutch universities have higher requirements for independent study. The survey results also confirm these interview findings. Flowerdew and Miller (1995) indicate that Chinese students usually play a passive and compliant role in classes; also, the research by Zhu and Gao (2012) mentions that Chinese students in the UK expect their tutors to provide more guidance on critical thinking in academic learning. Although participants also perceived a

difference between Chinese schooling and Dutch schooling in this study, most of them did not report the inadaptation to Dutch education systems. In contrast, some students perform more proactively in the class as they are encouraged to express their thinking. Findings currently support the research from Chan (1999) that students interact and participate more in Western classes than in Chinese ones. Therefore, pedagogical differences were not seen as a negative factor.

5.3 Difficulties in Socio-cultural Adaptation

The researcher has identified three themes in terms of socio-cultural adaptation, which are interpersonal communication, expectation and discrimination. However, rather than discrimination, Chinese international students' problems are mostly related to interpersonal contact and their expectations of life in the Netherlands.

Most of the interviewees mentioned that it is hard to become close friends with local Dutch students. Although they have no problems participating in the group discussion with Dutch students, there are few extra connections beyond study. This is in line with the findings from Yin (2017), who researched the integration of Chinese students at Tilburg University that Chinese students reported difficulties in having casual conversations with Dutch students. They described not having enough topics to talk about with internationals, and those conversations were often superficial (Yin, 2017). In this study, many interviewees also reported that their interactions with Dutch students were often limited to greetings and superficially discussing homework.

Another problem in socio-cultural adaptation is that the reality of living in the Netherlands does not match their expectations. Except three interviewees' primary motivation is to pursue the degree, the rest of the interviewees were full of expectations of experiencing European life before coming to the Netherlands. This also confirms the findings from Leiden Asia Center that the affection for Europe is one of the reasons attracting Chinese students to choose the Netherlands (Hong et al., 2017). Pitts (2009) research shows that students studying in France experience a discrepancy between

travel or cultural experience and their academic life due to the cultural barriers and imposing academics. However, in this research, participants' expectations were not met mainly because of the lockdown resulting from COVID-19 as there are few chances to explore the Dutch social environment.

Surprisingly, most participants in both interview and survey rarely suffered from discrimination caused by COVID-19. Research by Ruiz, Horowitz and Tamir (2020) reveal that Asian Americans and Black Americans are more likely to experience discrimination since the outbreak of COVID-19. The other research from Araujo (2011) shows that international students from Asia encountered more racism and discrimination than those from Europe. However, in this study, the majority of interviewees mentioned they felt welcome and safe when meeting people, either local or international, in the Netherlands. One possible explanation supporting this result, from qualitative analysis, is that Chinese students can engage in the diverse and international environment of Dutch society where they are seen as internationals, rather than a certain ethnic group. Also, as most participants socialized with co-national students during the lockdown, the chance to perceive discrimination may be fewer. Therefore, the perceived discrimination is not be seen as a cultural adaptation issue in this study.

5.4 Influencing Factors in Socio-cultural Adaptation

5.4.1 Language Barriers

In line with previous research, this study also found that a significant relationship exists between language proficiency and socio-cultural adaptation. In this study, the research identified two languages, English and Dutch, as the results show that both languages influence the socio-cultural adaptation among Chinese international students to some extent.

Although English language proficiency is not a significant predictor in academic adaptation, oral English has been found to be an important factor in social interaction

and adjustment among Chinese international students, as it is a basic and necessary requirement for communicating with other international and local students. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that students who have achieved the minimum language requirement for college admission will not guarantee their oral comprehension and communication skills (Mori, 2000). Oral English proficiency is also closely connected to social interaction. In this study, most participants interviewed in English reported that it was not challenging to socialize with other international students. Interviewees with more international friends usually had fewer difficulties in social interactions. Chen's study (1999) indicated that the more competent international students are in using English, the more confident they may feel in dealing with challenges, and the fewer stressors they may experience in socio-cultural adjustments. Thus, the lack of English-speaking ability may inhibit Chinese international students' capacity for socialization.

As English is not the native language in the Netherlands, the native language Dutch also creates a language barrier that influences the Chinese international student's adaptation. The inability to speak the host language fluently is a primary inhibitor for international students in developing intercultural friendships with local peers (Long et al., 2009). This study also demonstrated that the majority of participants had the least socialization with Dutch students and perceive a feeling of exclusion as they did not understand Dutch. Despite the fact that the majority of participants in this study could not speak Dutch, they showed a strong willingness to learn Dutch to adapt to Dutch culture and society better. Supporting this evidence, Meng, Zhu and Cao (2017) also indicate that local language proficiency significantly affects social connectedness and adaptation. Therefore in a country where English is not considered a native language, the host language proficiency also plays an important role in acculturating individuals.

5.4.2 Personality

Personality is another factor that emerged in interviews. As Ward and Searle (1991) stated, Chinese subjects are more introverted in social interactions than Western

subjects. Some interviewees mentioned that they did not have many international and local friends because of their introverted personality and the survey demonstrated that it is a general finding. Kour and Sharma (2017) indicate that proactive personality traits positively impact the capability to function effectively in a cross-cultural environment. However, as the majority of participants experience shyness as a barrier in socializing with local and other international students in the Netherlands, it may be difficult for them to adapt to Dutch culture and society.

5.4.3 Previous Experience

As Abel (2002) identifies that prior international experiences are very important in preparing individuals to work or study overseas, this study also revealed that the majority of participants agreed that their previous overseas traveling and studying experience was helpful in their socialization with other international students. One interviewee also mentioned that her overseas study experience had facilitated her ability to communicate with international and local people and adjust to different situations. This is also in line with studies that found students who had previously spent between three and twelve months abroad felt they were more aware of themselves and different cultures (Abel, 2002; Martin, 1987).

5.4.4 COVID-19 Related

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has a profound impact on the establishment of interpersonal relationships and the expectation of living in the Netherlands, which directly or indirectly affect the socio-cultural adaptation of participants.

The majority of participants agreed that the COVID-19 had caused difficulties in activities related to social interactions. Research by Zhang et al. (2021) find that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the college students reporting higher quality of interpersonal relationships experience more social support and also participate in more leisure activities in school, which may have promoted their school adaptation. However, in this study, participants did not have too many opportunities to establish close and friendly relationships with other international students, local students and even co-national

students, because of the COVID-19 lockdown. This means that there is a limited source of social support in the Netherlands when most of the participants enter a new environment. Thus, without the high quality of interpersonal relationships and social support in the Netherlands, the process of adapting to the Dutch society and culture could be affected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 also affects the participants' expectation of living in the Netherlands, as many interviewees mentioned that they could not explore the new environment in the Netherlands during the lockdown period. A couple of interviewees reported that they did not experience a huge gap between reality and their expectations because they predicted the negative impact of COVID-19 before coming to the Netherlands. Also, the majority of those who surveyed revealed a smaller expectation gap in terms of academic study, as some interviewees reported that they had mentally prepared for the academic burden. The findings from this study to some extent support the research of Caligiuri (2001) that having accurate expectations positively affects cross-cultural adjustment.

5.5 Academic Adaptation and Socio-cultural Adaptation in General

The analysis of the results reveal, in general, that participants are able to adapt well to life and learning in the Netherlands, although it is inevitable to encounter difficulties to some extent. As shown by the interview results in this study, some participants mentioned that Dutch culture is diverse and international, and they did not perceive exclusion when living in the Netherlands. The results are similar to research by Hsu (2011) on international students in the US that almost all interviewees reported little difficulties in adapting to learning and life, and the globalization has facilitated their adaptation to living and learning in the host country by diminishing the culture differences experienced by international students studying in America.

Moreover, according to the quantitative data, the proportion of participants admitting to adapting well to academic requirements is slightly higher than that of those

adapting well to life in the Netherlands in general. This could mean that participants adapt better in academic aspects than in socio-cultural aspects. One possible explanation supporting this result, from qualitative analysis, is that many interviewees are satisfied with the pedagogical techniques in Dutch universities that encourage students to study independently and explore the field they are interested in. Unlike Chinese education, where the tests are the only criteria for grading students' academic achievement (Meng, Zhu & Gao, 2012), studying in the Netherlands provides more opportunities to maintain appropriate academic standing and achieve their learning goals. Since the international students' social and academic experience are closely tied to their academic environment, participants in this study may have a low amount of difficulties adapting to learning and life in the Netherlands with the favorable academic atmosphere.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis results indicate that Chinese international students are able to adapt to Dutch universities and society in general during the COVID-19 pandemic, except the communication and social interaction issues caused by COVID-19. Meeting the new learning requirements of a university is usually used to measure academic adaptation (Feng & Li, 2002). As the majority of participants reported that they were able to get used to the academic requirements in Dutch universities, they had not encountered many difficulties in academic adaptation. In terms of socio-cultural adaptation, the COVID-19 mainly affects participants' social interactions. However, social activities are seen as one part of socio-cultural adaptation (Rienties et al., 2012) and fitting in the international and diverse environment in Dutch society is not challenging for the majority of participants. This could be the reason that most participants agree that they can adapt to life in the Netherlands. Another possible reason could be the length of residence. The majority of participants have lived in the Netherlands for over six months, and some interviewees also reported that they could adapt better than in the beginning when they just arrived. Thus, while COVID-19 is a significant factor affecting academic and socio-cultural adaptation, it is not the only factor.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to provide current information regarding Chinese international students' adaptation to academic study and life in the Netherlands and to explore other factors that affect their cultural transition, considering the effect of COVID-19. This study utilized a mixed-method research approach which included two portions, a qualitative study and a quantitative study. Based on the interview results, the main difficulties that Chinese international students have encountered during COVID-19 are inefficient communication with professors, academic burden, the lack of social interaction with local peers, as well as unmet expectations. This study has identified three factors (language barriers, pedagogical difference, and COVID-19) influencing the communication with professors and professional learning, in terms of academic adaptation. In socio-cultural adaptation, this study also identified four factors (language barriers, personality, previous experience and COVID-19) influencing interpersonal relationship and expectation of life in the Netherlands. It is noticeable that the difficulties stemming from COVID-19 are strongly related to communicating and socializing with people, such as their professors in Dutch universities, fellow Dutch students, co-national students and other international students. Both professors and their fellow students stood out in Chinese students' perception as being most important, and thus were strongly tied to their academic adaptation, but also to their social adaptation. However, the COVID-19 lockdown has significantly reduced the opportunity of interpersonal interactions with people from the Netherlands or other different cultures. Although most participants are disappointed about the current situation caused by COVID-19, they did not perceive huge difficulties in adapting to socio-cultural life and academic learning. Therefore, academic and socio-cultural adaptation may be influenced by COVID-19 to some extent, but problems in the cultural transition cannot be generally blamed for the negative impact of COVID-19.

The current study provides insight into the academic and socio-cultural adaptation of Chinese international students in the Netherlands during COVID-19. However, this research should be viewed in light of limitations in the research design and of the current sample. First, the sample size and sample characteristics of this research are limited. The research findings of the survey cannot be generalized to represent the situation of all the Chinese international students in the Netherlands, as the survey samples are mainly from Utrecht University and Radboud University. Secondly, the survey questions were formulated by the researcher, based on the interview results rather than utilizing scientific questionnaires in previous research. Thus, although the researcher positions herself as much as possible as a neutral observer, bias can only be reduced but cannot be completely avoided. Thirdly, as some interviews are conducted in Chinese, information may be lost in the process of translation. Another limitation is the fact that this research only accounts for a relatively small amount of variance. Other potentially significant predictors may include the length of stay, social support and other environmental factors.

Regarding suggestions for future directions, it would be interesting to explore the changes in Chinese international students' trajectories of adaptation. By enlarging the sample size, more significant factors that may influence the cultural adaptation could occur in further research. As this study focuses on academic and socio-cultural adjustment only, the psychological adaptation of Chinese students can be excavated in order to reveal more adaptation issues during COVID-19.

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8. Appendices

Appendix A – Interview questions

| | |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Introduction questions |
| | How long have you been living in the Netherlands? What do you study at Utrecht University? |
| | General questions |
| | Have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands/at Utrecht University (during Covid-19)? Why or Why not? Have you enjoyed your study at Utrecht University (during Covid-19)? Why or why not? Have you experienced any challenges (during Covid-19) while studying and living in the Netherlands? Do you feel that Covid-19 has impacted your study at UU? To what extent do you think Covid-19 contribute to these problems? Do you feel like you fit in with Dutch culture and society? Have you found it easy to adjust? Do you feel like you fit in the Dutch education system? Have you found it easy to adjust? |
| | Previous culture experience |
| | Did you have any previous experience of studying and travelling abroad? Did you have any knowledge of Dutch culture and society before arriving in the Netherlands? If so, do you feel that this helped with your adjustment? Especially during |

| | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | the covid-19 pandemic? |
| | Expectations |
| | <p>What were your expectations for studying and living in the Netherlands before arriving?</p> <p>Has the reality of living and studying here matched your expectations? Why or why not?</p> |
| | Biased stereotype |
| | <p>Have you experienced any discrimination when living and studying in the Netherlands?</p> <p>If so, what was it? How have you coped with that?</p> <p>To what extent do you think COVID-19 has contribute these problems?</p> |
| | Interpersonal Communication: |
| | <p>Who do you often communicate with, local people, co-national students, or other international students?</p> <p>How often do you socialize with local /co-national/ other international students? What were these social interactions like for you?</p> <p>Do you find it easy to communicate with them? Does a lack of Communication sometimes make you upset? Do you keep trying to make contact?</p> <p>Do you feel like they have influenced your adjustment? Have they helped or prevented your adjustment?</p> <p>Have you established any close relationships with Dutch people? Have they influenced your stay here? Have they guided you through the Dutch culture?</p> <p>Has the pandemic affected your socialization with local people, co-national students, or other international students? Why or why not?</p> |

| | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Pedagogical difference |
| | <p>Do you feel like there are differences between Dutch education and Chinese education?</p> <p>If so, has it influenced your adaptation to the Dutch education system? Why or why not?</p> <p>While studying at UU, have you experienced any challenges resulting from covid-19, in terms of academics?</p> |
| | Communication with professors |
| | <p>How often do you communicate with your professors? What are those communications like?</p> <p>Do you feel like communicating with your professors has helped you adapt to the academic requirements/ Dutch education system?</p> <p>Has the pandemic affected your communication with your professors?</p> |
| | Language barriers |
| | <p>Do you speak Dutch?</p> <p>To what extent do you feel speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to Dutch society or Dutch education easier?</p> <p>How would you evaluate your English language proficiency?</p> <p>Do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education system's academic requirements? Why or Why not?</p> <p>Do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture and society? Why or Why not?</p> <p>Are there any adaptation problems that language barriers have caused? To what extent do you feel like Covid-19 contribute to those problems?</p> |
| | Concluding |

| | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Overall, are you happy with your choice to study and live in Utrecht? Why or why not?</p> |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands, even with the impact of the pandemic?</p> |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Appendix B – Survey questions

1. Age:
2. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - I prefer not to say
3. Please choose the option that is applicable to your current situation
 - I am doing my Bachelor at Utrecht University
 - I am doing my Master at Utrecht University
 - I am doing my PhD at Utrecht University
 - Others
4. How long have you been in the Netherlands? _____ (Months)
5. Which Dutch Universities you study in?
- 6.

Please indicate to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please use the following key:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---------------|
| Strongly disagree | | | | Totally agree |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Academic adaptation

Communication with professors

Language barriers

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| My English speaking have impeded the communication with professors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English listening have impeded the communication with professors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English reading have impeded the communication with professors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English writing have impeded the communication with professors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

COVID-19

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on my communication with professors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If no COVID-19, I prefer to communicate with professors in person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Pedagogical differences

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Compared with professors in China, | | | | | |
| I feel less distance when communicating with professors in the Netherlands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| professors in the Netherlands are nicer | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Professional learning

Language barriers

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| The academic study in the Netherlands is difficult | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English speaking have impeded the academic study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English listening have impeded the academic study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English reading have impeded the academic study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English writing have impeded the academic study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| COVID-19 | | | | | |
| COVID-19 pandemic has a negative impact on my study plan | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pedagogical differences | | | | | |
| Compared with academic study in China | | | | | |
| the academic study here required higher ability in independent study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| the academic study here required higher ability in innovative thinking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| the academic study here required higher ability in team work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| In general, I enjoy the way of academic study in the Netherlands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Sociocultural adaptation

Interpersonal communication

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| When living in the Netherlands, I mostly socialized with | | | | | |
| Co-national peers (e.g., Chinese students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Language barriers

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| My English speaking have impeded my socialization with | | | | | |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| My English listening have impeded my socialization with | | | | | |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English reading have impeded my socialization with | | | | | |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My English writing have impeded my socialization with | | | | | |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

COVID-19

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Covid-19 pandemic has a negative impact on my socialization with | | | | | |
| Co-national peers (e.g., Chinese students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|

Personality

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am too shy to socialize with | | | | | |
| Co-national peers (e.g., Chinese students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Previous experience

Did you have any experience of **travelling abroad** before coming to the Netherlands

- Yes
- No (skip to next one)

How many times? _____

How long did you stay on average? _____

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think my experience of travelling abroad is helpful in socializing with | | | | | |
| Co-national peers (e.g., Chinese students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Did you have any experience of **studying abroad** before coming to the Netherlands

- Yes
- No (skip to next one)

How many times? _____

How long did you stay on average? _____

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| I think my experience of studying abroad is helpful in socializing with | | | | | |
| Co-national peers (e.g., Chinese students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| International peers (e.g., Other international students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Host national peers (e.g., Dutch students) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Expectation

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Covid-19 pandemic has a negative impact on | | | | | |
| my expectation of daily life in the Netherlands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| my expectation of academic learning in the Netherlands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

When living in the Netherlands, I have perceived discrimination resulted from COVID-19

| | | | | |
|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix C – Interview Transcript 1

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| interviewer | L |
| interviewee | F1 |
| | |
| L | 你来荷兰多久了 |
| | How long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| F1 | 半年了吧，我去年八月份来的 |
| | Half year, I have been here since August last year |
| L | 你的专业是什么 |
| | What do you study? |
| F1 | Drug Innovation 药物创新 |
| | Drug Innovation 药物创新 |
| L | 哦 药物创新,你觉得你对在这里的生活满意吗 就是生活方面? |
| | Okay, Drug innovation. So, are you satisfied with your life here, from the perspective of living here |
| F1 | 还可以吧，除了花销高了一点 |
| | It's okay, except that the cost is a bit higher |
| L | 那你觉得在这里的学习呢 |
| | What about the study here? |
| F1 | 学得挺迷茫的。因为我们专业全部是自己定的，老师也不会帮你去计划。你要自己决定你整个两年中，你几个月到几个月要做什么事情，然后下几个月要做什么事情。就感觉，有点无所适从的那种感觉。 |
| | I'm quite confused in learning. Because our program is basically all set by ourselves, the teacher will not help us plan. You have to decide for yourself what you will do for the entire two years, months to months, and then what you will do in the next few months. I just feel a little bit at a loss. |
| L | 这算是你在学习上遇到的困难是吗 |
| | Is this the difficulty you encountered in study? |
| F1 | 算是吧，如果只说学习的话，感觉语言还是有点障碍吧，但是其他的都还好。 |
| | Well, I think so. If you only talk about learning, I feel that the language is still a bit obstructed, but everything else is fine. |
| L | 那生活上呢? |
| | What about the life? |
| F1 | 生活没什么问题，就反正，我一个人生活也挺好的 |

| | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Life is fine, anyway, I live well by myself |
| L | 那你觉得疫情对你的生活和学习方面有什么影响吗 |
| | Do you think the pandemic has any impact on your life and study? |
| | 生活没有什么太大的影响。学习主要就是现在 Major 不太好找。因为我们专业要求做一个九个月的 major, 然后还有做一个六个月的 profile, 然后就一直找不到。因为之前最开始, 我去年十二月, 去年底的时候找嘛, 然后到处实验室都说因为疫情, 现在很多项目都取消了, 找不到。然后, 之后就一直都找不到了, 脑壳疼。 |
| | There is not too much impact on my life. In terms of learning, the main issue is that major internship is not easy to find now. Our master program require us to do a nine-month major internship, and then a six-month profile, but I couldn't find it. At the very beginning, I started to look for it in December last year, at the end of last year, but many labs said that because of the covid pandemic, many projects have been cancelled, so I cannot find it. Then, after that I just cannot find it anymore, which really upset me. |
| L | 你觉得你可以适应这里的文化和社会吗 |
| | Do you think you can adapt to the culture and society here |
| F1 | 嗯....就我平时也不是很出去交流, 所以也, 怎么说, 我也不好说我适不适应吧, 但反正也没觉得有什么问题。 |
| | Um.... I don't usually go out to communicate, so, how can I say, I can't say whether I can fit in with here, but I don't feel there are any problems anyway. |
| L | 那你觉得学习上....你觉得你可以适应这里的学习吗 |
| | Then what about your study..... do you tink you can adapt to the learning here? |
| F1 | 还行吧, 感觉这里学习还是属于, 一个是自我学习能力要求比较多。还有一个还是, 跟国内相对来说, 还是创新力要很强一些的。 |
| | It's okay, I feel like studying here require stronger self-learning ability and innovation ability, compared with the study in China. |
| L | 你之前有去海外留学或者旅游的经历吗 |
| | Have you ever studied abroad or traveled abroad before? |
| F1 | 有去旅游但是没有留学 |
| | I have experience in traveling abroad, but no studying abroad. |
| L | 是去的哪里呢 |
| | then where did you go? |
| F1 | 也就亚洲吧, 像是日本啊, 缅甸, 柬埔寨那一圈, 泰国那一圈 |
| | Just in Asia, like Japan, Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand |
| L | 你来荷兰之前对荷兰有什么了解吗 |
| | Did you know anything about the Netherlands before you came here |

