



BALEAP Conference 9 June, 2018



Research Aims & Questions

Investigate Chinese PG students' experience in the UK with a focus on oral participation in English.

1. What are Chinese PG students' needs for oral participation in English during their experience in the UK?
2. What factors influence their oral participation?
3. How do students think their needs should be addressed and met?







Research Design

- The University of Edinburgh
- Pilot interview (n=3)
- **20 interviews** with Masters & PhD students
 - 10 different schools
- Pilot focus group (n=2) *with Thinking Hats*
- **2 focus groups** with Masters & PhD students
- **36 PTAS interviews** from 7 schools
 - Talked to heads of the PG programmes

Prolonged
Engagement



56 Interviews & 2 Focus groups

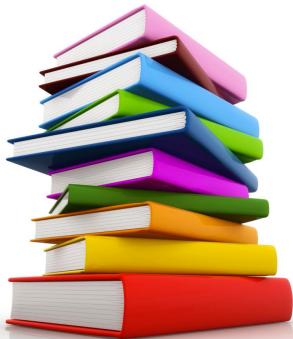
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	College of Science and Engineering
1. Education	7. Engineering
2. College of Arts	8. Informatics
3. Business	9. Geoscience
4. Law	10. Chemistry
5. Social and Political Science	11. Biology
6. Language, Culture and Literature	

RESULTS

Oral Participation for

Academic needs

Social-personal needs



Linguistic Proficiency Factors

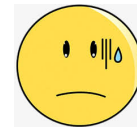
- Listening skills
 - Accents
 - British & American, Australian
- Speaking skills
 - Organizational skill + time pressure
 - Overthink, self-doubt - Avoidance
 - Direct translation - Can go wrong...





- *“One day, I was waiting for my friend outside my flat and a previous groupmate of mine was passing by. She was very nice and asked about my progress in the film I was directing. She asked me how it was going, and honestly, I didn’t even think twice, like, I just wanted her to know it was going okay and there was nothing to worry about. So I said, “It is okay. You can go now.” I felt very wrong immediately after I said it. Even I thought it sounded rude but I was just trying to tell her it was going well. It would sound perfectly normal and much nicer in Chinese.”*

- Youyou (ECA, PGT)



Intellectual Capacity Factors

- Disciplinary knowledge and academic competence
 - Confidence
- Non-academic knowledge in communication
 - Jokes, Cultural frame of reference
- Awareness of cultural differences
 - Norm of communication in class
 - Lining up later for private discussion
 - Teacher - student relation