| | |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| F1 | 我也没有什么了解 |
| | Not really |
| L | 那你觉得你之前旅游的经历对你适应荷兰有什么帮助吗 |
| | Do you think your previous traveling experience will help you adapt to the Netherlands? |
| F1 | 我也没有欧洲旅游过 |
| | I have never traveled to Europe |
| L | 那你感觉，你在国外的经历能帮你更好的适应这里吗 |
| | Just...Do you feel that your experience abroad can help you adapt here better? |
| F1 | 嗯。。算有吧 |
| | Umm... Maybe I think |
| L | 你在来之前对这里的生活和学习有什么期待吗？你觉得这里的生活学习会是什么样的呢 |
| | Do you have any expectations for living and studying here before you come? What do you think the life and study here would be? |
| F1 | 就是感觉蛮符合期待的 |
| | I feel it's kind of in line with my expectations |
| L | 怎样的期待呢 |
| | What kind of expectations? |
| F1 | 就是怎么说呢，一个是学习上肯定会有一些挑战。然后就还，确实挺有挑战的。生活上，反正就是感觉一个人生活还是挺有意思的， |
| | Well, how should I explain, I think one is that there will definitely be some challenges in learning. actually, study really challenging. In life, anyway, I feel that living alone is quite interesting. |
| L | 你大学不也是一个人生活的吗 |
| | Don't you live alone in your bachelor university? |
| F1 | 大学虽然是住校，你也是跟很多人一起生活嘛，也不算一个人生活。就是集体宿舍，和一个生活还是有区别的。 |
| | Even though you live on campus, you still live with a lot of people, not alone. And it is a dormitory, which is still different from really live alone. |
| L | 那你觉得来到这里之后的生活，有到达你的期望吗 |
| | After coming here, does the reality match your expectations? |
| F1 | 还是有的 |
| | Yes I think so |
| L | 就是跟你想象中的生活和学习期望相比 |
| | Just compared with the life and learning in your imagination |

| | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| F1 | 还是有的 |
| | Yes I think so |
| L | 你在这里生活和学习的时候有遇到过歧视吗 |
| | Have you experienced any discrimination while living and studying here? |
| F1 | 感觉好像没有，没觉得 |
| | I don't think so. Not really. |
| L | 比如说别人有。。。我也不知道该怎么表达 |
| | For example, did other people well I don't know how to explain |
| F1 | 主要是吧，我这个人比较自闭，我也不在乎别人怎么想，就有可能他歧视了，但是我没觉得。 |
| | Well, I think, I am kind of autistic (introverted), and I don't really care what other people think. Maybe he is discriminating, but I don't perceive that. |
| L | 哦哦，你在平时的生活和学习中，与谁交流的比较多呢，当地的荷兰学生，中国学生，或者是其他国际学生 |
| | Okay, who do you often communicate with, local Dutch students, Chinese students or other international students? |
| F1 | 额 可能还是中国学生吧 |
| | Um, Chinese students, mainly |
| L | 你跟他们交流频繁吗？多久会交流一次呢 |
| | Do you communicate with them frequently? How often do you socialize with them? |
| F1 | 也不算很频繁，因为在荷兰的（中国）留学生也没有跟我一个专业的。所以就也...如果上选修课，有时候会聊一聊，但是平时主修上是不会聊的，也聊不到一起嘛。平时聊天的话，我会跟我以前的朋友，不过不在荷兰，但是也是留学生。 |
| | Not very often. Because there is no Chinese international students in my major except me, so..... If I took an optional course, sometimes I had a chat with other Chinese students in that class. But in my major course, I don't have any Chinese students to talk and actually we don't have some common topics. Usually, I prefer to talk with my old friends who are international students as well, but not in the Netherlands. |
| L | 那你跟你的朋友都聊一些什么话题呢？ |
| | Then what do you usually talk with your friends? |
| F1 | 杂七杂八什么都聊 |
| | Anything |
| L | 比如说呢 |
| | For example? |

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| F1 | 因为我有几个朋友也是类似专业的。我有一些学习上的事情会跟他们聊。除此之外，也就聊一些游戏，然后聊家里的事情，像什么，有没有被催婚啊，有没有催相亲这种事情 |
| | Because some of my friends also took similar master program, we talk about academic stuff sometimes. Besides, we also talk about games and our families, like, does their parents urge them to get married or date with someone or something like that. |
| L | 会不会太早了一点。那你跟其他国际学生交流得多吗？ |
| | is it too early? So, do you often socialize with other international students? |
| F1 | 不是很多，就是偶尔会聊一些，就是同一门选修课的同学，但是也聊得不太多。 |
| | Not very often, just sometimes. Usually they are classmates from same optional courses, but we did not talk a lot. |
| L | 主要就是聊学习上的事情吗 |
| | So you mainly talked something about study? |
| F1 | 是的 |
| | Yes |
| L | 那你会主动跟他们交流吗，还是他们主动来问你 |
| | Did you take the initiative to communicate with them? Or they took the initiative to talk to you? |
| F1 | 一般是他们来问我，我比较自闭，一般不会主动找人聊天。 |
| | Usually, they come to ask me. I am kind of autistic (introverted), and usually I don't take the initiative to chat with someone. |
| L | 那如果是学习上的事情，你会主动问吗 |
| | If it's a matter of study, would you take the initiative to talk? |
| F1 | 学习上还是会的 |
| | Yes, if it is something about study |
| L | 那生活上，日常交流就不会是吗 |
| | what about daily life? if it is something about daily life, will you take the initiative to talk? |
| F1 | 是的，就是自闭 |
| | No, I won't. I am autistic (introverted) |
| L | 你觉得跟其他中国留学生交流，有帮助你更好的适应这里的生活或者学习吗 |
| | do you think that communicating with other Chinese students will help you better adapt to the life or study here? |
| F1 | 就是大家有时候交流一下超市啊，买东西啊，生活上的信息，还是有一些帮助的 |
| | Sometimes we exchange information about supermarkets, shopping, and daily life. It's kind of helpful. |

| | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L | 那你有认识当地的荷兰学生吗? |
| | Do you know any local Dutch students? |
| F1 | 认识还是认识, 但是也不太聊天 |
| | Yes I know some, but we don't really talk |
| L | 不怎么交流, 是吗 |
| | So you don't really socialize with them? |
| F1 | 对, 就是自闭 |
| | No. I know I am autistic (introverted). |
| L | 那其他的国际学生呢? 比如你的室友之类的 |
| | Then what about other international students? like your flat mate or something |
| F1 | 偶尔交流, 反正也是同专业的国际学生, 也有交流吧, 但也不多 |
| | Well, sometimes, but they are all from same major. We talk sometimes, but not too much |
| L | 那你觉得与他们交流, 能帮助你适应这里的生活吗 |
| | Do you think communicating with them can help you adapt to life here? |
| F1 | 嗯。。 |
| | Umm |
| L | 或者是学习 |
| | Or study here |
| F1 | 学习上还是有的。但是生活上就是, 我们专业里, 有些国际学生没有来荷兰, 所以没有什么帮助 |
| | In study, yes. But in daily life, not really. And also, some international students in our major have not come to the Netherlands actually. |
| L | 你觉得疫情对你与荷兰学生, 中国学生, 国际学生的交流和交往有什么影响吗? |
| | Do you think the pandemic has any impact on your interaction with Dutch students, Chinese students, and international students? |
| F1 | 可能还是有一些影响的。因为如果没有疫情的话, 按理说, 这个时候要么就已经开始做我的 major project, 要么就已经是在线下上课了。就是线下上课, 总是比线上上课, 逼着你去更多的交流吧。然后我又是那种不太主动的人。 |
| | Yes, I think it did impact on the interaction. Because if there was no pandemic, I should either start my major project or take the offline lectures. Compared with the online course, offline course can force you to communicate more others. Also, I am the kind of person who is not very active, so.... |
| L | 所以你觉得, 如果没有疫情的话, 你可能可以跟他们交流的更好一点 |
| | So you think if there was no pandemic, you could communicate with them better. |

| | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| F1 | 对，可能会交流得更多一点 |
| | Yes, I probably have more communication with them |
| L | 所以你没有很好的荷兰朋友？ |
| | So do you have any closed Dutch friends? |
| F1 | 没有 |
| | Nope |
| L | 你这里的学习和中国学习有什么不一样吗？除了之前提到要比较创新之外，就是比如说老师的教学方式上 |
| | Is there any difference between your study here and your study in China, in addition to being more innovative as mentioned earlier? For example, the teacher's teaching methods |
| F1 | 还是有一些不一样的。因为，也可能是我大学的一些特点吧，因为我们之前上学就是，你上课的时候听懂了，基本上就没有太多要自学的东西。老师讲什么东西你记下来就好了。但是这里就是，老师讲 30 个学时，你自己要用 200 个学时去学。他要求你自学，就是跟国内不太一样。 |
| | There are still some differences. Because there was no too much stuff that required you to learn by yourself in my bachelor university. As long as you can understand what professors said in class, it would be fine. You just wrote down what the teacher said in class. But it may also be some of the characteristics of my previous university. But here, the professors only teach about 30 hours in class, but you have to spend 200 hours to learn by yourself. They require you to learn by yourself, which is really different from study in China |
| L | 你觉得这对你来说是一个挑战吗 |
| | Do you think it is a challenge for you? |
| F1 | 算是吧，因为有的时候，他要求你去阅读一些文献，去扩充一些知识，但是我一方面是新来的，他们肯定之前就一直在这么学的，就比较适应。然后我就是，你那我自己拿那么长时间去自学，我也不知道我该从什么地方下手，我也不知道要去怎么挑选我要看什么，也是慢慢适应的过程 |
| | Yes I think so. Sometimes, they ask you to read some papers and researches to expand your knowledge, but I didn't get used to that. Because, on the one hand, I am a new here, while other students probably get used to that as they've already studied here before. On the other hand, I don't where I should start even though they give us enough time to learn by ourselves. I just don't know how to choose which one I should read. It takes times to get used to it. |
| L | 那你现在有觉得自己适应得比较好吗 |
| | So do you feel that you can well fit in with that? |
| F1 | 也不能说比较好吧，反正是比刚来的时候要好很多了 |
| | I would not say "well fit in", but it's much better than the beginning |

| | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L | 如果没有疫情的话，你能适应得更好吗 |
| | If there was no pandemic, would you say you can fit in with that better? |
| F1 | 也许吧，但是我觉得这个事情还是靠自己的 |
| | Maybe, but I think it is still on your own |
| L | 跟疫情没有什么关系是吗 |
| | So you think it has nothing to do with the pandemic? |
| F1 | 没有太大的关系 |
| | No, not really |
| L | 你跟你的教授有经常沟通吗 |
| | Did you often communicate with your professor? |
| F1 | 不太经常，我也没有一个专门负责我的 professor |
| | Not very often, and I don't have a professor who supervises me |
| L | 就是平时上课 professor |
| | then just the professor from your lectures |
| F1 | 上课的话，就是提问的时候，会邮件问一下。但是我大部的时候还是不太联系 |
| | I asked him some questions sometimes via email. But most of time, I did not communicate with him |
| L | 所以你在课堂上问的多，还是课后问得多 |
| | So you ask more in class, or after class |
| F1 | 课后吧 |
| | after class |
| L | 发邮件问的吗 |
| | only through email? |
| F1 | 对 |
| | Yes |
| L | 是关于学习上的问题 |
| | So are those questions mainly about your study? |
| F1 | 对，主要是我发邮件过去，他再发邮件回来，这个有记录的话，我可能之后复习会方便一点，主要也是出于这个考虑 |
| | Yes, it is mainly because it is recorded when I sent an email and he emailed back and it may be easier for me to review it later. That's the main reason |
| L | 哦哦 好.那你觉得跟你教授交流能够帮你更好地适应这里的学习吗? |
| | Okay, well, do you think that communicating with your professor can help you adapt to the study here? |
| F1 | 还是有的，这里教授还是比较很热心，他会帮你去适应这个事情 |

| | |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Yes, the professor here is very nice, and he would love to help you adapt to it. |
| L | 你觉得如果没有疫情的话，你跟教授的交流会有什么改变吗 |
| | Do you think there will be any changes in your communication with the professor, if there is no pandemic? |
| F1 | 像我这种自闭人士，可能也没有什么改变， |
| | I don't think there may be any changes, as I am kind of autistic (introverted) |
| L | 所以，就算没有疫情，线下上课，你也会选择用电子邮件跟他交流 |
| | So, I mean that even if there is no pandemic situation, you still prefer to communicate with him via email? |
| F1 | 对，基本上吧。因为我英语又不太好，我要是当面问，就算我能问清楚，可能他讲了我也听不明白，还不如你邮件发给我，我慢慢研究。 |
| | Yes, basically. Because my English is not very good. If I have to ask questions in person, face to face, even though I can express myself clearly, I probably will not understand what he said. So it is better to send him an email so that I can take my time to read and understand it. |
| L | 那觉得你的英语水平是怎么样的 |
| | How would you evaluate your English language proficiency? |
| F1 | 反正就不太行，但是反正比刚来的时候好多了 |
| | Not really good, but it's much better than when I first came here. |
| L | 如果一到十分，你给你刚来的时候打几分 |
| | On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your language proficiency when you just arrived here? |
| F1 | 刚来的时候可能就打三分 |
| | Probably only 3 when I just arrived |
| L | 那现在呢 |
| | what about now? |
| F1 | 现在打个六分吧 |
| | 6, I think |
| L | 所以你觉得你的英语水平还不能让你完全没有压力的学习 |
| | So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to study here, without any pressure? |
| F1 | 还是不行 |
| | No, I don't think so |
| L | 那你觉得你的英语水平可以让你没有压力的跟当地学生和国际学生交流吗 |

| | |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to communicate with local students and international students, without any pressure? |
| F1 | 还是有点压力的 |
| | still a little stressed |
| L | 为什么呢 |
| | Why? |
| F1 | 就是，怎么说，也不能说英语水平不行，但是有的时候吧，就是词到嘴边吧，然后就突然间把它忘了那种感觉。如果上课的时候，我提前计划好我要说什么，打一个稿子，然后这样的话交流比较顺畅。但是生活中，你突然过来跟我说一个什么，我没有时间准备，然后就会懵掉了，不知道怎么说的感觉。 |
| | Well, how should I explain, I wouldn't say my English language proficiency is bad, but sometimes words are on the tip of my tongue. However, if I know what I am going to say in class and type a draft, the communication would be better. But in daily life, if someone suddenly come over and say something to me, I will become confused and do not know what should I say, as I do not have time to prepare. |
| L | 这种时候你会怎么办？会慢慢地重新组织语言，还是就算了不说了 |
| | Then what did you do at that situation? Did you reorganize what you want to say or just let it go? |
| F1 | 肯定还是想慢慢组织语言。要不然，人家说一句话你不回，多尴尬啊。 |
| | Definitely reorganizing, otherwise it would be awkward if they asked you something but you don't response |
| L | 就是，你可能会很简略地说，就不能..... |
| | Yeah, but will you say it briefly without really expressing your..... |
| F1 | 对对对，就是你换一些简单的词汇，或是肢体语言嘛。反正总是要试一下的 |
| | Yes, Yes, just use some simple words or body language. Anyway you have to try |
| L | 那你觉得语言问题对你适应这里生活和学习有很大的困扰吗 |
| | Do you think the language barrier is a big trouble for you to adapt to life and study here? |
| F1 | 还是有的 |
| | Yes I think so |
| L | 有多大呢，你觉得绝大部分都是语言的问题造成的吗 |
| | To what extent do you think that these troubles are resulted from the language barrier |
| F1 | 可能绝大部分都是语言吧 |

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Maybe, I think, most of them are caused by language barrier |
| L | 那你觉得没有疫情的话，这个问题能有所改善吗 |
| | If there was no pandemic, would you say that this problem can be alleviated? |
| F1 | 也许可以，因为没有疫情，你必须要去项目的话，就是按头交流，多少都会好一点。一个人在家就会想逃避问题 |
| | Maybe. Because if there was no pandemic, you have to do the major project and you will be forced to communicate. This problem may be solved more or less. But when living alone, I just want to run away from the problem |
| L | 总体来说，回忆这半年的生活，你觉得你满意吗？ |
| | Overall, are you satisfied with your life here when recalling the past six months? |
| F1 | 也不算太满意吧，因为我现在还是属于有点像失业状态，就是找不到组，就有点浪费时间的感觉 |
| | Not very satisfied, because I'm kind of like unemployed as I cannot find a internship for the major project. I feel I am wasting my time |
| L | 你觉得这主要是疫情的影响吗 |
| | So do you think that it is the pandemic that causes the problem? |
| F1 | 有一部分是疫情的影响吧 |
| | Well the pandemic is a part of reason. |
| L | 那还有一部分是什么 |
| | Then what is the other part? |
| F1 | 就是可能是我比较逃避问题 |
| | It is probably just because I don't want to face the problem |
| L | 所以是个人方面的原因， |
| | So it's personal reason |
| F1 | 对，个人方面的，有的时候比较逃避问题 |
| | Yes, it is personal reason. Sometimes I just run away from the problem |
| L | 那你觉得你压力大吗 |
| | Do you feel like you are under huge pressure |
| F1 | 还行吧，算是有点压力大，但是也不至于要怎么样那种 |
| | Well, it's okay, it's a bit stressful, but it did not cause any issues or something |
| L | 那你刚到荷兰的时候，是什么感觉 |
| | When you just arrived in Netherlands, how did you feel? |
| F1 | 刚来的时候，我们专业要上必修课嘛。那个时候属于课程压力比较大，但是你就没有什么心思去考虑别的。就是每天上课，做好你手头的事情，就也没有太多操心的事情。你现在手头没有事情做了，反而开始担心了。就是那种迷茫感，反而开始有生活的压力，那种感觉。 |

| | |
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| | When we first came, we had to take compulsory courses. At that time, it is more about the pressure from school and courses, and you didn't have time to think about other things. You just need to take the course and focus on your study. There was not much to worry about. But now, you have nothing to do and you start to worry. It's the sense of lost that makes you feel the pressure from life. |
| L | 就是担心未来的发展是吗 |
| | Worry about your future? |
| F1 | 主要是担心延毕，因为现在你耽误一个月，毕业的时候就要晚一个月。主要就是这种担心，然后就压力就很大。 |
| | I am mainly worried about postponement, because if you delay be one month, you will graduate one month late. That is my big concern and it is really stressful. |
| L | 那你觉得适应这里的生活和适应这里学习，哪个比较容易呢？ |
| | Which one do you think is easier, adapt to life here or adapt to study here? |
| F1 | 额 可能还是生活比较容易吧，因为，怎么说，我其实还是过自己的生活吧，我租一个房子，然后我自己做饭，就也不算融入当地的生活，因为我过得还是我自己的生活习惯。所以，对我来说，我只要知道哪里买东西，哪个地方住，其实对我来说也无所谓。但是学习就是，你必须要去适应他们这里学习。 |
| | Umm, maybe life is easier, because, how should I explain, I actually live my own life. I rent a room and cook by myself. I wouldn't say I've intergrated into the local life, because I live my own life that I get used to before. So, I just need to know where I can go shopping and where is my house. The rest of thing is not big deal. But study is the thing that you have to adapt to. |
| L | 最后一个问题，你觉得你会给你同学推荐来荷兰学习吗 |
| | So last question, would you recommend to your fellow students to study in the Netherlands |
| F1 | 还是会吧， |
| | Yes I think so |
| L | 即使在疫情的影响下 |
| | Even with the impact of Covid-19? |
| F1 | 还是会吧，因为感觉这里确实是学习上机会比较多吧 |
| | Yes. Because I feel people have more opportunities in study. |
| L | 以后发展的机会也比较多吗 |
| | then what about the oportunities for the future development? |
| F1 | 其实荷兰，冲着荷兰来主要是这里签证比较好拿，因为你如果在这里读个硕士，在读个博士，基本上你就可以换永久居留了。所以就，如果想要留在欧洲的话，荷兰可能是个好选择。但是你如果不想，只想回去的话，像英国的一年硕士就比较好了。 |

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | In fact, the main reason for me to study in the Netherlands is that it is easier to get a visa and stay here. Because if you take the Master degree here and after that take a PhD degree, you can have a permanent resident permit. So if you want to stay in Europe, Netherlands may be a good choice. But if you don't want to stay here, if you want to go back after study, I think one-year Master in UK would be better. |
| L | 好的，没有问题了，谢谢 |
| | Okay, thank you very much! I don't have any questions |
| F1 | 好的 |
| | Okay |

Appendix D – Interview transcript 2

So how long have been living in the Netherlands

I've come here at the end of August. So up until now it's like September, November, December, January, like almost six months.

Six months, Okay. And what do you study at Utrecht University?

International Development Studies

Okay. Have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands or just at Utrecht University?

Yeah, yeah, kind of, even though like, I cannot really go somewhere and explore the city completely. But I made really good friend here. So like, my daily life is not as dire as hell. So it's okay, kind of. Because of the COVID, I cannot really go anywhere freely.

And have you enjoyed your study at Utrecht University? Just study and learning

Yeah, I will say yes.

Then why?

Sometimes, it's quite challenged, but I had a feeling that if you get like, if you score really high, you just have a sense of achievement. Yeah, but I have to admit, that is quite challenging, sometimes give me like, a little bit pressure, but like, professors from our program are quite happy to help us out, just like, to distention our deadlines, those kinds of things.

Yeah, have you experienced any challenges? what kind of challenges you experienced?
right now?

I mean just during the whole period of time...

Okay, during the whole period of life living here. Challenges? Not really, just like, sometimes I think it's have like, definitely have some like, tough question, or tough choice, you have to make the decision. But that's not quite the challenge. From my point of view, you mean it is more, like, in the professional work life or in the daily life?

Both

emm... not really

not really, okay

i cannot recall anything that seriously to call it a challenge.

Just difficulties, like, you feel confused or stressed, sometimes?

Okay, so like, it's more come at like recently, because my professor was like, yeah, your research is interesting. So you might just find out an organization here to just to say which organization might be willing to coordinate with your researches this kind of thing. And I talked to one of the researchers from our program yesterday, and she told me to prepare a one research paper in that proposal is just like a research outline and send to them. And I would suddenly become quite doubt myself, because like, my professor give me like, quite,

quite like good feedback and the score on my proposal, but one is, if I just like, sent to all of these companies, and none of them think my research is interesting. I will feel a little bit like, how should I say, stressful, or it just, like, start to doubt myself If my research is like, that interesting or that valuable or not

Yeah. Okay. So do you feel like you fit in with the Dutch culture and society,

Not really like fit in, but I really enjoy the culture and the society out here. The Dutch people is famous for, like, direct. Everything so direct, including like my friend, like, my professor, but it's also give me a hint. Like, I can say no at any time to any people without they feel offended about that. Because like, in my culture, say no to people is kind of like, not that polite, you know, but like, at here, I feel like yes, it's give me just like, the new style of life. I should enjoy it. Yeah

So do you feel like you fit in the Dutch education system?

Yes, I would say. Because like, the education system, like I know it before I come into here. So I should, I should actually, I have to as a student, I have to just like, try my best to fit in, because like, they do this period system which means you just like, take two course at for one period, instead of you take like seven or eight courses for the whole system, oh, for the whole semester that I used to in my home University, but here everything is different, including the professor when they grade you, when they grade your paper, they just like take a different standard towards that. But I mean, I'm, I'm trying. Yeah.

Where did you get those information about Dutch education system?

Online

The website?

Yeah the school website, or just like talk to any other students familiar with Dutch. Yeah,

And did you have any previous experience of starting and traveling abroad?

Yes. So, in my high school I take like, one year in the US, California. And yeah, that one year just like, change me completely. And also, when I was in my bachelor, I went to Australia to take like, one semester exchange in their law school.

Okay. So do you feel like those experiences can help you adjust to Dutch society, culture and education?

Yes, I was a, It is like not only about help me to fit in or help me to enjoy like the Dutch system and Dutch society, generally helped me to just like to know how to talk to people. When people come from a different country come with a different educational background with you. How do you communicate with them? How do you know like, which people you like, which people you want to make an effort to make friends?

Yeah. Okay. So, before you arriving in the Netherlands, do you have any knowledge about Dutch culture and society?

A little bit, not too much. Because like before I come, I never know any Dutch people. Okay, actually, I know one. he's my German teacher. But he is Dutch in my home University. Yeah, but like, after that, I don't know. I actually have no idea his dutch before. But actually, after I

finished my German course, I just know. People told me that "Okay, you know what, he's not German, he is Dutch". I, I barely know, actually, but I just like, look up something on the internet. Okay, it's really interesting. But before, I actually already know that Dutch people is quite direct and their culture is like, more open, like more freedom, those kind of things. But after I moved here, I was like, Okay, yeah, that's what I want. Probably.

Yeah. Okay. So before arriving here, what were your expectation of starting and living in Netherlands?

Also, like the expectation right now is more related to the Coronavirus, you know, when I just like plan to study abroad, I plan to have like, more interaction with my professor. And we can just like, go to the office hour to talk to them our idea frequently, instead of like, the only thing we can just like get in, get in touch with each other is by the email or just like by the team. So it's kind of a little bit different from what I was thinking. But normally, it should be like this, and I suppose. Yeah, yes.

Then what about the life here?

about the life here. Okay. So like, the one of the reason I decided to move in the movie enlightenment is not only about like, the most important reason is definitely like Utrecht University, you have the high reputation in the research field that I'm studying right now. So that's first off during the second way. I was like, Oh, yeah, life is interesting. I want to enjoy that kind of life. So when I was in the Euproee, it's like the exchange student life, you know, we went to party every day. And we just like, have a different culture or try the different beer. So like, that's the second reason I really wanted like to experience the European life or traveling around the Europe, but all of the things right now. I cannot really do that. So the reality is such a shame.

So yeah, the reality didn't really match your expectation of the life here?

what do you mean reality?

Just the real life, the reality

Oh yeah, just the real life. So the real life is quite, so, it's just like the special situation under this special situation. But I mean, if like, everything goes back to normal, I suppose. Yes, I will love here. It's just like it's matched my expectation, I think. Yeah.

So you mean, if we don't have the COVID-19, it will match your expectation.

Yes.

Okay. So have you experienced any discrimination when leaving in the study in the Netherlands?

I'm not really discrimination is more about the stereotype. But every time it's just like, I encountered some stereotype, I would just like to tease them back. I've heard like a lot of people talk this to me. And they were like, yeah. And they asked you, where are you from, this kind of things, and like, have you talked about this. And they were like, okay, like before, I just like made so much Chinese student as well, like one of the guy from my program, and they were just like, you have a beer outside. And he was like, Yeah, I live in Delft before and there is a technical university over there. And he was like, yeah, I'm so surprised that you

are just like, go around and talk to different people. I was like, why not? I mean, you are my classmates. And I haven't seen you for like, two months. So like, yes, I'm happy to see you guys, actually. And everybody did that. And he was like, Yeah, but like, Chinese students, they always like, hang out with each other. They don't really talk to other people. And they're just like, being silence being completely quiet in the class. Like, well, that's not me. That's not really discrimination. It's just kinda like, stereotype. But yeah, yeah. But sometimes I have to admit that some stereotype also kinda is a little choice, because like, normally speaking Asian people, they're just, like, more quiet and more shy than the European students. And also, yes, I suppose English is one of the barrier, those kind of thing is to understand each other's humor. They cannot understand our humor, and sometimes, like, we cannot understand their humor, so it kind of depends on so like, It's why I think like the one year in the US High School is really helpful. For me, it makes sense.

Yeah. And who do you often communicate with, just local Dutch people, or co-national students, I mean, Chinese students and other international students

Mostly, it is local and other international students. Cause like my best friend here. She's from Ireland. Yeah. And also, like, some friends we asked to come over frequently, is also like international students, ex-students from Belgium, Italy and Germany

So you socialize more with local people and international students, right?

Yeah

when you socialize with them, what kind of topic you're talking about?

emm...

It depends?

Yeah, It depends, actually a lot. For example, with my best friend, we are, just like, gossip. that's ust didn't come up. So yeah. And we're talking about movies. And we have the same favorite writer. Yeah. Yeah. And we also were talking about this feminism topic. And we talked about it frequently, super frequently. And two of us is like extrem people. We define that we defined ourselves in that way. So actually, we have like, a quite a lot to talk about. Yeah, just like, yeah, just ask each other how was the day, that kind of things. And we just, like, tell each other to share information and to just like, try to cheer each other up. And I think it's quite important.

So do find it easy to communicate with them, just including local Dutch people and international students?

Yes, I think so. I think it's like, not even mentioned about, like, make a friend or just like how just like, communicate is like, yeah, it's quite easy.

So you prefer to, like, communicate with them first, or you're more like, active to communicate with them?

What do you mean by that?

Let me think, so, you're not afraid of communicating with them. Right?

No

Okay. Do you feel like they have influenced your adjustment here?

influenced me? so help me to fit into the society or those kind of things? Or

Yeah, Have they helped you or prevented you?

How to say that. I mean, fit in the society or enjoy the society is like a totally personal things. It doesn't matter if you have a friend here or not. I mean, sometimes, like my dutch friends were like, "yeah, if you need to just like translate something, if you don't understand something, and you can just like, ask me, I can do that for you". I mean, I know that for them, it's like, no big deal for that, because they are Dutch, they understand every single Dutch word, but for me, it's kind of struggle for me to understand something. But I insist. I was like, Yeah, I'm fine. Because I need to do that by myself. Because I cannot ask help all the time. I need to try my best to fit into society, including the language barriers. Yeah. So sometimes they are super willing to help but sometimes I know, like, I can make myself being lazy. If somebody keeps helping you, and you will just like being lazy, or anyway I have people do that for me, but it's not truth. You have to do that by yourself eventually.

So have they guide you through the Dutch culture, your Dutch friends.

Themselves, as a human being, is a kind of Dutch culture. So like as well, my friend, she came over to my house like two weeks ago, and she doesn't really like like, like different people and party, whatever. So she was like, write everything on her face, but people probably will think that is kind of rude. But for me, it's like, it's quite like okay for me to understand why she did that. I mean themselves, like, how they eat, how they normally do, how they just like go traveling, how they communicate with people, those kind of things like, can embody in the Dutch culture. And yeah, it's not have to be the people tell you what the Dutch culture is because like the Dutch societies, like the diverse society, they have, like Moroccan they have like, they have like Polish and Dutch kind of thing. So different people, they have, like, different understanding towards a Dutch culture, but themselves is kind of like part of the culture for me. For example, they never eat warm breakfast or warm lunch. So they always have bread, they obsessed with bread. They can eat bread for like three meals kind of thing.

Yeah, that's ture. And have the COVID-19 affect your socialization with Dutch people, Chinese students and other international students?

I will say yes, more or less definitely.

And then why why do you think of that

As I told you, I would like to,like, if I'm not really busy with my study and I have like a weekend this kind of thing. I like to just like, go to the club, to dance with my friend, those kind of things. And you can definitely just like meet some, like new people in that class. And you definitely will have like more chance to go on the campus to have class to attend the lecture. So yeah, that definitely will help you to know more people, more interesting people.

Okay, and then we will talk about your learning here. Do you feel like there are differences between Dutch education and Chinese education ?

Yeah. How do I say that? I will say, yes. The most different, the most big difference is, I mean, at here, professors are more encourage you to do things independently. And also, they encourage you to challenge their idea. And they are open to just like, offer you like the different options kind of things, and they want to make sure, like, you are happy about your research. You are not stressful. You're confident about your research right now. I mean, that is the thing that my supervisor asks me every time after meeting, and she was like, yeah, we could, yeah, we're good. And she was like, but right now you have more confident about your research. That mean, they care about this a lot. I mean, they also work here about what you did, what do you do on your research? That's the most important thing, but besides that, they were like, yeah, were you want to this confident, independent researcher or scholar instead of just like student. But in my home university professors more like the babysitter, you know, they will offer you like, specific idea. So like that is the huge difference I am feeling right now. Yeah.

Which one do you prefer?

Dutch way defenitly. So I feel like yeah, I'm a grown up. I am not a baby any more.

So because of this COVID-19, have you experienced any challenges in your academic life? professional life?

Yes, somehow, like, for me, I'm quite open to just like ask questions in the class or just like go to the professor's office at office hour to talk to them about my essay's idea, about my papers idea, but right now everything is like so tightly on schedules, everything had been put on the schedule, you can not just like, really figure this out. And also like every time we attended the lecture, and professors were like, yeah, any questions? Do you have any questions, but sometimes it's super hard for you just like, ask a really personal question in front of like 100 students, you know, because if you have like, a lecture on the campus, we can just like after the lecture, we can just like go to Professor like face to face to talk about this. But riight now it is just like, embarrassed, you know, it just is not the right time to answer that to just like ask that question. So I have to fix that question by myself.

Yeah that's ture. So how often do you communicate with your professors?

Apart two weeks. Yeah. I would say.

When you communicate with your professor, like, both in the email or in front of class, which topics you're communicating more, or just only about your academics

Not really, we like talk about academics, we talk about like, she will ask me how are you feeling recently? Where are you going for Christmas. Like, Have you enjoyed the life here? Yeah, that's kind of thing.

So do you feel like communicating with your professor has helped you adapt to the academic requirements here?

Definitely, Yeah. Like, Professor out here is like, pretty chill. Like before that I have to submit a 22 pages proposal. And she was like, super stressful about that, Oh, Jesus Christ, the proposal is already 22 pages. And she was like, God, just like, relax, you just like need to tell people what you are going to do. And what's a research question is, you're going to have

that sub research questions. And also you're going to tell people, okay, I need to, I need to use this data, because of what. Because I need to use this kind of like, data set, because of what. And that's it, that's you just like the research proposal. I definitely know that's not the research proposal, because I if I own right, that is maximum for like, three pages. Yeah, it's definitely just like, it makes me relax a lot. Yeah, it's not a big deal.

So the following question will, regarding your language proficiency. How would you evaluate your English language proficiency?

You mean, on a scale of like, 1 to 10? Or it's like, according to the IELTS tasks, or should I just give you a specific number?

You can give me the IELTS task and also how you feel about your

Okay, IELTS, I got seven overall. Yeah, but my reading is quite, is such a chaotic, compared to like the rest of the three components, but it's fine. I just like do not want to pay lots of attentions on just like doing practice, you know.

What about speaking?

I get 7 on my speaking. Yeah, I'm just like, just like writing down some like answers, but sometimes, for me, it doesn't really make sense. So like for the reading part is kind of my weakpoint at somehow, but it's fine, I am okay with that.

do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education system?

Yeah, I would say. Yes. You know, it's funny, even though somehow, like my professional will like, yeah, there are two sentences I do not really like, understand what you mean. Could you like, explain that to me? I'm like, definitely, I will do that. But they were just like, give me a minus point on that. But it's really funny. Like, my friend, my best friends here. She's Irish, she is native speaker. She's native English speaker. Even for her sometimes like her professor were like, Okay, so what you said it doesn't really make sense. Also, they will try to correct her grammar mistakes. Oh, I would say our professor or her TA, teaching assistant, is Dutch, they is not English native speaker. They have corrected English from the native speaker, so I was like yeah, I'm okay with that. Cuz like if, like, yeah, that's pretty funny.

Yeah. And do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture and Dutch society?

Yeah, definitely. Because like the Dutch people everybody speaks like perfect English. Somehow even though I do not really speak Dutch, but they were just like, yeah, sure you address and so sometimes I, I found like, even before, like, between the Dutch people, some kind of people attend to speak English to each other, even though both of them can speak Dutch. I think it's pretty good for like international students in this sense.

But have you experienced any difficulties or challenges caused by your language proficiency?

Not really

Not really. Okay, good. Do you speak Dutch?

Nope

Okay, then, to what extent do you think speaking Dutch may help a person to adapt to a Dutch society and Dutch education?

One of the huge advantages is that if you can speak Dutch, you can definitely find a job. For example, if you can speak.. for example, me, I can speak English and as a Chinese native speaker, I can speak fair enough Spanish. And also if I can speak Dutch and people were like, yeah, we should consider you. And also some job position, they were just like, in their requirement, they were like, yeah, we need you frequently in both Dutch and English. In the sense, I feel like yeah, speaking Dutch is like really helpful for you to get a job in the sense. Yeah, but most of the time, I think, is dependent on you if you want to speak Dutch or not. But like, if you really don't want to learn that right now in this kind of stage, but it's okay to just like, communicate in English with other people. It is fine.

Yeah, So overall, are you happy with your choice to stay here in and to live here during the pandemic?

Yeah, I was super happy. Because like, during the pandemic is really important. In my home, at home, people are super nervous about everything, about this COVID related things, even though they just like, get like 100 case, 100 cases and 100 new cases per day. They're just oh my god we fuck up with everything. But here people are super chill with this, I am not just like want to compliment about, like, they have like, four or 3003 or 4000 new cases per day. I was just like saying, like, people are super chill, people are relaxed about this. I mean, I'm more enjoying this kind of like, it's kind of like, normal life.

Yeah, so you don't feel like the pandemic....

Yeah, we're just like, I just, I definitely will just like, protect myself, wash my hand, and those kinds of things. But happily, yes, there's nothing I can do more. You know, the only thing I could do just like wear the facemask when there's super crowded and wash my hand and do not just like touch everywhere, do not touch my nose and do not touch my mouth in the public. So like, Yeah, that's it. Like everybody just like do that. So there's nothing. just as net people are super worry about their life. I mean, yeah, It's Human Rights things. I mean, yeah,

yeah. Also, can you describe how you feel when you just arrived here and how you feel right now?

Okay. When I first arrived here, like the weather, it just like shocked me a lot. Because like, I still wear the shirts. I still wear like the super, like. Yeah, just like so travelers, whatever. And when I went here, like in the morning, in Amesterdam. And it's so cold and it's raining, windy all the day. I hate that. And after that, one of my friends, but at that time me and her were not really friend, it was the first time we met, and she was like "yeah, me and my friends, we're going to the city center today. You should join us". I was like, "Yeah, but the whole day , the weather is like, shit as hell. "Yeah, so most of the time is more about weather things, you know. Now, I just I get used to it pretty good I think.

Then how about your emotional status, psychological status?

Okay, I can get that. But like, it's all happened to me at any country. For example, before I moved to the US, it is quite different. And also, later I go to Australia, but that one is more like the exchange. So everybody just like settled down everything for you. And I have like, two months work experience in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. But that one is also like different. So like, you definitely will just like experience some like emotional fluctuation. I mean, that's, that's necessary for you to explore new things but I can enjoy that, which means it's awfully to tell "you hey, you are here just like enjoying life out here"

Yeah. So your previous experience really help you adjust to this new environment?

Yeah. Because at the very beginning it is definitely, cuz I don't know, I know nothing about this country. I need to get the ov-chipcard. I need to get a SIM card. I need to get a bank account. So those kinds of thing you need to sort it out by yourself. And I mean I already know this thing is already here. But the thing is, like only yourself can help yourself to do, can help yourself to do this. Yeah, so just like enjoy this. Yeah.

Okay, so last question. Would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands? Even with the impact of pandemic? Yeah,

Yeah, I will say yes. it's depended on them, actually, I recommend everybody to study in the Netherlands. It's better than UK. I have to admit that a lot of my, all of my friends, they went to the UK or they have the plan to go to the UK next year, but I think it's definitely a different place at here. Yeah,

yeah. Okay. Yeah. That's all for those questions. Thank you very much for participating my interview.

Appendix E – Interview transcript 3

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| |
| Okay, so let's get started. So the first question, how long have you been living the Netherland? |
| If you mean come to the Netherlands, it's only about, like, one half year, |
| One and half a year ? Okay. |
| Yes. |
| So what did you study at Utrecht university? |
| You mean the faculty.? |
| Yeah |
| I studied the intercultural communication, a master's program. |
| Yeah. Okay. So have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherland during the Covid-19. Or you can talk about both, before and after |
| During the COVID-19, that means it's like almost after February. Um...enjoy. Definitely not, because how to say it's quite isolated, especially, for example, in May, I have never seen that, for example, near the Utrecht centraal, there's no people on the street, it's totally like empty, you don't feel the cities vivid in that way. And this is the daily life. And also, shopping is also a daily life, part of daily life. For example, if you go to a grocery store, you need to wear a mask, it is somehow, first, out of, out of expectation. And second, you're not getting used to it. So it kind of like interfere in your daily life, something unexpected interfere in your daily life. And to be honest, in like study life, because at that time, you have to do the internship, at least look for in an internship. And also the meanwhile you need to write your thesis. And normally, to make maintain a good relationship with your supervisor you normally at least once a week, you go to the office and talk about your thesis with your supervisor, but at that time, it's impossible. And I feel like more passive in that situation. That's my first perception, my daily life during Covid-19. |
| Yeah, then what about the daily life before COVID-19 |
| It is quite occupied. I would like to say, like, on weekends, for example, you study you also go with friends outside. It's different. It's more like vivid, especially, you have more chance to meet your colleagues. Like during the discussion, group chatting, and everytime after block one and block two, we always have like a small party with the whole intercultural communication faculty. So after that, there's nothing like people only talk via WhatsApp or something like that. |
| So have you experienced any challenges during COVID-19? While study in the Netherlands? |
| Yes, I think quite a lot. Because I only meet my supervisor once. And I don't know, for example, what he expects of my performance in writing. But also, how to say, kind of, |

because I write the thesis in German and my supervisor is a Dutch teacher, and we communicate normally only via email, like he will list some bullet point, and I will revise it. But under my understanding, I feel more like passive but it's the first time you experienced that. Actually, someone needs to make a first step. So for example, to suggest we have to meet like for example, like we like digitally via zoom, not only via email, so it make a huge, how to say, difficulty in writing thesis because the first time I submit my thesis, and it's totally not pass, because of some, like major differences between two parties, like what my supervisor expects me of the, I don't know how to call in English because I write in German. how to say, introduction. And the main part of the thesis is talking about two different things. But it's somehow how you write it, not because of what you write is wrong, but how you write it. But I totally didn't know. So I revise my thesis second time in German, I think it really because of the covid-19, you cannot meet your supervisor in person. And I really need that in person talking to understand how I need to write my thesis. That's a big problem.

Why you think meeting in person can help you write your thesis?

It's difficult to talk, let me think. For example, if, via email, my supervisor writes some bullet point, and it is a sentence, but within the sentence, there is, for example, a word in German that we interpret in different ways. I interpreted it in my way, but he actually meant another thing. But in the in the personal meeting, people tend to talk more, because of some reason, I don't know. And he will explain the bullet point that will help us a lot.

Yeah. Okay. So have you experienced any challenges while leaving Neverland?

Most of things are with the government to do. For example. like more bureaucratic stuff, to be honest. You need to register your address in gemeentehuis(town hall). It's different. For example, first time they asked " Have you have your bank account?" I don't have. So I got back. And after I have my bank account, I come again. And they say you need to bring your contract. This kind of stuff. But actually, you can check this via online. Normally people I don't know in a foreign country, they go in person and to the reception desk. But you don't get all the information. So I call it bureaucratic. Because it's bureaucratic. Yeah, that's the main point. And, and also looking for a roommate is quite difficult.

So that's your challenge. That's your challenges before COVID-19. Right?

yeah, mainly

What about the challenges during the COVID-19?

You mean in the Netherlands?

Yes, in the Netherlands

Actually, I don't think a lot if I have already talked about the emotional isolation. But apart from that, I feel because I've already lived there for half a year. So there is no too much differences before and after

okay. And do you feel like you fit in with Dutch culture and Dutch society?

Not really, sometimes

Why?

I would say it depends on which kind of person. If this Dutch person is more like students or international or at your age, you will feel more comfortable, but that's not because they show their Dutch side that's because they are being somewhere in between. They tend not to show it too much Dutch side to you, because you are foreigner. But I might for example, my landlord is a Dutch person, he is quite different way in thinking, for example, if I take an example, I would like to say, for example, but there was a one thing that we go to supermarket together, it's just a minor Meinl like details. Normally, I weighed, for example, tomato together with the plastic bag, but my landlord just shout, not shout at me, but very like loudly "No, you cannot do that." "You should not do that". I said "why?" And he said "You should first weigh the tomato, tomato first, and then put them into the plastic." I don't know why. I asked "Is that some ritual stuff? For example, like habits like Dutch habit?" He said "Because they will show different price. You weigh your plastic bag, under tomatoes price, plastic bag is for free." I actually really argue with him. It really makes differences because the plastic is like a piece of paper. It doesn't weigh anything. But actually no, we make experiments like first, like two different test a and test B and show really big differences like test a is with plastic bag is a little bit more expensive than the test B, without plastic bad. I was so surprised. I think they are stingy. Because I also lived in Germany before. I never see people like that.

Okay, so another question. Do you feel like you fit in Dutch education system?

From the beginning, really not. Because I don't know it is only because of this faculty or others. It's quite intense. It's like block one, block two, block three and block four. Normally, people will expect a long vacation in winter, for example. But it's only like, one week or two weeks. I don't really remember. And you need to continue. So it's quite push you forward. Yeah. This is one thing. And the second I feel generally speaking, it's quite International, like people can talk and ask questions, especially the relationship between professors and students are more like casual. You can raise a hand and ask question just in class and say, "Hey, I have a question". It's more like casual relationship. So that I think is quite good.

So you feel like you can easy to adjust to the Dutch education, right?

Yes.

Yeah. Okay. So did you have any previous experience of starting or traveling abroad?

Yes, I was in Germany before

Yeah, so before you arrived in the Netherlands, did you have any knowledge of Dutch culture?

Not really, I have only been here once

and so do you feel like your previous experience, like your experience studying in Germany, helps you adjust to Dutch education or Dutch society?

Society, yes. Because the language quite similar. I don't feel like for example, if you do the grocery shopping, you don't feel foreign, don't feel you are foreigner. But in the education system, it still different for the, for the relationship between professors and students. Because I remember very, very clearly that in the orientation days, Professor Jan come to

me and asked "Are you coming from the exchange program?" Like very long talking about like 30 minutes? Actually, in Germany is quite distance with professor. You have to say 尊称 (you have to address someone respectfully)

Oh, yeah, yeah. Okay. I can translate that.

Like show respect to professor. You go to, they have a limited time for you to ask questions

Okay. So, before you arriving in the Netherlands, what were your expectation for studying or living here?

I expected to meet a lot of friends, which I did. like totally different friends from all around the world. That's what I expected. And what I really experienced. That's true. Not only in, in study, but also out of study, I can make a lot of friends.

does the COVID-19 affect your expectation?

Not really.

because you already know those friends before covid-19, right?

Yes, yes. Yeah.

Okay. Can you describe how you feel when you just arrived here? your emotional feeling.

I feel, Utrecht is really very nice place. Because in summer it's sunny first. And maybe you didn't see it. But you know, the canal is quite deep. Yeah. They need to go downstairs and near the river or near the canal. There's different cafe it's quite cozy. Yeah. And also the central station when you go outside there was a big wheel, in blue. It's made of different like mechanical parts like battery like, like lotto. It's a, it's very nice. Actually it is attractive. But I don't know why the government move this afterwards, like in winter.

Has your emotional status changed over the time since being here? Compare with the very beginning when you just arrived here and after you study here for for a long time. Is your emotional feeling change?

Do you exactly mean like emotional change? Can you like name some part of life?

Maybe just at the beginning, you feel kind of stress about something but but now you can get used to that.

Yes, for example, the bureaucratic that I mentioned before, the Netherlands is quite digitally oriented, that you can apply a lot of things online, you don't need to go in person. so quite convenient.

Okay. And have you experienced any discrimination or stereotype when leaving and starting here?

Personally, not. Personally not

but even during the COVID-19?

Yeah, personally, no, it's okay. actually being quite nice. For example, I were, I lived in Utrecht near the central station. And I normally go shopping during the covid-19 in the morning because there's less more people and on the street. I always wear the mask while at that time no people on the street wear a mask. But people were very nice like say hello,

even you don't know that people, like just come across and say hello. I don't. Personally I don't experience any discrimination.

Okay, and The following question is about your interpersonal communication. Who do you often communicate with local Dutch people? Or co-national students like Chinese students or other international students?

other international students

Okay. So how often do you socialize with them?

At least twice a week or once a week. Once a week at least.

Okay. Even during the covid-19?

Yes, yes.

Did you communicate more before COVID-19? Or does the COVID-19 affects your communication with the international students?

It affects, definitely. Because normally, you can go next door, like go to their home. But now you can only chat via online, like during the COVID-19 we scheduled once a week with my friends, also in the faculty, but some people didn't attend because they are, you know, at another space and you don't know, they just say I cannot attend tonight. And other people continue. The next week. Two people say I cannot attend. And then we just canceled the meeting. And next next week the same. So it's like, the kind of thing Yeah,

yeah. When you communicate with your friends, what, like what topics your communicate more?

Because we're all girls, we talk about men. And it's more like girls talking about a movie for example. movie is the second topic, man is definitely the first. Topic is more like share the differences. For example, Chinese cooking, great sunshine, beach, and American, Trump for example.

Yeah. So do you feel like communicating with them influence your adjustment? Like it may help or prevent your judgement?

it help a lot in adjustment

Can you give me an example or it is just how you feel?

example like they will offer you some other perspective that you personally cannot own it. You never think about it this way. And they offer you another perspective in seeing things in different ways.

Yeah. Okay. So do you have, like, close relationship. Or do you establish any close relationship with Dutch people?

close relationship?

I mean, just like best friend or someone you think you can be best friend or something

Nope. if I say this, you will be sad. To be honest. My best friend is international students.

Is that because you don't meet too many Dutch people

That's one of the reason. Yes. And the second is, that's one of the main reason . Not a lot of Dutch people surrounding me. yeah, on the street, there's many Dutch people, but you cannot just come and say hey can we be friends?

Okay, as so has the COVID-19 affect your socialization with local Dutch people, co-national students or other international students.

Dutch people, I will say. because before there were more but after Covid-19, there is none. No people, I mean no Dutch people is available to talk.

Then what happens next?

For example, I can name an example because I do climbing. And we have a group. Many Dutch people really like this, but I only go twice. And then there's COVID-19 and nobody can go there. So if I continue to go, without COVID-19, like, if there's no COVID-19 I continue to go, I think we can definitely be a good friend. It's affecting the social life in, for example, physical sport.

ou mean the COVID-19 affect you or socialize with Dutch people? Right?

In some way, yes

Okay. Do you feel like there are differences between Dutch education and the Chinese education?

Of course

Has the differences influence your adaptation to Dutch education system?

I would tend to be more active, to be more bold, more brave to ask questions.

So during the COVID-19? Do you feel like it's more difficult to adapt to that education? Or you already get used to that?

During Covid-19 is already past the first two blocks. So the difficulty, the most difficult parts are gone. So it's not really

So what's the most difficult part?

in what? in study?

Yeah in study

Like group assignments, Like assignments, I don't, I don't know. But block one and block two are difficult.

Why do you think it was difficult?

All our group assignments that you have four people in your group. And four people have four mindset and they are really different. Sometimes we sit in the cafe or library for five or six hours just to write and interviews or write the results of the interviews. Because many people have different ideas, but not all can be on the paper. you have to choose one. So you argue with each other. And it takes a lot of time. And if you do it alone, I just say this one and this one. And nobody ... Yeah.

Okay, how often do you communicate with your professor before COVID-19?

It depends on classes, for example. In German classes, we have three times a week. I, if I have questions every time I will ask. But for the big group class. I normally don't have communications with professors.

Yeah. So okay, the following question will regard your language proficiency. How would you evaluate your language proficiency?

Oh, it's getting better and better after I have the group classes because you need to talk. It's good. It's really helpful. Even if you cannot clearly transfer your message, but you can explain your meaning in a long way. Like you can name an example, you can let people to understand you. You can name two examples and compare with each other, and then really helps a lot.

Yeah, if you give a score, like one to 10, at the very beginning when you're in the Netherlands.

I think five is the most, now I feel is eight or 8.5. Like that

Okay, so Do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education system in the very beginning?

It is a little bit difficult in big classes. Because in big classes, professor talks. It's like you have to absorb, absorb the knowledge. And many things are new. If one time you didn't, because English is not my mother tongue, if there's one thing that you don't concentrate in your mind, it flows away. the knowledge is not here, in your mind.

then what about now?

What about now. Because I'm already working, I feel like in the meeting, when the boss talk a lot, like for two hours, I can listen it, like a background music. And if two hours is also like, lessons, and you have the main points of the whole conversation.

So you can understand most of what they are talking in the meeting?

Yes

Okay. So, do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture and society? Like in the beginning, and now.

If they talk in Dutch, I can't. If you speaking of English, their English is much more correct. much. not better, but more precise in meeting. Especially, during. for example, if we talk about some political issues or worldwide issues, they grasp the trend or the meaning and to explain it more precisely than me, I can only listen, but no more comments.

Then Are there any adaptation problems that the language barriers have caused?

in Dutch society

Yeah.

what you mean? like, if I don't know Dutch and it will bring

only the English like the English barriers

Not a lot

so do you speak Dutch?

No, but I would like to learn

So to what extent do you feel like speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to the society and the Dutch education?

First, like, if the Dutch people hear that you have already been there for one year, they expect you to speak a bit, not only Goedemorgen(Good morning) or something like that,a normal conversation. Because you're on their land, they expect you to speak Dutch and they will like you to speak Dutch in studying or in working. And if some Dutch people gather together and they speak Dutch and you don't understand. it will give you the distance. Also during the day life yeah, indeed the Dutch people speak quite well English but there are still some Dutch people who can not speak English. Especially in small town. For example, I was hiking outside, and I want to catch a bus. But it does not show the schedule on Google Map, I asked a lot of people, but in this small town, no people can speak English. It's quite difficult. But only local people know the best schedule. So in this small thing, you feel so ... Yeah. It's just happened recently and many times, like almost four times. So I think learning Dutch is quite necessary if you want to live here.

Yeah. Okay. So overall, are you happy with your choice to study at the leaving Neverland?

Yes,

Why?

Because it's International. You, you feel diverse. Yeah, you meet diverse people. They are also international people, but they have been living in the Netherlands for 10 years, or more than five years. They are different and interesting. And it is charm of the Netherlands

Yeah. And generally speaking, do you feel like the Covid-19 has impact your study at UU

Looking for internship is quite difficult. But it's also part of your study, it's very, very difficult. Some people has already found, which makes you nervous. And, for example, you look for it for two months and there's no people contacting you, you will feel more nervous. But at that time, Professor Jan has offered an alternative that people to accept it or not. It depends on themselves. So it mitigate our problems.

Okay, last question, would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands even with the impact of covid-19?

I would like to, but still, I feel I never experienced like, I think, in this year, all our online courses. You have more right to say this than we, I will recommend it, but only from my perspective. So generally, if you chat with people in group lessons, and afterwards, and you also chat other stuff, like daily issues, You exchange ideas.But if it's online, it's really difficult because you only focus on the assignments. I do recommend it. But during the COVID, it is difficult, so you need to conquer yourself.

Okay. And that's all for the interview. Thank you very much for participating in my interview

Appendix F – Interview transcript 4

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thank you for participating in the interview. And how long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| Less than one year. |
| Could you be more specific? Like, how many months? When did you arrive? |
| Last year, September |
| so it's kind of like six months, right? |
| Yeah. |
| Okay. Oh, what do you study at Utrecht University? |
| financial management, |
| master or bachelors? |
| Master |
| Okay. So, have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherland? |
| Yes, I think so. |
| Why? |
| 这个要说得很详细吗? 还是大概? |
| Should I elaborate on this? or just gnerally speaking |
| Both is fine |
| 我想想。 因为以前没有在国外生活过吧, 这是算是比较新奇的体验。这里的外国同学挺友好的 |
| let me see. Because I haven't lived abroad before, this is a relatively novel experience. The students here are very friendly |
| why you choose to study the Netherlands? |
| 因为荷兰的学费比较低而且只有一年嘛。英国也要一年但是比荷兰贵不少 |
| Because the tuition fees in the Netherlands are relatively low and only for one year. The UK takes a year but is much more expensive than the Netherlands |
| So is there other reasons that you choose to study in the Netherlands? |
| 荷兰还有一个找工作的签证嘛 |

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| You can also have a search year visa to find a job if you study in the Netherlands |
| Yeah, okay. So have you enjoying your study at Utrecht University, even during the COVID-19 |
| 新冠还是带来一些不好的体验嘛，但是，总的来说还行，因为我是一个不太喜欢出门的人，所以上网课对我来说比较惬意，而且，我的英文不算很好，上网课可以录下来，就可以反复听。 |
| The COVID-19 do has some negative impact, but in general it is okay, because I am a person who doesn't like to go out, so online classes are more comfortable for me, and my English is not very good. , Online lessons can be recorded and listened to repeatedly. |
| So have you experienced any challenges while studying the Netherlands? |
| 如果说有的话，可能就是学业上的吧。因为第一学期学计量，然后第二期的宏观，就是期中考试挂了一半的人，我们就比较提心吊胆，但是最后还是过了。 |
| If yes, then I think the challenge may be something academic. Becuase we study Econometrics in first semester and Macroeconomics in second semester, but half of students failed in the mid-term exam, which made me worried. But I passed it anyway. |
| So have you experienced any difficulties while living in the Netherlands? |
| 总的来说没有，荷兰人都会说英语，还是可以交流的 |
| Generally speaking, no. Dutch people can speak English and they can still communicate. |
| what about like shopping or just buying some stuff or some daily thing |
| 买东西的话，还是有点，因为看不懂荷兰语，就要一个个对照很麻烦，然后，我有的时候会买不到我想要买的东西 |
| When buying things, it's still a bit difficult, because I don't understand Dutch, it's troublesome to translate them one by one. Then, sometimes I can't find what I want |
| for example? |
| 比如说 我想买白糖，但是市中心的 jumbo 我找遍都没有找到，后来换一家才找到，可能这和我不知道它怎么翻译有关 |
| For example, I want to buy sugar, but I couldn't find it in Jumbo in the city center. But I found it in another Jumbo. I think maybe it is because I don't know how to translate |
| do you feel like you can fit in with Dutch culture? |
| culture 好像不太行吧，因为我对西方文化不是特别感兴趣。我还是比较喜欢亚洲那边的 |
| Not really, I don't think I can fit in Dutch culture because I am not really interested in Western culture and I still prefer the Asian culture. |
| Okay. Do you feel like you can fit in with Dutch education |
| 我也不是很喜欢，比如说，他们用很多的 case 教你财务，绩效管理，让你去分析。但是我还是觉得，我比较适应那种做题，直接让你反复做题，那样感觉比较知道他要考什么。case 的感觉太虚幻了，几个人一起讨论，也没有一个标准答案，老师说这个是一个开放式的答案，然后就给人感觉很迷惑 |
| I don't really like it either. For example, they use a lot of cases to teach you finance and performance management and ask you analyze them. But I still feel that I am more |

comfortable with exam practice, just asking you to answer exam questions again and again, so that I can know what they want in real exam. I feel like using cases is kind of vague. Students discuss it together, and there is no standard answer. The teacher said that this is an open-ended answer, which makes me feel confused sometimes.

Okay, so you feel like there's a huge difference between Dutch education and Chinese education right?

对

Yes

so, before you arrive in the Netherlands, did you have any expectation about living and studying here?

因为我之前有个学姐在这里，她已经说了一些情况，所以我觉得跟我预想的差别不大吧

Because I know a girl who studied here before and she has already said something about it, so I think it's not much different from what I expected

So you already know something about Dutch before you arriving here, right?

是的

Yes

But even during the COVID-19 do you feel like your expectation match the reality

我觉得改变不大

I don't think it has changed

Why do you think so?

总的来说，还是我不是很外向的一个人吧，所以，我觉得，这个新冠主要是不能一起上课，他们外国人好像比较喜欢在老师上课的时候随时提出问题，然后老师回答，但是我属于那种永远不会提问题的人，所以我觉得区别不大吧。我觉得这甚至是一件比较好的事情，因为我害怕老师上课点名我

Generally speaking, I am not very outgoing. I think the negative impact of COVID-19 is that we cannot take class together. Other students prefer to ask questions in class at any time and then the professor will answer them. But I am that kind of person who never asks questions in class, so I don't think there is huge difference between online courses and offline courses. Actually I think online courses is a good thing, because I am afraid that the teacher will call me in class.

okay. So have you experienced any discrimination or stereotypes when living and studying in the Netherlands?

嗯，好像没有，我觉得他们总的来说还是比较 nice 的

Well, it doesn't seem to be, I think they are really nice and no one said something like "it is Chinese virus"

yeah, okay. So who do you often communicate with? local people like Dutch students or national students, Chinese students or other international students?

一般还是跟中国人说吧，还有就是，因为我们有很多小组工作，所以一般是跟组里的人讨论，还有就是宿舍的人

Generally speaking, Chinese students. Snd because we have a lot of group work, I also communicate with the people in the group, and also my flat mates

So those people in your group is Chinese or?

哦 那些组里的基本都是外国人，我们专业的中国人很少

Basically they are foreigners (Dutch and international students), we don't have too much Chinese in this master's program.

Okay, so do you socialize with them or you just talk about those academic thing?

就只是讨论一些学术的问题

Yeah, just talk about something about academics

do you feel like it's easy to communicate with them

算是吧，室友就是他们经常主动找我说话，他们好像表面上看起来比较好接近一点，就是比在中国的时候，看起来要热情一点

I think so, My flat mate often take the initiative to talk to me. Compared with foreigners in China, they seem to be easier to get along with, on the surface.

为什么是表面上 Why do you use "on the surface"

因为，我还没跟他们深入交往到那个程度，所以我也不知道他们到底怎么想的，但至少表面上看起挺友好的

Because, I haven't established a close relationship with them, so I don't know what they really think of it. But at least they look nice on the surface.

So you just have, how should I say, common or daily communication with them?

对

Yes

So do you think you can be friends with them? Do you have any friends? Like international friends or Dutch friends?

没有，就只是平常生活里说一说

Nope. we just have a causal talk in daily life

Then what about Chinese friends in the Netherlands?

有吧，就是同专业的

Yes, I have. we are in the same master's program

So you have Chinese students in your class right?

对

Yes

So you communicate more with your Chinese classmate?

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 你要说总的谈话的量的话，我觉得其实总的和外国人谈话的量还更多一点，因为有很多作业嘛，就被分配到一组，不得不跟他们说话 |
| If you are saying the total amount of conversations, I think the total amount of conversations with foreigners(international students and Dutch students) is actually more than that with Chinese classmate. Because we have a lot of group work and we are assigned to be a group and I have to talk to them. |
| So okay do you feel like communicating with those international students can help you adjust to Dutch culture or Dutch education? |
| 好像我们不会针对这个谈论，就是不会说这种话题，他们很多都是荷兰以为的欧洲人。 |
| We don't really talk about that. We don't talk about this topic. And actually, most of them are European outside of the Netherlands |
| Okay. So do you feel like the pandemic affects your socialization with local people? |
| 不会 |
| No |
| Because, even without covid-19, you still don't want to communicate with local people? |
| 算是吧 |
| Well, I think so |
| then what about those like Chinese students and international students ? |
| 这可能有点影响吧，因为我有一个同学说，本来想找我过年的，但是她担心大家聚在一起会不被荷兰政府允许 |
| It may have some impacts, because one of my classmates wanted to celebrate Chinese New Year with me, but she also worried that it may be not allowed to do so |
| so that classmate is Chinese, right? |
| 对 |
| Yes |
| Okay. A while studying at Utrecht University, have you experienced any challenges resulting from COVID-19? |
| 额 好像没有，如果说有的话，就是会担心这个网课不好，就是影响上课和考试 |
| Not really. If I have to say so, I would say I am kind of worried about whether the internet is good enough to take courses and exam |
| okay. So, the following question is about your communication with your professors. How often do you communicate with your professors? |
| 你指的论文的导师还是所有的导师？ |
| You mean my thesis supervisor or all my professors |
| both |
| 可能一学期才沟通一次吧，就是考试前问下关于考试的细节， |
| Maybe once a semester, just asking something about the exam |

| |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| then what about your thesis supervisor ? |
| 目前是开过两次会，我看他的意思是一个月一次 |
| I had two meetings so far, but I think he wants to have meeting once a month |
| So when you communicate with your supervisor or your professor, which topic you talk more, like it's more about you academic? |
| 就是学术啊，人家也不愿意跟你扯别的 |
| Just something about academics, they probably don't want to talk about anything else |
| You can talk about your daily life with them if you want actually, they will be very nice. So, do you feel like the pandemic affect your communication with your professor. |
| 不会 |
| No |
| Why? |
| 因为至少目前来看，我还没有跟导师一对一的谈，我们都是和同一个导师的同学一起，所以好像也没有什么影响。他一般讲的时候也会同时演示一下别的东西，所以就算我们不在一起，他也是要用电脑来讲的，所以网上讲和面对面讲区别不大 |
| Because at least for now, I haven't had a one-on-one talk with my supervisor. I and other students who have same supervisor always have a meeting together, so it seems that it has no effect. The supervisor usually presents something with the computer when he talks, so even if we are not together, he still need to use the computer, so there is no big difference between online and face-to-face |
| Then, which one do you prefer? Face to face or just online ? |
| 说实话，我比较喜欢网上，因为可以录下来。然后，因为我回看的时候，我会发现几个我忘记的点 |
| To be honest, I prefer online because it can be recorded. Then when I rewatch it, I can find a few points that I forgot |
| Okay, so when you communicate with your professor, you use email or you just use teams or zoom? |
| 一般是先发邮件，除非他主动跟我用 Teams，我不会主动找他 |
| Usually email first, unless he takes the initiative to have a meeting in Teams, I will not take the initiative to have a digital meeting. |
| And so how would you evaluate your English language proficiency? |
| 就是不太行，在这边是一个很大的困难 |
| Not very good, it's a big challenge. |
| Can I ask your IESLT score ? |
| 7分 |

but it's quite high actually. And so on the scale of one to 10, how would you evaluate your English language proficiency?

应该是五吧

Probably 5

is it based on your communication, like speaking, or based on listening or writing

所有的吧，

Well, it is an average

So do you feel stressful to study in the Netherlands because of your English language proficiency?

有啊 就算是他们聊天，问我一些问题，我有时候一下子回答不出来，就觉得很尴尬。然后，上课的时候，我们老师还喜欢 cold call，就是冷不丁地提问你，就搞得我们提心吊胆的

Yes, even in a casual talk, when they asked me some questions, I cannot give a response immediately, which is embarrassed sometimes. Also in the class, our professor likes cold call which is calling people randomly, which make us nervous.

Okay. Yeah, so do you feel like your English language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture?

不行，

No, I don't think so

why?

就是，我觉得口语不行吧，就是跟别人聊天总是中断的话，就挺影响人家体验的，人家可能不愿意跟我聊吧。我是这么觉得的

I think I am not good at speaking. When you have a talk with others, it is kind of annoying when the conversations are always interrupted because of my poor spoken English. They probably do not want to have a talk with me. That's what I think.

okay. So do think that the language barrier is the most difficult thing that you have encountered?

嗯 我觉得这就是最大的问题

Yes, I think it is the biggest difficulty

Yeah, okay. took a stand. Do you feel like the COVID-19 contribute to the language barrier, for example, like if we don't have COVID-19 now, you probably have to communicate more with your professors, your classmates, do you think this problem can be solved in some way?

我觉得不会，我有的时候 Teams，我都是开字幕辅助的，所以就当面谈，我就更紧张，因为我的听力也不是很好

No I don't think COVID-19 contribute to the language barrier. Sometimes, I use the CC (subtitling) in Teams to help me understand what they said. So if it is a face-to-face communication, I will be nervous because I am also bad at listening

So you don't speak Dutch? Right?

| |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 对 |
| No |
| so to what extent do you feel like speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to Dutch society or Dutch education? |
| 应该比较大的程度吧，我听别人说招聘的时候，很多都要荷兰语吧。还有就是我们专业的荷兰人很多都喜欢跟荷兰人组队，荷兰人优先这样。 |
| Well, to a large extent, it may help. I heard that in recruitment, they prefer someone who can speak Dutch. And also in my master's program, Dutch students prefer to make group with Dutch students. The Dutch people have priority. |
| Yeah. Okay. And can you describe what you feel when you just arrived here? your emotional status |
| 我会觉得压力比较大，因为那个时候，我是九月十五号来的，其实已经过了迎新的那两个星期了。然后，第一个学期学计量，计量也挂很多人，而且计量对数学要求比较高吧，反正那个时候很担心。而且我过来的时候，他们已经上两个星期课了。不过后来好像好一点。 |
| I felt stressful at the beginning, because I arrived here on September 15th, which was two weeks after the orientation. So I actually missed the orientation week. And we studied econometrics in first semester and a lot of students failed which made me worried about my selves. And they already took class for two weeks when I arrived. But it seemed a little bit better now. |
| So, do you feel like you can get used to the Dutch education now? |
| 习惯是习惯，但不代表我很享受这种方式。 |
| Yes I can get used to the Dutch education, but I do not really enjoy it. |
| so you're not very satisfied with your study here? |
| 不能这么说，我只是不喜欢这里的教学方式，但是我还是有学到一些东西。我觉得这种方式对我来说比较费力，所以我不太喜欢，但是并不是它不好的意思 |
| I wouldn't say that. I just don't like the method of teaching here, but I still learned a lot from the course. I think this method is more laborious for me, so I don't like it very much, but it does not mean it is bad. |
| Yeah. Okay, so are you satisfied with the life here? |
| 总的来说，还行 |
| Overall, it is fine |
| Why do you think overall, it's kind of okay? |
| 因为没有发生什么不好的事情，我觉得这样就很好了 |
| Because nothing bad happened, I think it is great |
| So, that's what you expected in life before arriving? |
| 因为我的期望不是很高，有些人他可能觉得要怎么怎么样，但是我觉得只要顺利毕业就好了 |

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Because I don't have a high expectation, some people may have certain kind of expectation, but I think it's fine as long as I can graduate |
| Okay, so you just want a master degree? |
| 这个是主要的。因为，可以说疫情降低了我的期待吧，因为我来之前就发生了这件事 |
| Yeah, it is my main expectation. Possibly because the COVID-19 has lowered my expectations as the COVID-19 has break out before I came |
| So,are you satisfied with your choice to study and live in Utrecht? |
| 是的 |
| Yes |
| So would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands even with the impact of pandemic? |
| 应该会吧，如果他问我的话 |
| Probably yes, if they ask |
| Even during the covid-19? |
| 是的 |
| Yeah |
| Last question, what's your motivation to study in Netherlands? |
| 就是获得硕士学位 |
| My motivation is getting a master degree |
| You just want a master degree? do you plan to stay in the Netherlands? |
| 主要就是拿学位 |
| Mainly master degree |
| okay. That's all for my interview. Thank you so much. |

Appendix G – Interview transcript 5

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| how long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| One year and six months |
| what do you study at Utrecht University? |
| My master program is science and business management. |
| So have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands during COVID-19? |
| I will not use the word "enjoy". But I do find a way to enjoy my life during covid situation like I would prefer to have more fun, because I like going to the gym and the club. But now it's closed, everything is closed. So I just tried to learn more skills during covid situation because I am at home almost every day, yeah. And also because now I am doing my internship in Rotterdam. And it makes my work a bit hard because of COVID, because I didn't need to go to office and talk with my colleague about the progress of anything, everything. And it's a bit difficult because I come to Zoom meeting every day, all the time. And typing sometimes is just not communicated very well. |
| Yeah. So have you enjoying your study at Utrecht University during COVID-19? |
| Frankly speaking, no. I don't like taking courses from me from zoom link or from Teams. It really makes the connection between you and the teacher, really vulnerable, like, sometimes I feel I am not listening at all. And nobody would know that. And sometimes I would just stop paying attention for a really long time. And, and also because the lecture is usually recorded for my study, they're kind of demotivated me to pay a lot of attention during the meeting, because I know I can rewatch everything. So not really. Also with the group work with my team members. Sometimes you just really want to sit together and write something down on a paper so you don't need to type and talk and the other person still don't know what we're talking about |
| what about your study before COVID-19? |
| For me, it's not very comparable, because before COVID, I was working in the lab, and during COVID I was staying at home and to take course like even with..... it's just not very comparable. Because my first year is about lab working, and the second year is about the lectures. And before COVID I was working in the lab, it was really, how to say, the stable life pattern, I go to lab at nine and I stop working at five and then I go home and you're working out and many other things. I really like it actually because everything is very fixed in schedule. So I can arrange my time in the evening freely as I want to. So I can work my part time job, I can go to the gym, I can close my friends, and do my homework. |
| Yeah. So have you experienced any challenges or difficulties while living in Netherlands? |
| Challenges? Not really actually. Because I think usually in a foreign country, language will be the most difficult part. But you know, they are really good at English. And I find them |

really friendly. Most of them like 99.9% of them are really friendly, and they can help you with English. Not really challenging

Then what about study. Any challenges you have encountered during study?

Let me think about it maybe. study challenges. Sometimes I find when I just started like my project in the lab or a big task unique that I need to do for my lecture. In the beginning I always lost a bit because I don't know what I need to present. Like, before my project in the lab started, my professor just asked me, like, "what do you have in your mind?" I was hoping you can tell me what I should have in my mind. In the, in the beginning, it was a little bit difficult for me to, I think it was a choice problem. Like it was difficult for me to choose what I want to do. And it's the same with lecture because sometimes my lecture needs me to come up with, let's say, a company, and brand-new company and to find your issues in the market. And I don't know. I think that's the only problem I encountered with studying.

So have you encountered any maybe like language barriers or something

Not really, actually, because my English is quite good. And because I also speak German. I can't talk in Dutch, but I can read that very well.

Oh, that's cool. So do you feel like your language proficiency, your English language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education systems?

Yes.

Yeah. Okay. So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to that culture?

Yeah, I think it's very important, actually. Yes, it is.

Yeah. So you, you told me that you can read Dutch, right?

Yeah.

So to what extent do you feel like speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to Dutch society or Dutch culture.

And I feel when I was working in the lab, everybody can speak English very well. But sometimes it's, it was, especially in the beginning, it was difficult, difficult for me to join them with lunch, because we still have lots of Dutch colleagues there. And they're talking, they're eating in Dutch. And I know the moments I joined them that they will switch into English, but I just feel it may be a little bit uncomfortable for them. And maybe they are more freestyle with Dutch speaking. So I feel a little bit burdened, that I'm going to join them and they're going to switch to English and I'm actually not very talkative when I'm eating. So people are talking to each other. They are Dutch, but they're talking in English. And I'm not talking. So sometimes I would just join us the international students so we can talk English. No worries, no burden.

Yeah. Okay. So how often do you communicate with your professor?

When I was doing my lab work, I think if there was no covid, it was about twice a month then what about during COVID.

During COVID, it was actually interesting, because I was, everything was going so smoothly with my project. So I finish everything before COVID. So during COVID, I only need to work on the thesis and my supervisor gave me a lot of instructions on writing thesis, I only send the last two version to my professors. So basically, I contact him three times during COVID. But it was not. It was not very necessary for me to contact him actually.

Yeah. Okay. So when you communicate with your professor, you mostly talk about the academic thing. Or you talk about others, like, what happened in your life.

It was purely academic thing.

Okay. So do you feel like communicating with your professor helped you adapt to the academic requirements of Dutch education?

Yes, yes, because before COVID we have a weekly meeting once a month or twice a month. And as a master student, I also need to report about my progress to my professor. And you can feel the difference between a professor and a student, he will just give you a lot of insight and where you're not doing good enough? It was very helpful, I think, yeah, their instructions are very important.

So do you feel like the COVID-19 affect your communication with the professor?

It's a bit difficult for me to answer this because I was done with my project. Yeah. No, not really, because I think my professor was a really good professor, he always responded really quickly, and he gave me a lot of good advices a lot. I mean, firstly, a lot of advices, then all of them are really good advices. So I don't really think the COVID jeopardize, or not jeopardize, the COVID has some bad impact on the communication was professor.

Yeah. Okay. Did you have any previous experience of studying or traveling abroad before you arriving in the Netherlands?

Studying experience? No. I did my bachelor in Shanghai. Traveling experience. Yes, I did.

So Where did you go?

For Europe I only went to Hungary and Czech Republic before I went to Netherlands, and the rest of foreign country are in Asia.

So do you feel like those experience helped you adjust to Dutch culture? Nope.

Nope.

Okay. Before arriving in the Netherlands, do you have any knowledge about Dutch culture and society?

Before I moved to Netherlands, I think Dutch people are really powerful and strong people because they made out their country. And I find that's true after I got here. And actually, I think all my conception before I moved here are actually true because I think they're strong, independent, practical people. Their food are not very nice. They're very tall. very tall, and they're very down to the earth. It's also my perception of them.

Yeah. Okay. Have you experienced any discrimination or stereotype when living or study here?

Only once. It was when I was working in the restaurant as a waitress, and it was quite old man. He was talking to me in Dutch. And I told him in Dutch that I don't speak Dutch, I will ask my colleague to help you. Then he was behaving really angry. Then I got my colleague to help him. And the colleague is Dutch but I think he the customer is not against Asian but against all the different people because the colleague who I asked for help is gay. The customer was also really rude with him. But that was the only the only moment I felt a bit discrimination.

Yeah. Okay. So the following question will regard your personal communication. Who do you often communicate with Dutch people, co-national students like Chinese students or other international students?

Before COVID it was basically international students in my program. And also because I had a Dutch boyfriend, so friend of him are Dutch. And during COVID because most of my friends in my master program went back home, most of them are European students. They just went back home, Spain, Italy. Then I started hanging out with more and more Chinese because they are still here.

Yeah, okay. So when you socialize with your international students, or like your Dutch boyfriend, do you feel like they helped you adapt to Dutch cultural society?

culture and society? with Chinese students, nope, and with my Dutch boyfriend? Yes. Then the culture and the society? Yeah, I think so. I think

why do you think your Dutch boyfriend helped you adapt to culture and society?

Well, because they are a cultural difference between, let's say, Chinese culture and Dutch culture, for example. And I think, okay, so I think when we, as Chinese, we give the key of your house to another person means a great deal. And he just gave me the key after two months of relationship. I was like "we're not going to marry, you don't need to do this". At least I was not thinking about marriage. And he was saying, "What the fuck, it was just about convenience". So I can go to his house when he's not there. And also things like friendship. And I find Dutch people are not, they are not very intended to make friends when they reach an older age. So I find most of his best friends are just from childhood. And I asked him why and he was like you know I am chilling I'm very good with my current life. And just a lot of parts, I think it's just like, with my boyfriend I, I kind of know what they are actually thinking about what works and what doesn't, and what you need to do and what you don't necessarily need to do.

Okay, so do you feel like the pandemic affect your socialization with local people or Chinese students or just international students?

With international students? Yes, they are home. And with my Dutch friends, not really because the Dutch friends I made just by myself have very few, just two. And that they live in Utrecht and we can still visit each other. And with Chinese students, COVID actually helped me to foster better relationship and friendship with Chinese students. Because actually, before COVID, I didn't know a lot of Chinese. It was during covid, I started know more and more people.

So, why can you know more Chinese students during COVID

I think I was bored. So you know, we have this WeChat group. Yeah. And people are just talking. And because before COVID, I was a really busy person I do lab in daytime, and I work I go to gym. So, I spend time with spend time with my boyfriend. So there was not a lot of socializing time for me. And during COVID, everything was close. So I had more time to make my network and socializing with people. So then I started paying attention to the friend of my friend and my friends. So I had more friends.

Yeah. So do you feel like there are differences between Dutch education to Chinese education?

Yes, because of course, I take as an example, I guess, maybe it's not very good example because in Chinese, in China, I study chemistry. And here the course I took are about business and management. But I think here, they, the assignment usually it's usually quite big, and it's like three big assignments. You need weekly or daily homework and it's all about scientific and knowledge and the calculation. Well, I do feel the teamwork is the biggest difference in China. Except for some lab work. I never worked with my, with a group member or something for a course. But here everything is about teamwork.

So, can you get used to this teamwork? Like, at the very beginning and now?

In the very beginning? Yes, I think so I didn't find it very difficult.

Okay. So overall, are you happy with your choice to study and live in Utrecht or the Netherlands?

Yes, yes. Because I was choosing between Utrecht and American University, Columbia University in Manhattan. And I chose Netherlands just because I wanted to go to somewhere like completely different from Shanghai, you know, the metropolis, if I want to go to somewhere peaceful, less people. And I think Netherlands offered it, like offer just exactly what I want. with my choice when I'm thinking about where I'm going, except for the

Sorry, except for what?

Except for, let me rephrase this. So study part, I'm also very happy with it. But when I was thinking, like where I should go to do my master program, I wanted to go to somewhere different from Shanghai. So I want to go to peaceful and fewer people and more relaxed place. And I think Netherlands is like that. So I'm really happy with my choice,

So your motivation of studying here is that you want to experience different life? Or you would like to focus more on the lecture here. You think that the lecture can match what you want?

Both of them. Because I was searching for a really specific master program. I did chemistry as my bachelor, but I had a lot of experience with marketing and financing. So I wanted to make use of them both. So I was looking for this program, I only found it in Leiden, in Utrecht and in Columbia University. So it's about the studying and about the life part. Yes. Just as I said,

Would you recommend your fellow students to start in the Netherlands even with the impact of COVID-19?

You mean, well, I suggest them to study in Netherlands even like now?

Yeah

I would suggest them to come after the COVID is finished.

if the COVID haven't finished, but some of your friends ask you "should I choose to study in the Netherlands now?" what would you say?

I would say Netherland this really great place for you to study. I don't know about other majors or topics, but with science, it's really nice, especially with UMC, the biology and the pharmaceutical majors. And I think even now we have COVID the lab is still working, but just working in a slightly different way. Yeah. So I don't think that will change a lot with the study. But life style. Yes. Like you. You're not going to enjoy all the parts I enjoy with Netherlands right now. But just if it's just for the study, I would definitely say yes, yes. You should come to Netherlands. But with the life part. I think we are having more fun in China.

Yeah. Okay. Uh, that's all for questions. Thank you for participating in my interview.

No problem.

Appendix H – Interview transcript 6

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| How long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| 我到这里已经半年了 |
| I have been here for half a year |
| What do you study at Utrecht University? |
| 我的专业是 medical imaging |
| My major is medical imaging |
| Have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands? Why? |
| 还是很好的，比较满意。这里的气候非常宜人，这里的人非常友善，但是这里的学习压力也比较大，所以不是非常满意，但是比较满意 |
| It's good, quite satisfied. The climate here is very pleasant and the people here are very friendly, but there are certain pressure from study. So I am not very satisfied, but quite satisfied. |
| So why do you think studying here is kind of stressful? |
| 因为教学方式的不同，然后语言也不同，这样有很多需要小组合作的课程，但是我和工作伙伴的沟通会出现问题。比如，他们很喜欢向老师汇报，这就让我很不习惯，因为在中国一个小组成员之间出现问题通常不会向老师报告。 |
| Because they have different way of teaching and they speak different language. there are many courses that require group cooperation, but communication problems with my work partners will occur. For example, they like to report to the teacher, which makes me very uncomfortable, because a group member in China usually does not report to the teacher, when there is a problem in communication. |
| So have you enjoy your study at Utrecht University? |
| 总体来说还是很好的，因为通过学习这些课程，让我的知识得到了增加，让我的能力得到了提升，让我更多的了解了荷兰和我的专业 |
| Overall, it is very good, because through learning these courses, my knowledge has been increased, my ability has been improved, and I have learned more about the Netherlands and my major. |
| So do you feel like COVID-19 has impacted your life at Utrecht University? |
| 我不适应荷兰的一些文化，比如他们都不带口罩，我觉得很危险，而且他们不认为很危险，尽管他们很多人都感染了新冠，但是他们依旧坚持，我不明白这是为什么。他们很喜欢开 party，这也是我不能理解的，这样第一是很危险，第二是很吵，而且我也认为 party 没什么意思 |
| I don't adapt to some cultures in the Netherlands. For example, they don't wear masks. I think it's dangerous, but they don't think it's dangerous. Although many of them are infected with COVID-19, they still insist to not wear face masks. They like to have parties very much, |

which I can't understand. Firstly, it's very dangerous, and secondly, it's very noisy, and I also think parties are meaningless.

Okay, so what about the study here? Do you think COVID-19 has influenced your study?

对学习上的影响就是，总是上网课，至今我也不知道我的同学都是谁。其他的话也没什么不好的。

The impact on learning is that I always take classes online, and I still don't know who my classmates are. Except that, there is nothing bad.

Okay, do you have any previous experience of studying or traveling in different countries?

是的，我曾经去过两次马来西亚，去过一次越南。去马来西亚是为了参加一个 winter school，关于深度学习和医学影像的，然后就没有了

Yes, I have been to Malaysia twice and Vietnam once. I went to Malaysia to participate in a winter school regarding deep learning and medical imaging, and that's it.

So do you feel like your experience in Malaysia help you adjust to Dutch education or Dutch culture.

好像没有很强的关联性，但他们都是英语教学，我觉得可能应该会有一些帮助吧，我猜测。但是感觉也不是很有帮助

It seems that there is no strong connection, but they are all taught in English. I think it might help, I guess. But I feel it's not very helpful.

Okay, before arriving in the Netherlands, did you have any knowledge about Dutch culture?

是的，有一定的了解，因为我的本科学院和荷兰的埃因霍温大学是合作关系，所以了解一些荷兰的文化，比如郁金香，风车，等等。

Yes, I think so. Because my undergraduate college have partnered with the University of Eindhoven in the Netherlands, so I know some Dutch culture, such as tulips, windmills, and so on.

Before arriving here, what were your expectation of studying here?

我觉得荷兰的学习对我来说会是一个挑战，然后它确实是一个挑战。相比我在中国的学习，这里的学习需要我投入更多的精力和耐力。我有时候会丧失信心，但是我相信这是一个很好的锻炼机会，能够让我在困境中学习

I think studying in the Netherlands will be a challenge for me, and then it is indeed a challenge. Compared with my study in China, studying here requires more energy and effort. I sometimes lose my confidence, but I believe it is a good opportunity that will allow me to learn something from a difficult situation.

那具体是哪些方面比较困难呢？

What are the specific difficulties?

知识的深度和语言的障碍

the depth of knowledge and language barriers

怎么样的语言障碍

What language barriers?

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 我觉得我的口语和听力都不太行 |
| I think my English speaking and listening are not good |
| 那你是用什么方式跟老师和同学交流的呢 |
| Then how do you communicate with professors and classmates |
| 通过文字吧，发邮件或是打字聊天 |
| Text, email or type in the chat |
| 那上课需要和老师交流的时候呢 |
| Even when you need to communicate with the professor in class? |
| 我们的课都是录好的，不用和老师交流 |
| Our lectures are all recorded, so there is no need to communicate with the professors |
| 那小组讨论的时候呢 |
| What about in the group discussion? |
| 小组讨论的时候就挺着，就是硬听呗。听不懂的时候，我会下来之后，之后再发文字去问。 |
| In the group discussion, I just listen. When there is something, I don't understand, I will send a text in group after meeting. |
| 所以你不会当面说？ |
| So you won't say it in group discussion? |
| 因为当面有的时候说不出来，不知道怎么用英语来表达 |
| Because in group discussion, I don't know how to express it in English |
| 你在这里的生活有达到你的期待吗？ |
| Does the real life here meet your expectations? |
| 差不多吧，没什么期待。不过我本来想在空闲的时候去博物馆参观的，但是现在看来，可能没有机会了。 |
| Sort of, actually, I have nothing to expect. But I would have visited some museums in my free time, but now it seems that there may be no chance to do so. |
| 那学习上面有达到你的期待吗？ |
| What about the study? Does it meet your expectation? |
| 没有，这里的学习比我想的要困难。主要是知识比较难 |
| No, the study here is much more difficult that I thought because the knowledge is difficult. |
| 你在平时的生活和学习中，跟谁交流得比较多呢？荷兰学生，中国学生，还是其他国际学生？ |
| Who do you communicate more with in your daily life and study? Dutch students, Chinese students, or other international students? |
| 中国学生，我认识好多中国学生， |
| Chinese students, I know many Chinese students here. |
| 那你们平时的交流都说些什么呢？ |

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What do you usually talk about |
| 关于学业，然后也会聊一些有趣的事，比如新闻，其他的一些话题，比如中国的性别问题，因为在荷兰人们关于性别的认识跟中国非常不同，我们总是进行比较 |
| We talk about study and also some interesting things, like news and other topics, such as the gender issues in China. Because people in the Netherlands and people in China have different understanding of it, so we always compare them. |
| 你会主动与荷兰人和其他的国际学生交流吗 |
| Will you take the initiative to communicate with Dutch and other international students? |
| 很少，基本没有。我只会和他们打招呼 |
| Rarely, basically none. I only greet them. |
| 你觉得跟中国学生交往可以帮你适应荷兰的生活吗 |
| Do you think interacting with Chinese students can help you adjust to life in the Netherlands |
| 恐怕不能。它只会让感觉到舒适，但是不能让我适应荷兰的生活 |
| I don't think so. It makes me feel comfortable, but it's not helpful in adapting to life in the Netherlands. |
| 所以你觉得疫情有影响你在荷兰学习吗 |
| So do you think the pandemic has affected your study in the Netherlands? |
| 有一定的影响，比如要在线上考试。但是其实也没有很大区别，让我去线下我也不敢，但是目前来看我还是更喜欢线上。 |
| Yes, to some extent, for instance, we have to take exam online. But in fact there is no big difference as I am kind of afraid to take exam offline. So far, I prefer online. |
| 你跟你的教授交流频繁吗？ |
| Do you communicate frequently with your professors? |
| 会有偶尔的交流，一般交流考试的问题，就没有了。 |
| We communicate occasionally and it is usually about the exam. That's it |
| 是用什么方式交流的呢？ |
| In what way? |
| 基本上是发邮件 |
| Basically email |
| 你觉得你跟你的教授交流可以帮你适应荷兰的学习吗 |
| Do you think that communicating with your professor can help you adapt to your study in the Netherlands |
| 有时候是的，但是有的教授不太爱回邮件 |
| Sometimes yes, but some professors don't like to reply to email |
| 你觉得如果没有疫情的话，你和教授交流的方式会有改变吗？ |
| Do you think the way you communicate with professors will change if there is no pandemic? |

| |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 我可能还是会用发邮件的形式 |
| Probably, still email |
| 你觉得你英语水平如何 |
| How would you evaluate your English language proficiency |
| 雅思有 6.5，但是我觉得我的实际水平也就 5.5 分吧，我觉得我的口语不行，听力也不咋地，阅读和写作可能稍强一些。因为有一些人的英文我可以听得懂，但是有一些人的英文就听不太懂，我也不知道是因为什么。比如说我们的 coordinator 说的英语我就能听懂他在讲什么，但是在小组讨论的时候，他们有的人说的英语，要不然就是很快，要不然就是结巴，导致我听不懂。我们组有个英国人说话太快了，总是连在一起。 |
| IELTS is 6.5, but I think my actual level is only 5.5. I think my oral English is not good, my listening is not good, reading and writing may be a little better. I can understand some people's English, but I don't understand others, and I don't know why. For example, I can understand the English spoken by our coordinator, but in group discussions, some of them speak English very fast and some of them kind of stumbled sometimes, which is hard to understand. There is an British guy in our group who speaks super-fast and always speak indistinctly. |
| 所以你觉得你的语言水平对你学习有障碍吗？ |
| So do you think your language proficiency is an obstacle to your study? |
| 我觉得我的语言水平还是不够，因为听不太懂，阅读就还好。 |
| Yes, I think my English is still not good enough, because I don't understand them well. But reading is fine |
| 你觉得你的英语水平可以让你适应这里的生活吗？社会和文化方面 |
| Do you think your English is good enough to help you adapt to life here, in social and cultural aspects? |
| 我觉得我还需要努力吧 |
| I think I still need to word hard in English learning |
| 你觉得语言问题是你最大的障碍吗？ |
| Do you think language barriers are the biggest challenge? |
| 算是障碍之一吧 |
| Well, one of challenges, I will say. |
| 那其他的障碍是什么呢？ |
| What are the other challenges? |
| 学习的知识的难度，我觉得我们的课程比较难，有点压力， |
| The difficulty of the knowledge. I think our courses are difficult and it is a bit stressful. |
| 你在这里有遇到什么歧视吗？ |
| Have you encountered any discrimination here? |
| 还没有 |

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Not really |
| 你刚到荷兰有什么感受吗 |
| How did you feel when you just arrived in the Netherlands |
| 觉得很紧张, 没有安全感, 因为这是一个完全陌生的环境。 |
| I feel very nervous and insecure because this is a completely unfamiliar environment. |
| 刚来的时候和现在相比, 有什么变化吗? |
| Compared with now, it there any change? |
| 有稍微适应了一点这里的生活, 刚来的时候还没有那么大的压力, 但是现在觉得压力很大, 因为我渐渐了解了我的专业很难 |
| I have adapted to life here a little bit. When I first came here, there was not so much pressure of study, but now I feel a lot of pressure because I gradually understand that my major is really difficult. |
| 总的来说, 你对这里的学习和生活满意吗 |
| Generally speaking, are you satisfied with your study and life here? |
| 有的地方不太满意。比如说, 这里的信号灯的变化, 我总是不能掌握, 有时候我会不小心闯红灯, 我就会觉得很尴尬, 而且有时候我就会看到荷兰人闯红灯, 所以我不太明白这里的交通规则到底是什么。是没有车就可走吗? 还是必须要等到绿灯 |
| Not very satisfied in some way. For example, I don't quite understand the sinal lights here. Sometimes, I accidentally run the red light and I feel embarrassed about it. But sometimes I also see Dutch people run the red light, so I don't really understand the traffic rules here. Can I jsut go when there is no car, or should I wait until the light is green |
| 最后一个问题, 所以你会推荐你的朋友和同学来荷兰学习吗? 即使是在疫情的影响下 |
| Okay, last question, So would you recommend your friends and classmates to study in the Netherlands? Even with the influence of the pandemic? |
| 这要看他的需求。如果他的需求是, 他需要提高自己的专业能力, 变成一个专业上非常强的人, 我推荐他来这里, 因为这里的学业很扎实。如果他想早点上班, 我推荐他去英国, 因为那里更快毕业。 |
| Well, it depends on his needs. If he wants to improve his professional abilities and be a talent in that professional field. Then I will recommend him to come here because he will acquire a lot of academic knowledge. But if he wants to go to work earlier, then I will recommend him to universities in UK because he can have a master degree faster. |

Appendix I – Interview transcript 7

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| So how long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| Half year and I come here last September. |
| Okay. So what do you study at Utrecht University? |
| I study master's program climate physics. it is a two-year master's program. |
| Yeah. Okay. So have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands or just at Utrecht University? |
| daily life? The study here or some other non-study |
| Just non-study |
| Okay, Actually not really enjoy because of the corona lockdown. But it's a new experience for me, because this is my first time being abroad. And I traveled a lot, riding bikes in surrounding areas, and I'm really enjoying the air and the environment here. |
| Yeah. Okay, so have you enjoyed your study at Utrecht University? |
| You mean before? |
| I mean just right now |
| Yes, yes |
| So when you just arrived here, have you enjoyed your study here? |
| Yes, pretty much.. |
| Yeah. Okay. |
| My study was really difficult. But I can feel get a lot of knowledge from study here. |
| Yeah. Okay. So have you experienced any challenges while studying here? |
| Yes. When I was first being here. So English language is the biggest challenge for me. Because I, my previous studying was completely in Chinese. So I need to find more time to get used to this language environment. I need more time to translate English into Chinese. That's getting better now. |
| Yeah. So how would you evaluate your English language proficiency? Maybe just at the beginning, like on a scale of one to 10, how would you.....? |
| maybe just six. |
| and now? does it improve? |
| Yes, I think I've improved from six to seven or eight. But, of course, I am not an expert |
| So what is your IELST score? |
| I didn't take IELST, I took TOEFL |
| Ohh you took TOEFL, so ... |
| I have 99. |

Okay. So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education?

For some basic, basic knowledge, it's okay. But some advanced knowledge or some academic words. I still need more time to learn. It doesn't matter because the most of these words are just norm. So I just remembered that words and it works for me.

Okay. So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture and society?

Actually, no.

Why?

Yeah. Because the most important thing is that the European think in different ways as we do. So the, the formulate the words and sentences in very different ways. And it's a little difficult to adapt my thinking, mindset to theirs.

Okay. So are there any problems that the language barriers have caused

Umm....It was a barrier was quite was quite significant when I was come here..... how do I say.... I don't have a clear mind to this question

Yeah okay, but do you feel like language is one problem that you encountered?

Yes, of course. It's a first biggest challenge.

you don't speak Dutch, right?

Nope

So, to what extent do you feel like speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to culture in society?

Yes, but sort of.... because the Dutch people are experts in English so we can talk to each other in English and they can understand.

Yeah. Okay. Good. So, have you experienced any challenges in daily life?

daily life? Not very much, but a little bit inconvenient, I have to say.

In which area?

because of the Corona, lockdown. I can't go to some restaurant or shops. Because I live living science part which is very far away from any supermarket. So it takes some time to...

Yeah, but even though we don't have covid-19, you still need to travel far away

Yes, Yes. So maybe next year, I would like to live in a live more near to the city center

Okay, so do you feel like you can fit in with Dutch culture and society?

Umm...Yeah. I'm trying to adjust to this. But it's difficult. Because, for example, I have a lecture, I have a course called semantic interdisciplinary course in this semester. And we have a lot of group discussion. And we have very different thinking. And sometimes they negotiate a lot of about one small task, from my point of view, yeah. The answer is very direct. And why can they talk so much about this small topic? It's very weird for me, but I'm trying to understand them and they're also trying to understand me,

Okay. So do you feel like you can fit in the Dutch education system?

For me is, it's, it's good. It's good for me, because I study climate physics, and I also studied atmospheric science in my bachelor, so it's, I don't feel much barrier between the bachelor and master knowledge and it's very, it's linked. It's very linked tightly. So the education systems is not a problem for me.

Yeah. Okay. Did you have any previous experience of studying abroad?

No, no.

What about traveling?

No, It's first time so it's very new.

what were your expectations for studying here before arriving?

Of course, the master's degree is very important for me and I also want to pursue PhD position. I think this master is a new a new level and a preparation for my future studies.

So what's for you expectations for living here before arriving?

Well, I have to say, living in a studio, a personal space, is really appealing. Because in China, I lived in ways three other roommates in university. But now, I live alone. So I don't know what it will be when I was in China, but I'm really excited about that, because I have more private space.

So okay, has the reality of living and studying here match your expectation?

Yes, pretty much.

Yeah. Okay. Have you experienced any discrimination when living or studying here?

No, I don't feel much discrimination. But I, I think... that... because... I can feel a little sometimes. But I think it's because of the culture, maybe they don't understand me very much and I also don't understand foreigners as well. So maybe we have some difficulties, so I don't feel very engaged in group activities. but it doesn't matter.

So do you think it is a stereotype?

stereotype? I think every Chinese meets this problem, except those have been studied abroad for years.

Okay, so, in your life, and in your study, who do you often communicate with local people like Dutch students, or co-national students, like Chinese students and other international students?

Mostly with Chinese students. And I think, the best relationship is with Chinese students. And second is with some international students and then Dutch. I don't know why.

So, you often communicate with other Chinese students, right?

Yes. Luckily, I have another two Chinese students in my program. So we always work together for assignments and lectures.

So when you talk with each other, you mostly talk about the academic thing or you also talk about your daily life?

Both

Okay. So do you feel like communicating with those Chinese students can help you adapt to Dutch culture or society?

Sort of, because we we meet different people. I meet this group of international students. they meet another group, and we can exchange our friends and news like this.

Yeah. Okay. So do you often communicate with international students? Like will you communicate with them first?

Yeah, yes. Yeah. I was trying to meet more international students and they are friendly actually.

Yeah. Okay. Well, what about the local people, Dutch students?

I also meet them a lot, but I have to say, I don't feel very engaged with the Dutch people.

Why?

Yes. In many cases, Dutch students make groups with Dutch students, And international students make group with international students. I don't know. But of course, we have some discussions between international and Dutch.

Okay, so when you communicate with Dutch people, do you usually talk about those academic things?

Yes, academic stuff.

Okay. Oh, yeah. So do you feel like communicating with international students can help you adapt to Dutch culture and society?

I don't think it's really helpful, because for these foreigners, Netherlands is also a foreign country. And they only know some very obvious culture like, such as Dutch people are really tall. And the wind is very strong. I also know that.

Yeah. So, do you feel like communicating with Dutch people can help you adapt to Dutch culture.

I'm pretty much, because a Dutch friend introduced or recommended me kind of food, it is a fish. It's very popular here. And he brought me to the open market. And we joined, we ate some fish together. It's very Dutch style. Yeah.

So how has the pandemic affect your socialization with those people?

Yes, of course. Because of the corona when we have to take lectures online. Yeah. So actually, I cannot remember all of my classmates.

So do you feel like there's a huge difference between Dutch education and Chinese education?

Yes, pretty much. The workload here is much overwhelming I think, much heavier. I think in China after lectures, we don't have much exercise or homework to do, or the exercise is quite simple. But here, it's really time consuming.

Yeah, that's true. So how often do you communicate with your professor?

Actually, I don't contact with professor regularly. But when I have some problems about lectures or assignments, I will turn to the professor and they always give, they always respond us very quickly.

So do you feel like communicating with your professor has helped you adapt to the academic requirements?

Yeah, yes. They are always helpful

So has the pandemic affect your communication with the professor?

Yes, a sort of, sort of, because we cannot meet face to face. We don't have that much efficiency between me and professor. But the good thing is that we type and text in chat. And it makes the answer more logical. It's easier to understand.

So would you prefer to communicate with your professor through email or just face to face.

For me, face to face is better and more efficient

Why do you think face to face is better?

Because I think it is the same reason as why we interview face to face. We can communicate very efficiently and we exchange ideas. But in the chat or mail, through the email, I will spend a lot of time thinking how should I describe my question in a very organized way. So, yes, it's pros and cons.

But do you feel like if you need to organize your thinking in a more logical way, is it better to communicate?

Yes, of course.

Then why do you prefer face to face?

Ahh. that's a circle question.... Uhm...

Okay, it's fine. It doesn't matter. So do you feel like the pandemic affect your, like, your online course or your academic thing? Like your exam or?

No, actually, I think it benefits our exam. Why choose? Choose? Sex to the dynamic exams now are all open books. Yeah. Sometimes, as a professor, allow us to, to discuss during the exam. Yes, move work.

Why?

Because, thanks to the pandemic, the exam now is all open book. And sometimes the professor allows us to discuss during the exam, a group work. Another thing is that I can use Google Translate in exam.

Okay, so it helps you understand those questions. right?

Yes

Okay. So, overall, are you happy with your choice to study and live in the Netherlands?

Yes, yes. I have to say, although I meet a lot of difficulties from living here and studying here. I can feel a lot of, how to say, I indeed get lots of knowledge I want from studying here. And I indeed improved my studying abilities and living abilities.

Okay. Would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands even with the impact of pandemics?

It depends. I have to see if, if my friends really want to focus on academic career, I really recommend to study here because the education quality is really high. But if my friend doesn't really want to focus on this academic career, or if they don't have an academic career perspective, I don't recommend, because lecture, the courses here is really difficult. And generally speaking, we don't have, it's not easy to get a high grade, like seven or eight or nine, it is quite difficult. I have to say, maybe other countries is better choices.

Have you ever failed your exam?

No, no

And last question. Could you describe your feeling when you just arriving here and now? how does it change?

When I came here, I was really anxious about living here because of the language and Corona now. I'm getting used to it.

Yeah. even get used to the corona.

Yes, I am getting Dutch

Okay, that's all for my interview questions. Thank you so much

Appendix J – Interview transcript 8

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| So, how long have you been living in the Netherlands? |
| 一个多月，不到两个月 |
| More than a month, less than two months |
| so what do you study at Utrecht University? |
| Applied cognitive psychology |
| |
| Okay. So have you enjoyed your daily life in the Netherlands? |
| it depends, 刚开始的时候，我并不是很满意，我觉得很孤独， |
| it depends, when I just arrived here, I was not very satisfied, I felt very lonely |
| You feel lonely? why? |
| 因为刚开始的时候，我住在一个 studio 里，前半个月我都住在 studio 里，我也不认识这里的朋友，我只是在网上认识。然后还有时差。我一开始对疫情的恐惧非常强。 |
| Because when I arrived here, I lived in a studio for the first half month. I don't have any friends here. I just know someone studying here online. Then there is a jet lag. Also, the fear of COVID-19 preoccupied me |
| Yeah. Okay, so now you're more enjoyed than before? Why? |
| 一是因为有了室友，有了外国的室友，第二是有了中国的朋友吧，然后每天会正常的生活，你每天三餐会定时吃饭，然后还有一些去图书馆，然后散步这样的活动 |
| One is because I have a roommate, a foreign roommate (international student), and the second is that I have Chinese friends, and then I started to live a normal life every day. I have three meals a day and eat regularly, and then there are some activities like going to the library and taking a walk. |
| So, at the very beginning, you don't live in a regular way, like don't have meal or |
| 因为有的时候你醒的时候，可能是国内的白天醒的，也可能是这里的白天醒的，就是每天都不同，也不记得今天吃了两顿饭还是三顿饭 |
| Because sometimes I woke up during the day in Chinese time, or sometimes during the day in European time, but every day was different, and I didn't remember whether I had two meals or three meals today. |
| So have you enjoyed your study at Utrecht University? |
| 我觉得也是有一点失望的，因为我跟自己的同学接触比较少。上课啊活动啊什么的都是在上学期，就是我在国内的时候，然后刚好我就错过了。这个学期更多的是自己跟老师做项目，写论文，做实习，大家的交流其实都变得很少了 |
| I feel a little disappointed, because I don't have too much communication with my classmates. The classes and activities were all in the last semester, while I was in China at that moment, and then I just missed a lot of offline activities. This semester is more about |

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| doing projects, writing thesis, and doing internships. So the opportunities of communicating with other students has become fewer. |
| Okay, so you feel disappointed because you cannot have a communication with your friends, your classmates? |
| 对，主要是我们没有那种线下课，也没有那种大课，但是之前还是有的，反正就是有点失落 |
| Yes, mainly because we don't have offline courses, nor lectures, but we used to have it last semester. Anyway, just a little bit disappointed |
| what about the academic thing like are you happy with the teaching or learning here? |
| 我觉得蛮那个的，一是很专业吧，就是有一些规范什么的。像我们心理学的话，一个是需要预注册，然后需要经过伦理道德审核，才能去招收被试者，学校有专门发问卷的平台啊。最重要的是导师，感觉这里的导师很负责，他会给你一个规划，他会教你去探索，去找到自己的兴趣点和想法，这是我觉得蛮大的不同 |
| I think it's quite, err, professional in the regulation. In psychology that I study, we are required to have pre-register and ethical approval, after that we are allowed to recruit participants. Also we have a professional platform for releasing questionnaires for academic studies. Most importantly, our mentor is very responsible. He will give a plan and teach to explore what you are interested in. It's a huge difference, in my opinion. |
| Yeah. Okay, so are you happy about that? |
| 嗯 是的 |
| Yes, I am quite happy about that |
| Have you ever experienced any challenges when living the Netherlands? |
| 一个是一开始的时候，我不知道怎么坐车，包括坐公交和火车。我来第一次的时候，就因为没有 check in 和 check out，然后就逃票了。但之后可以在 ov 网上，找回来。但是因为这一个事情，导致我很久都不敢坐公交车。 |
| One is that at the beginning, I didn't know how to take a bus, including buses and trains. When I came here for the first time, I did not know how to check in and check out, so I stole a ride. Because of this incident, I was scared of taking the bus for a long time. |
| So have you experienced any challenges while studying in the Netherlands |
| 有，最重要的还是语言上的不同，还有思考方式方面，我自己的话，在跟别人讨论问题的时候，我会先想很久再回答，但是不能做到一边讨论，一边思考。但是，其他同学就是那种，别人在说的时候，就已经想了很多的那种感觉，就会觉得很跟不上。 |
| Yes, the most challenging thing is the difference in language and the way of thinking. Personally, I prefer to think for a while before answering when discussing issues with others. I can't discuss and think at the same time. However, other students in my class can discuss while thinking at the same time. Sometimes I feel like I cannot follow them |
| So do you think it was your language proficiency that caused this problem |
| 我觉得有一部分是语言，还有一部分是思考方式上的 |
| I think one reason is the language barrier and the other is the way of thinking |

Okay. So do you feel like the COVID-19 has impact your study at Utrecht University?

影响还是很大的，一是，我们其实有很多实验，我本身其实是想去实验室的，使用仪器。但是，由于现在很难招被试，然后担心有一些接触上的风险，所以我就放弃做实验这个了。我们课程里也是有很多实践的那种，像 workshop 的那种，现在都取消了。我觉得这对我们来说影响特别大。

The impact is huge. First, we actually have a lot of experiments, and I actually want to go to the laboratory and use instruments. However, since it is difficult to recruit participants now and I am worried about the risks of being infected, I did not choose to do the experiment. Also, there are many practical courses, like the workshop, which are now cancelled. I think it has a great impact on us.

So do you feel like COVID-19 has impact you're living in the Netherlands?

我觉得这个也影响很大，比如说我刚开始来的时候，我不敢去人多的地方，包括去超市的时候，都是在人最少的时候去，也不敢跟外国的朋友打招呼什么的。平时的话，就是会有潜在的害怕，你不知道哪里在增长，也不知道谁到底有，谁到底没有。然后感觉，看上去大家都是在正常的生活，但是为什么每一天都有新增长那么多。然后，我还有听说住在 zeist 那边的中国同学，感染上了。特别的焦虑，然后惶恐。

I think it also has a big impact on life. For example, when I first came here, I was scared of going to crowded places. I went to the supermarket when there were least people, and I am scared of say hello to my foreign friends. There is a potential risk. You don't know where the new case occurs, and you don't know who get infected and who not. Then I feel that everyone seems to be living a normal life, but why is there so many new cases every day. I also heard that a Chinese student living in Zeist were infected. I was really anxious and terrified

Do you feel like you fit in with Dutch culture and society?

我觉得可以的，我觉得这里的人很热情。我一开始的时候觉得这里的人可能比较高冷和傲慢的，这是我固有的偏见。但是我来这里后，我发现这里的人很热情，而且比我想象中的更包容。我举一个例子，我刚从市中心搬到这里来的时候，那时候我要去取货，我要去取被子。我当时就提了一个箱子去取被子，然后再路上的时候，我就遇到了很多当地的人，他们跟我打招呼，而且有些人还担心我迷路，因为他看我一直在那个地方，他就问我是不是真的走对路了。我到了那个地方，我确实是没找到，然后一个妈妈和她女儿在那里散步，她们就直接带我去。我当时就是，一个是很感动，还有一个就是特别惊讶

I think it is possible fit in. People here are very nice. At the beginning, I thought that the people here might be cold and arrogant. This is my prejudice. But after I came here, I found that the people here are very nice and more receptive than I thought. Let me give an example. When I first moved here from the city center, I was going to pick up my stuff and I was going to pick up the quilt. I brought a suitcase to get the quilt, and then when I was on the road, I met many local people who greeted me, and some people were worried that I would get lost because he saw me staying in same place for a while. He even asked me if I were on the right path. When I arrived at the place, I did not find it. A mother and her daughter were walking there, and they showed me the way. I was moved and very surprised.

So, do you feel like you fit in with the Dutch education?

我觉得刚开始的时候，其实不是很适应的，但是慢慢地觉得这种还是蛮好的，刚开始的时候，一个是觉得在小组讨论会很尴尬，因为以前从来没有说真的要你真的跟几个人讨论，也不知道要讨论个什么东西。但是后来觉得，讨论确实会给你带来各种层面的想法。包括，我们平时会有一些随便那种聊天的 meeting，之前也是一开始不知道她们在说什么，也不知道怎么插话。后面觉得大家聊的那种话题还是蛮有趣的。

Did you have any previous experience of studying or traveling abroad?

没有

No

Okay, so what were your expectations of living the Netherlands before arriving here?

我来之前有点担心吧。一个是我知道我跟别人的合租，但是我不知道我室友是谁，我一开始的时候会担心我的室友会不会喜欢我，比如说她会不会不喜欢华人。然后就是我很担心我在这无法生活，害怕这里的衣食住行都不一样，我有一点手足无措。但是来了是一个这样的过程，慢慢地每一件事情都会解决。包括一开始来的时候，什么手机卡，银行卡，觉得很混乱，来了之后就是一件事一件事把事情解决了。说到这个，那时候去市政厅注册的时候，那是我第一次接触荷兰的政府。一开始我的想法是，我不知道政府会不会像之前想的那样，比较傲慢，或者说懒得做事的那种。但是其实没有，我觉得这里的政府还是蛮敬业的。因为我当初约的是一点十五，但是我来的时候，我看到有一些人在吃三明治，我以为他们也是一样来注册地址的，没想到他们是工作人员，而且他们就花几分钟时间就出来办公了。他们这里中午的时间都有在办公的，这就让我很惊讶。

I was a little worried before arriving. One reason is that I knew that I shared a apartment with others, but I didn't know who my roommate was. At the beginning, I was worried about whether my roommate would like me or not, for example, would she dislike the Chinese. Then I was very worried that I would not be able to survive. I was afraid that the food, clothing, housing and transportation here were totally different. I was a little at a loss. But it takes times and you will solve problems one by one. like the SIM card and bank account. Everything was solved one by one. Speaking of this, when I went to the city hall to register, which was my first time to know about the Dutch government. Before, I thought the government would be arrogant or lazy to do things. But in fact, no, I think the government people here are quite dedicated. Because I made an appointment at 1:15 p.m., but when I came, I saw some people eating sandwiches. I thought they were also here to register their addresses. I didn't expect them to be staff members. But actually, they are staff there. They took a few minutes to finish their lunch and then back to work, which surprised me.

Okay. So what's your expectation for studying before arriving here?

学习的话，我以为我来这里之后，我的语言会有很大的进步吧，我期望是这样的，但是实际上，我并没有。我以为我来到这里之后，我们中国学生会一起学习啊，但其实也没有，就很多还是只在微信群里聊聊天什么的。包括像外国同学，我有见到我的外国同学，在系楼那里。那个我还是觉得蛮让我比较满意的，因为我们的系楼还是开放的，并且有很多同学在那里学习

For studying, I thought that my language would improve a lot after I came here. I expected it to be like this, but in fact, I didn't. I thought that after I came here, our Chinese students would study together, but in fact, there was no such thing. Many of them were just chatting in WeChat groups. I have seen the international classmates and Dutch classmate in our faculty building. Our department building is still open and there are many students studying there. I am quite satisfied with that.

So, have you experienced any discrimination or stereotype when living or studying in the Netherlands?

有，我们小组讨论的时候，就是情况比较特殊，我们组里面一共五个人，一个是内地学生，一个香港学生，一个是意大利的女生，一个是荷兰的男生。这个意大利的女生，就是因为疫情的原因一直没有来，她第一天被分到我们组的时候，就对我们特别不友善。那个男生他的家人得了新冠去世了，他们两个就在我们讨论的时候各种为难别人。一些问题明明是正确的我们在提出自己的建议并且找老师说，比如说，有时候我们是做一个预算，当初我们说那个预算不合理，老师也说不合理，他们就特别抗拒，不允许我们提建议，他们就觉得自己是小组的领导，然后给你派活，你得一直干，然后你就跟他讨论嘛，他们就给老师写 email 说他们不愿意跟我们一组。

Yes. We have five people in our discussion group, one is from mainland China. one is from HongKong. One is a girl from Italy, and the other is a Dutch boy. The Italian girl has never come to the Netherlands because of the pandemic. When she was assigned to our group on the first day, she was particularly unkind to us. One family member of the Dutch boy has passed away because of the pandemic. In our discussion group, they always embarrassed us by criticising us, even when we contributed to the right answer and checked the answer with our professor. For example, sometimes we make a budget. At the beginning we said that the budget was unreasonable, and the professor also said it was unreasonable. But they resisted to take our suggestions. They feel like they are the leader in this team and they are the ones who are in charge of assigning work. They even emailed to the professor, saying that they did not want to be a group with us

Yeah, okay. So you think it's discrimination?. Have you ever thought about that it is a personality or something?

他不是只针对某一个人，他们是针对我们几个中国学生。

They didn't aim at one person, they only aimed at Chinese students

So how did you cope with that?

之后就不跟他们来往了，老师也不把我们分到一组

I didn't talk to them anymore after that and professors didn't put us in one group

So do you think that the discrimination is caused by covid-19

我觉得很大的一部分原因 是的。因为这两个同学的经历都比较特别，其他的同学都不会那样，我们也有其他的分组。

I think it is the main reason. Because these two classmates has experienced something really different. We also grouped with others, but they never treated us ike this

Okay, except this situation, have you experienced any other discrimination when you're living here or not?

我觉得有一次，但是我也不太确定。就是我第一次去图书馆的时候，我不知道怎么找到 M floor，当时我就问了一个男生，但是他不理我，然后他就直接走了，他当时也是在旁边，但是他就直接走了

I think there was once, but I am not quite sure. It was my first time to go to the library and I didn't find the M floor. So I asked a guy next to me, but he just ignored me and walked away

so do you feel like that situation is caused by COVID-19. Why do you think it happened?

啊 说到这个，还有一次就是，我第一次去市中心的时候，我跟另外个女生一起。当时前面就有一个妈妈，带着三个小孩。然后那个小孩看到我们之后，就走开了。就是很明显的那种，刚开始是走在这边，然后他就抓住他妈妈，然后看了我们，他就走了，然后他妈妈就护着他们，然后就走了。我觉得的原因话，有可能是因为那个，可能是我们带着口罩，我们戴的是医用的口罩。我们刚开始来的时候很害怕，做的防护比较好，但是他们戴的是那种自制的口罩。

Ah Speaking of this, another time was when I went to the city center with another girl. There was a mother and her three children. Then the kid saw us and walked away. It was quite obvious. At first he was walking right next to us, and then he grabbed his mother's arm and looked at us. His mom and him just left without say I think the reason may be because of the pandemic. We were wearing medical masks as we were very scared when we first came, but they wore homemade masks.

So, okay, who do you often communicate with in your daily life and Dutch people Chinese students or other international students

我觉得更多的还是其它的国际学生，包括我的室友。然后我还有参加那种 skills lab，就是图书馆里的那种 writing tutor。那些其实，也是有是有一些国际学生，包括一些论文小组什么的。我还是更国际学生接触的更多。然后荷兰本地的学生其实更少。

I talk more with other international students, including my roommate. Then I also participated in the skills lab, like writing tutor. Also there are some international students in my thesis groups. I have more contact with international students. However, I didn't talk too much with Dutch students

Is that because in your class you don't have too many Dutch students?

不是，我们基本上都是荷兰的学生

No. Actually there are many Dutch students in our class

okay

但是我觉得荷兰的学生就是很喜欢跟荷兰学生玩，他们一起玩的时候，讲的都是荷兰语，他们彼此都很认识，你就不认识他们的感觉

But I think Dutch students like to hang out with Dutch students. When they hang out together, they all speak Dutch. They know each other very well, so you feel like you cannot be part of the group

Okay, so how often do you socialize with international students?

这个是指同学吗？还是说指学校里面的

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| You mean my classmate or just international students in university? |
| anyone you know |
| 这样的话，我感觉每天都有啊，我的室友每天都跟她交流 |
| Well, I think it's everyday. I communicate with my flatmate everyday. |
| Okay, except your flatmate |
| 除了她的话，我觉得其他时候，其他的学生可能一周只有一次吧 |
| Well, except her, I probably communicate with other students only once a week |
| okay, So when you communicate with them, what kinds of topic you're talking about most |
| 最多的还是学习，除了我室友是生活以外，其他的都是学习。刚刚有说，我有一个教我写作的那种，就是讨论像写 thesis 啊，然后他们还喜欢问，比如说中国的疫情怎么样啊，这样的话 |
| Mostly it's about study, except my flatmate. I also have a writing tutor and we discussed my thesis together. And they also like to ask how is the pandemic situation in China? |
| do you find it easy to communicate with them, with international students. |
| 我觉得不很容易。一是我很难去找到跟他们认识的点，不知道怎么去认识他们。我室友是没办法，因为她跟我一个寝室，我必须认识，其他的人话，比如说是我们的邻居，我不知道怎么去，没有什么平台去认识她，也没有什么事情去找别人聊天 |
| I don't think it is easy. One reason is that it is difficult for me to find an chance to know them, and I don't know how to get to know them. I know my flatmate because we share an apartment, so I have to know her. But other people, such as our neighbors, I don't know how to find a chance to know them. |
| Do you feel like it's kind of lack of communication with international students. |
| 嗯 是 |
| Yeah |
| So does that make you upset |
| 嗯嗯 |
| Yeah |
| Why you feel upset? |
| 因为在国内的时候，你觉得没有什么交流是因为上网课，你一个人在国内的原因。但是来这边之后还是没有交流，就是有的时候会觉得是自己的问题，然后会觉得很沮丧。就是那种想去跟别人交朋友，一是不敢，还有就是有时候你跟别人没办法维持下去。比如说，你们可能见了一次面，一起学习，但是之后就没有后面的交往了。 |
| Because when I were in China, I felt that there was no too much communication with other students because it's online courses and I were alone in China. But after arriving here, there is still too much communication, so sometimes I feel that it is my own problem, and then I feel very frustrated. I want to make friends with others, but I'm scared of taking a step and I don't know how to maintain the relationship with others. For example, you may meet someone once and study together, but that's it. There is no contact anymore. |

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Okay, so do you keep trying to make contact with them? |
| 没有 |
| Nope |
| Do feel like communicating with those international students or with Chinese students help you adapt to Dutch culture |
| 我觉得有，比如说我跟他们聊的时候，我之前有认识一个巴西的女生，我们在一起参加活动，然后那个活动结束后，我们就没有在联系了。包括一些像越南啊，我们小组的女生，我们会一起讨论这里的文化是怎么样的。他们也跟我遇到了一样的问题，像巴西女生，她也遇到了一些别人的偏见。那些讨论就觉得好挺好的，包括有些希腊的女生，她当时也跟我一样上网课没有来。中国学生就更不用说了，大家遇到一些问题，也会提供一些解决方法，其实也有很大的帮助 |
| Yes, I think so. For example, I knew a girl from Brazil when participating in an activity. Although we are not in contact after that, we did talk something about Dutch culture. In our group, I also knew girls from Vietnam and Greek, we share our experience and the problems we encountered. Not to mention Chinese students. When one person encounter some problems, others will offer some solutions, which is really helpful. |
| Yeah , so, it's kind of help you adapt to Dutch society like the life here.They also help you to know more about Dutch culture. Right? |
| Yeah |
| Yeah |
| Do you feel like the pandemic has affect your socialization with local people, local national people and other international students? |
| 就是有的时候家里面提醒不要跟外国同学接触，然后你想去接触，你自己就会很害怕，尤其是他们其实是不戴口罩的。出于那种跟他们交往，比如说，我第一次见同学的时候，我带着口罩，但是她们都没有戴口罩，我就会自己把口罩摘下来。但是还是有潜在的风险的。 |
| Sometimes my parents warn me against interacting with other international and Dutch classmates. When you want to do so, you will be scared, especially when they don't wear face masks. For example, during the first time I met my classmates in real life, I wore a face mask, but they didn't. So I took off my mask, even though I know there are some potential risks. |
| So you are kind of afraid to communicate with them because of you're afraid of being infected? |
| 是的 |
| Yes |
| Okay. So, do you feel like there are differences between Dutch education the Chinese education ? |
| 我觉得区别还是很大的，一个是国内是什么东西都给你安排好了，今天你上这个课，明天你上这个课。但是在这里，很多东西你要自己去跟导师讨论，你的实习要怎么做，要自己写 proposal 而不是说给你一个固定的课题。最让我惊讶的是，那个时候我挂科，我们挂科是可 |

以向老师去要分的，但是我们会开一个那种考试的那种，反正就是你可以去看你的卷子，然后你可以看到老师给你打的分，老师都会开一个 meeting，他会跟你讲这道题要怎么做，然后答案是什么，并且告诉你为什么给你打这么低分。有些同学，他们就写得很多而且很好，但是老师就给他们分很低。就是说他们不关对答案有要求，而是要真正答到那个意思，如果你在跟老师的讨论过程中，你可以说服老师，老师会把你的成绩加上去。

I think there is a huge difference. In China, everything has been arranged for you. You take this course to day and that course tomorrow. But here, you have to discuss many things with your tutor, like how to do your internship, and setting your own project proposal instead of giving you a project topic. What surprised me most is that when you failed in the exam you can have a meeting with your professor and asked him to give you higher score once you can convince them. For example, if someone failed, they would have a meeting with their professor to check your exam paper together. The professor will tell you why they give you low score and how to answer this questions. During the discussion, you can try to convince your professor and ask for higher score.

so do you feel like you can get used to that kind of education

我觉得我可以适应，我觉得这种学习给我对教育的体验和思考吧

I think I can adapt to it and the education here provides me new experience and insights of learning

So you feel like you can adapt to Dutch education system?

可以

Yes

How often do you communicate with your professors?

每个星期有两到三次，跟不同的老师

two or three times a week, with different professors

So when you communicate with your professor those topics is mainly about academic or did you

我觉得老师都还是比较关心学生的吧，我不知道是老师个人的原因还是这里老师的原因，不管我遇到的什么老师，他们都会先关心你，比如说知道你是的话，会问你在那里啊，适不适应这里的生活啊。包括你遇到一些困难的时候，他们都会很支持你。我觉得这些跟国内有很大的区别，在国内老师不会管你是谁。在这里，你跟老师说一些事情，一个老师知道，每个老师都知道的这种

I think professors here really care about their students. I don't know whether it is just our professor or all professors here. Every profssor I meet all show concern for me first. For example, if they know who you are, they will ask where you are now and whether you can adapt to life here. They always support you when you encounter some difficulties. I think it is very different from China. The professors in China do not care about you. But here, when you tell one professor about your problem, every professor will know.

so they not only help you in like academic stuff, they also help you to overcome some difficulties in daily life?

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 对，我觉得这对我帮助非常大 |
| Yes, I think it is really helpful. |
| Do you feel like communicating with your professor can help you adapt to the academic requirement, right? |
| 对 |
| Yes |
| Do you feel like the pandemic affects your communication with Professor |
| 有，如果没有疫情的话，我们可以跟老师一起喝咖啡一起讨论什么的，但是现在只能通过 Teams，有时候会觉得有距离感很强，就感觉你关机之后，老师就不在了。但是，如果说没有疫情的话，老师就感觉和以前大学时候一样，老师都有在。但是现在就感觉，你要是关机，退出账号，就是老师找不到你，你也找不到老师的感觉 |
| Yeah, it definitely have a huge impact. If there is no pandemic, we can have a coffee with our professor and have a real talk together. But now we can only use Teams. Sometimes I feel a strong sense of distance, and it feels like the professor is no longer there once you shut down your computer. If there is no pandemic, I probably feel that professors are always there. But now I feel that if you shut down and log out your account, the professor cannot find you, and you cannot find the professor. |
| Yeah that's true. You don't speak Dutch right |
| 对 |
| No I don't speak Dutch |
| So to what extent do you feel like speaking Dutch may help a person adapt to Dutch society or Dutch culture? |
| 我觉得会有很大的帮助，荷兰毕竟不是应该英语为母语的国家，比如说你去超市，很多时候超市的人不会用英语，他们也是用荷兰语跟你们说，然后你买东西什么的，就会更加方便，如果你说荷兰语的话。如果你会说荷兰语的话，荷兰人会更喜欢跟你做朋友 |
| I think speaking Dutch will be really helpful, because English is not a native language in the Netherlands. For example, when you go to the supermarket, many people in the supermarket do not speak English. They speak Dutch to you. I think it will be more convenient if you speak Dutch when buying some stuff. If you can speak Dutch, Dutch people will probably prefer to be friends with you |
| So have you ever thought about learning some Dutch |
| 但是我觉得还是先把英语学好 |
| But I think it's better to improve my English first |
| Okay, so how would you evaluate your English language proficiency? |
| 我觉得我的英语还是很低级的那种阶段，因为我雅思总是 7，但是我口语只有 5.5，我也觉得我的口语也就是 5.5 的水平。 |
| I think my English is still at a very low level, because my IELTS is 7, but my spoken English is only 5.5, and I do think that my spoken English is at the level of 5.5. |

So you'll feel like you're speaking is much worse than others?

我觉得我的口语就是非常非常差。写作方面，我觉得生活上写写邮件，我已经非常适应了，但是有时学术写作，我就觉得非常困难。口语上面，比如说我们一起讨论问题，或听个课，我都听得懂，发个什么东西，我也看得懂，但是你让我说就觉得，不知道怎么说，都是说一些乱七八糟的这样。

I think my spoken English is very poor. In terms of writing, I feel that writing something like email is totally fine, but sometimes academic writing is very difficult. In terms of communication, when we discuss problems together or take a class, I can totally understand, but if you want me to say something, I don't know how to say it. I am just saying something randomly

So do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to meet the Dutch education systems

我觉得不够，我应该要先把英语学得更好，在来这里学习

I don't think it is good enough. I think I should improve my English first and then come here to study.

which part you want to improve

口语，然后还有写作

Speaking and writing

so do you feel like is there any problem in your reading and listening

我觉得没有

No, I don't think so

do you feel like your language proficiency has been good enough to help you adapt to Dutch culture and the society?

我觉得不够

Not good enough

why?

我觉得一个还是口语吧，你想去跟别人交流，就会不知道怎么说，也不知道说什么。有时候会觉得自己想得很多，但是不知道要怎么表达它。第二个是想不到怎么说，比如说，我知道中文怎么说，但是不知道英文要怎么说。这样其实很限制跟别人交流。而且我很少用外国的社交媒体，就是 Whatsapp，很少用

I think one challenge is spoken English. If you want to communicate with others, you don't know how to say or what to say. Sometimes I feel like I think a lot, but I don't know how to express it. The other challenge is that I don't know how to say it in English. I know how to say it in Chinese, but I don't know how to say it in English, which limits my communication with others. And I don't use foreign social media a lot, like Whatsapp,

Are there any other adaptation problems that language barrier caused ?

还有一些像生活上遇到的一些困难，不过那些也不算什么困难，都可以解决。我觉得最大的问题，交朋友交不到。学习的话，就是有的时候要写一些作业的话，就写不好。我写作业的时

候，还有一些跟我水平差不多的同学，我们就先写成中文，然后用谷歌翻译，然后再检查一下，再改。

There are also some difficulties in daily life, but those are not challenging and can be solved. I think the biggest problem is that I can't make friends here. In terms of study, I have difficulty in writing my homework in English. When I was writing my homework, I wrote it in Chinese and translate it with Google Translate, and then checked the grammar or something. Many students who are in the same level do the same thing.

So, to what extent do you feel like it is the COVID-19 that contribute to this province?

我觉得有影响，但是不是最主要的，它可能会限制一些，但是本质上还是因为英语不好

Well it may have some impact, but it is not the most important reason. I think in essence it is because of the low level of English language proficiency.

do feel like if there's no COVID-19, you probably can improve your English language like

我觉得肯定会提高，因为如果没有的话，你就可以参加一些学校的活动啊。而且，我本身蛮喜欢参加一些学校的活动的，而且你可以遇到不同的人，不管怎么样，你多多少少都会说一点。现在的情况，就是活动减少了，很多活动都改成线上了，线上的话就是没有那种感觉，而且我感觉那些线上的活动有点无聊，注意力就分散了

I think it will definitely improve, because if there is no pandemic, I will participate in some activities. Personally I really like to participate in school activities, and you can meet different people there. You will communicate with them more or less. But in current situation, the amount of activities have been reduced, and many activities have switched to online. I don't like that. I feel that those online activities are a bit boring, and my attention is distracted.

So overall, are you happy with your choice to study and living the Netherlands?

我觉得还是挺满意的，如果没有疫情的话应该会更好。尽管我只来了一个月吧，我觉得我应该早一点来，就很后悔自己没有很早来。然后，这对我来说是一个很大的成长，我第一次接触不同的文化，我也没有自己想象中的那么适应不了。我觉得这里的文化，不能说是荷兰文化，我觉得这种国际化的文化，让我觉得自己更加的自信，就比如在国内的时候，连我爸爸都觉得我很胖，但是我跟我室友说这件事的时候，我室友会觉得这样的想法特别的 mean。在国内，我觉得自己不高，然后胖，但是来这里之后就觉得人之间就是有这样的差异，就很多元化，这里有一米九的女的，然后也有比你娇小的，有皮肤特别白的，也有皮肤黑的，有胖的，有瘦的，这对我来说是一种完善我自己过程，所以我不后悔来这里

I think I am happy with that, although I have been here for only one month. But I will be happier if there is no pandemic. I regret that I didn't come earlier. I think I should come earlier. It is a growth for me as it's the first time I went abroad and knew about a different culture. I think I adapted better than I thought. I think the culture here, which is not Dutch culture, I would say, but the international culture makes me feel more confident. Because, for example, when I was in China, even my father thought I was fat, but my roommate think this kind of thought is very mean when we were talking about this. In China, I feel that I am not tall and I am fat, but after coming here, I feel that there is such a difference between people, and they are very diverse. Some girls are 1.9 meters in height and some girls are

more petite than me. Some have bright skin and some have dark skin; some are fat, and some are skinny. For me, it is a process of improving myself, so I don't regret coming here.

You mentioned that it would be better if you can arrive here earlier. So why do you have that perception?

我来了之后，我感觉我之前的顾虑是没有的。我之前不敢来有很多原因，其中一个很大的原因是疫情，但是我觉得这也是借口嘛，因为发现这里的人还是正常的生活，第二个原因就是因为我英语不够，不敢来，我不知道我来这边该如何面对不讲中文，得用英语更别人交流，我就很害怕。但是来了之后，就觉得这种害怕是自己心魔，你早来了之后，有些东西也不是那么。包括，我不是说我挂科吗，我挂科的一个很大的原因就是因为我上网课，我网课有很多是录播，我在国内是没办法下那个视频的，所以我每次都有很大的延迟，我得等我另外一个在这里的中国同学下载下来，再发给我，然后会导致我的学习跟不上，我这些都没看完，然后那个就发下来了，然后我自己又没办法看，这是个很重要的原因

After I arrived, I felt that my previous worries were gone. There were many reasons that I was scared of coming. One of the main reasons is the pandemic, but I think it is an excuse, because I found that the people here are still living a normal life. The second reason is that I am not good at English. I don't know how to deal with situation that I can only use English, instead of Chinese, to communicate with others after I came. I am very scared. But after I came, I felt that this kind of fear was my imagination. After I came, I found that those things are not as scared as I thought. The other important reason is the internet problem. As I mentioned before, I failed in exam once and that is because I could not download those online courses in China. Many of my online classes are recorded, but I can't download the videos from Blackboard when I was in China. So I always asked my friends in the Netherlands to download it first and then send it to me. There is a big delay. When I haven't finished reading this, a new one came.

So would you recommend your fellow students to study in the Netherlands even with the impact of COVID-19

我觉得会，有机会的话，虽然说最大的问题是学校的知名度不够高，但是这里，我就比较这里和英国吧，据我了解，英国是有特别多的中国学生一起，这样的话对你的提高不是很多的，而且你会觉得没有那种国际的氛围，我觉得荷兰这里的国际话还是有的，虽然很难融入到本地的文化里面，但是你起码能体会到你作为一个国际生，而不是一大堆的中国人。我觉得这里课程设置的强度还是挺大的

I think I will. Although our university is not well-known, people can learn a lot here and improve themselves. As far as I know, there are a lot of Chinese students in the UK. You probably hang out with other Chinese students in UK and there is not too much self-improvement and international environment. But in the Netherlands, you will feel that there is an international atmosphere. Although it is difficult to integrate into the local culture, you are labelled an international student, rather than hanging out with a bunch of Chinese students. Also the setting of courses here is quite intense.

so do you feel like it is difficult to study

我觉得最大的困难就是我缺乏创造性

I think my difficulty in learning is that I am lacked of innovative thinking.

So you'll feel like if you be more innovative, you will be.....

我觉得在国内的时候就是已经习惯这种被动的接受，就是别人给你灌输的时候，你听得懂。这里的话，就是逼着你说，去写，你要有自己的想法，这对我来说还是很大的挑战的

I think when I was in China, I had become accustomed to acquire knowledge in a passive way, cramming for exam. But here, you are forced to have your own ideas, speaking it out and writing it down. It is still a big challenge for me.

So do you feel like you can adapt to this

我觉得还是可以的，我感觉我上课这么久，还是有很大的变化了。一个是我以前不是很愿意，也不懂怎么表达自己观点，但是现在的话，虽然是表达不是很好，但是已经可以尝试并且能够表达自己的观点，就是跟别人交流什么的，所以这对我帮助就很大

I think it's okay. I have changed a lot after taking classes for a long time. I was not very willing to express my views before, but now I started to try to express my views and to communicate with others, though I know my expression is not very good. So the study here helps me a lot.

So you like this kind of education?

对

Yes

Okay. That's all for my interview. Thank you very much for participating in my interview.

Appendix K – Sample of Consent form



Universiteit Utrecht

Information about participation in interview for Socio-cultural Adaptation and Academic Adaptation of Chinese International students at Utrecht University

1. Introduction

By signing the declaration of consent, we kindly ask you to give your permission to participate in this scientific research.

You receive this written information for careful consideration on your part are needed. Take your time to read this information letter. Before you make a decision, it is important to gain information about research project, understand all possible risks, possible inconvenience(s) and advantages of participant. When you still have questions after reading all the information you can always ask the research named at the end of this information letter.

2. What is the background and purpose of the study?

The number of Chinese students studying in the Netherlands has drastically increased over last decade. Given the increasing number of Chinese international students in the Netherlands, greater attention should be directed towards the adjustment of Chinese international students. Thus, this research is about the socio-cultural and academic adaptation of Chinese international students in the Netherlands, in particular, Chinese overseas students at Utrecht University.

The prime goal of this research is to characterize the typical difficulties that Chinese international students are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, to investigate factors influencing the process of academic and socio-cultural adaptation, as well as to explore their coping strategies.

3. How will the study be carried out?

Participation in the study involves completion of a survey that asks you basic questions about yourselves and a face-to-face (digital) interview concerning your experience of studying in the Netherlands, which will last for approximately one hours. The interview will be conducted by a master student studying Intercultural communication at Utrecht University. The interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

4. What is expected of you?

To answer interview questions in an honest and straight-forward manner helps us understand the Chinese students' experience of living and studying in the Netherlands and uncover the difficulties they encountered during COVID-19. If there is anything that you are



not comfortable answering, you are able to request to not respond to the questions. All responses will be kept anonymous.

5. What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of participating in this study?

The research is intended to help us understand the difficulties that Chinese international students are facing during COVID-19 and factors that influence the cultural adjustment of Chinese international students. You will not benefit directly from participation in this study. However, the research may provide useful data for the future and help Chinese international students integrate into the host country better.

6. Voluntary participation

Participation is voluntary. If you decide that you do want to participate after all, no action is necessary on your part. You do not need to sign anything. In addition, you do not need to explain why you do not want to participate. If you are participating, you can always change your mind and stop at any time — including during the study. In addition, you can still withdraw your consent after you have taken part. If you choose to do so, your research data will not be included in the analyses. However, your research data can no longer be deleted if the data have already been analysed or if the research data can no longer be traced back to you (see below).

7. For what purpose will the data collected be used?

Your personal data (name, address and other privacy-sensitive data) will be managed by a single person. If you wish to correct or have this personal data deleted, you can do so by contacting: Xinyi Li (x.li@students.uu.nl). The personal data will not be passed on to people other than the researchers who are directly involved in this project.

Data will be collected during your participation in the study. Your data will be stored and kept on a server secured by Utrecht University. This data will be saved for a period of 5 years on our university's server. After this period of time the data will be destroyed.

8. Is any reimbursement provided for your participation in the study?

No reimbursement or incentive of any kind shall be provided

9. More information about this study?

If you wish to ask questions and obtain further information after the research, please contact the research. The following is the contact information

Li Xinyi, x.li@students.uu.nl

10. Appendices:

In addition to this form, we also ask you to read and sign the declaration of consent form.



DECLARATION OF CONSENT for participation in: Interview for Socio-cultural Adaptation and Academic Adaptation of Chinese International students at Utrecht University

I confirm:

- that I have been satisfactorily informed about the study via the information letter;
- that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and that any questions I may have asked have been satisfactorily answered;
- that I have had the opportunity to carefully consider my participation in this study;
- that I am voluntarily participating.

I agree that:

- the data collected will be obtained for scientific purposes and retained as stated in the information letter;
- the collected, encrypted research data may be shared with and/or reused by other scientists, possibly to answer other research questions;
- video and/or audio recordings may also be made for scientific purposes.
(See the box below for the sharing and reuse of this data.)

I understand that:

- I have the right to withdraw my consent for the use of data, as stated in the information letter.

Name participant: _____

Date of birth: ___ / ___ / ___ (dd/mm/yyyy)

Signature: _____

Date, place: ___ / ___ / ___, _____

Declaration on data reuse to be completed after the data collection has taken place
(please tick the appropriate boxes and sign at the bottom):

(1) Do you agree that the collected audio and video recordings, which are not anonymous, can be shared with other researchers for research purposes?

Yes, I agree.

No, I do not agree.

(2) Sometimes, image and/or audio recordings are also shown in scientific lectures or lessons. Do you agree that the audio and/or video recordings created can be used for these purposes?

Yes, I agree.

No, I do not agree.

Signature: _____

To be completed by the researcher with ultimate responsibility:

Name: _____

I declare that I have explained to the above person what participation involves.

Date: ___ / ___ / ___ (dd/mm/yyyy)

Signature: _____

Appendix L – Survey results

The impact of COVID-19 & communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: During COVID-19, I ...

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Communicating via email or other digital platforms | 0% | 2.5% | 5% | 27.5% | 65% | 4.55 |
| Prefer to communicating face-to-face | 2.5% | 7.5% | 12.5% | 42.5% | 35% | 4 |
| Perceived negative impact of COVID-19 | 5% | 12.5% | 12.5% | 40% | 30% | 3.775 |

Language barriers & Communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English ... have impeded my communication with my professors

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Speaking | 25 % | 30% | 15% | 20% | 10% | 2.6 |
| Listening | 22.5% | 30% | 20% | 22.5% | 5% | 2.575 |
| Reading | 32.5% | 30% | 22.5% | 12.5% | 2.5% | 2.225 |
| Writing | 25% | 25% | 32.5% | 15% | 2.5% | 2.45 |

Pedagogical difference & communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: Compared with professors in China, I feel my professor in the Netherlands are ...

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|---------------|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|---------------|-------|
| Less distant | 2.5% | 27.5% | 25% | 22.5% | 22.5% | 3.35 |
| Nicer | 0% | 15% | 40% | 27.5% | 17.5% | 3.475 |
| More friendly | 0% | 17.5% | 25% | 37.5% | 20% | 3.6 |

COVID-19 & professional learning

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: During COVID-19, I ...

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Take lectures online | 5% | 2.5% | 12.5% | 20% | 60% | 4.275 |
| Take seminars online | 5% | 2.5% | 15% | 22.5% | 55% | 4.2 |
| Take exam online | 2.5% | 5% | 22.5% | 20% | 50% | 4.1 |
| Prefer to take lectures online | 22.5% | 20% | 17.5% | 20% | 20% | 2.95 |
| Prefer to take seminars online | 35% | 25% | 12.5% | 10% | 17.5% | 2.5 |
| Prefer to take exam online | 22.5% | 22.5% | 15% | 20% | 20% | 2.925 |
| Perceived negative impact of COVID-19 on my study plan | 10% | 7.5% | 17.5% | 25% | 40% | 3.775 |

Language barriers & Communicate with professors

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English ... impeded my communication with my professors

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-----------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Speaking | 25 % | 22.5% | 10% | 35% | 7.5% | 2.775 |
| Listening | 27.5% | 17.5% | 20% | 30% | 5% | 2.675 |
| Reading | 22.5% | 25% | 25% | 22.5% | 5% | 2.625 |
| Writing | 17.5% | 22.5% | 17.5% | 37.5% | 5% | 2.9 |

Pedagogical differences & Professional learning

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: Compared with courses in China, I feel studies in the Netherlands require higher ability of.....

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Independent learning | 0% | 7.5% | 22.5% | 25% | 45% | 4.075 |
| Innovative thinking | 0% | 7.5% | 25% | 40% | 27.5% | 3.875 |
| teamwork | 0% | 5% | 20% | 30% | 45% | 4.15 |
| I am enjoying this way of study | 2.5% | 5% | 25% | 42.5% | 25% | 3.825 |

Socialization & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I usually socialized with...

| | Mean |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Chinese students | 3.575 |
| Other international students | 2.95 |
| Dutch students | 2.75 |

Language barriers & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: My English..... impeded my communication with International Students

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|-----|-------|---------------|-------|
| Speaking | 17.5 % | 15% | 20% | 32.5% | 15% | 3.125 |
| Listening | 25% | 15% | 17% | 30% | 12.5% | 2.9 |

Dutch & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I would like to learn Dutch to integrate into the Dutch culture and society

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|------------------------|-------------------|----|-------|-----|---------------|------|
| Willing to learn Dutch | 0 % | 5% | 27.5% | 45% | 22.5% | 3.85 |

COVID-19 & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: COVID-19 has a negative impact on my socialization with

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|------------------------|-------------------|------|-----|-------|---------------|-------|
| Chinese students | 17.5% | 15% | 20% | 22.5% | 25% | 3.225 |
| International students | 7.5% | 5% | 10% | 45% | 32.5% | 3.9 |
| Dutch students | 5% | 2.5% | 10% | 40% | 42.5% | 4.125 |

Personality & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel I am shy when I socialize with

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|---------------|-------|
| Chinese students | 42.5% | 22.5% | 17.5% | 10% | 7.5% | 2.175 |
| International students | 20% | 15% | 22.5% | 20% | 22.5% | 3.9 |
| Dutch students | 15% | 12.5% | 20% | 30% | 22.5% | 4.125 |

Personality & Interpersonal communication

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel that my oversea experience is helpful in socializing with.....

| | <i>N</i> | helpfulness in socializing with other international students (Mean) | helpfulness in socializing with Dutch students (Mean) |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Overseas travelling experience | 22 | 3.5 | 3.25 |
| Overseas study experience | 12 | 3.54 | 3.1 |

COVID-19 & Expectation

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I feel COVID-19 have a negative impact on my expectation of in the Netherlands

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|----------------|-------------------|------|-----|-------|---------------|------|
| Daily life | 5% | 5% | 10% | 40% | 40% | 4.05 |
| Academic study | 10% | 2.5% | 15% | 42.5% | 30% | 3.8 |

Discrimination & COVID-19

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement: I have perceived discrimination resulted from COVID-19

| Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always | Mean |
|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|------|
| 22.5% | 32.5% | 27.5% | 12.5% | 5% | 2.45 |

General academic and socio-cultural adaptation

To what extent do you agree or disagree to the following statement:

| | Strongly disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | Totally agree | Mean |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----|-------|-----|---------------|------|
| I am satisfied with the study in the Netherlands | 0% | 10% | 37.5% | 30% | 22.5% | 3.65 |
| I can adapt to academic requirement here | 0% | 10% | 22.5% | 55% | 12.5% | 3.7 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| The COVID-19 has a negative impact on my study here | 7.5% | 0% | 32.5% | 30% | 30% | 3.75 |
| I can feel the local and indigenous Dutch culture | 0% | 12.5% | 30% | 47.5% | 10% | 3.55 |
| I can feel international and diverse Dutch culture | 0% | 15% | 15% | 57.5% | 12.5% | 3.675 |
| I can adapt to Dutch culture and society | 0% | 7.5% | 30% | 47.5% | 15% | 3.7 |
| I can feel COVID-19 has negatively affected my socio-cultural adaptation | 7.5% | 5% | 15% | 47.5% | 25% | 3.775 |