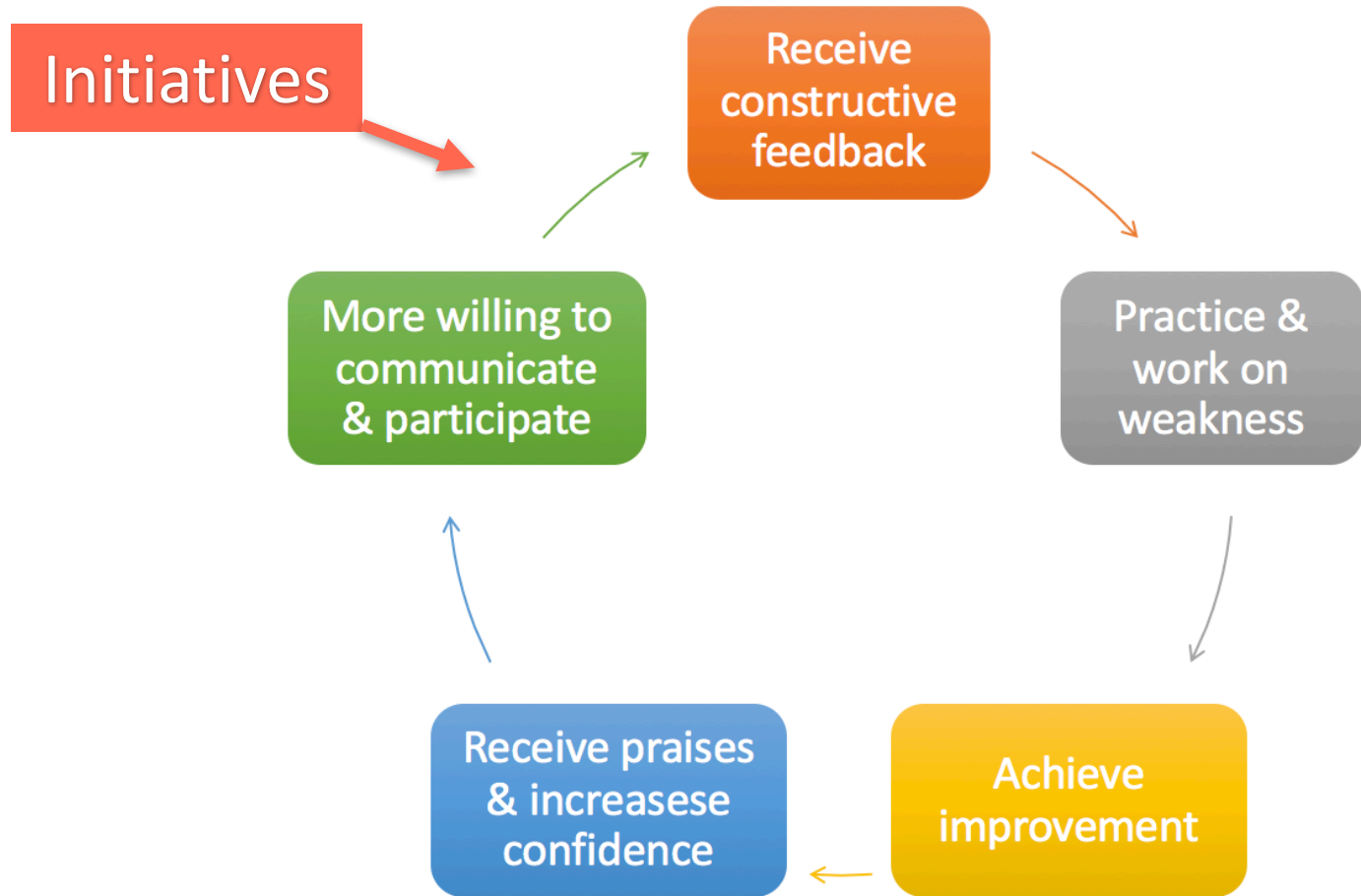


Psychological Disposition Factors

- More relaxed attitude towards speaking English
 - Instrumental role, tool for communication
 - Proud bilinguals of Chinese and English
 - Foreigners also make mistakes
 - lecturers' English
- Previous experience influenced willingness to communicate
 - virtuous cycle
 - vicious cycle



An example of virtuous cycle of oral participation - Shuai (Chem., PhD)



Psychological Disposition Factors

- The “Face” culture
 - Gain, maintain or lose
 - Reticence, silence
 - Collective Face
- *If all the other Chinese students don’t speak, I will definitely speak. I have a good friend who also thinks the same. We both act on the belief that we should not let foreigners think we Chinese people can’t speak our mind.*



- Rou (MSc International Relations, SPS, PTAS)

Social-Contextual Factors

- Exposure to English-speaking environment
 - Out of one's control
 - Disproportionally distributed across the university





Interviewees' programmes and estimated percentage of Chinese students

Programme	School	No. Chinese	No. Students	Approx. Percentage 1
Public Policy	SPS	1	16	6.30%
Chemistry	Chemistry	1	10	10%
International Banking, Law and Finance	Law	2	19	10.50%
Geographical information	Geosciences	6	33	18.20%
Artificial intelligence	Informatics	NA	NA	20%
Comparative Literature	Literature	5	22	22.70%
International Business & Emerging Markets	Business	10	40	25.00%
Film Directing	ECA	5	18	27.80%
TESOL	Education	125	160	78.1%
Signal Processing	Engineering	42	45	93.30%

Social-Contextual Factors

- Communication is a two-way street
 - “native speakers”
 - Shared non-nativeness
 - Sense of comfort and mutual understanding with other NNEs
 - Tolerance & empathy
 - ICC & Sense of achievement

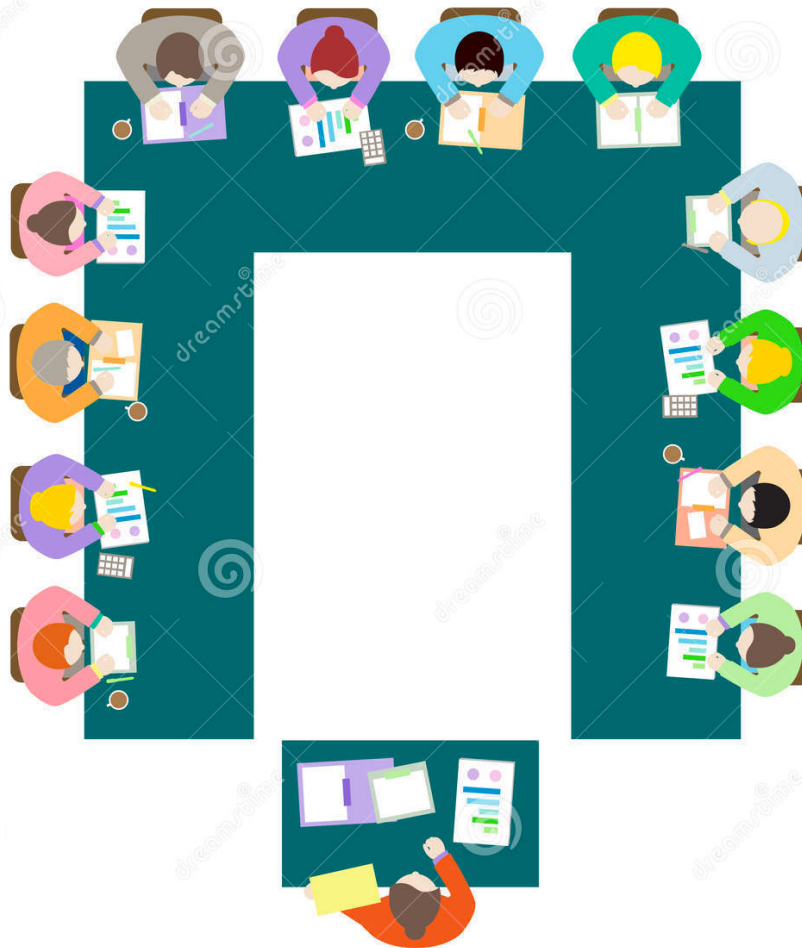


Social-Contextual Factors

- Space for oral communication
 - Classroom seating arrangement



US Foreign Policy





Challenge

Fear

Frustration

Effort

Oral participation in English

Quality of overseas study



"I think participating in various oral communication does not only improve your English proficiency, but also enhances your overall ability as an individual."

- Jin (Lit., PGT)



The University of Edinburgh



***Thank
You !***

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The University of Edinburgh



expectation development
geoscience interaction conversation
student feedback participation
tandem general transcription deadline
teaching class communication reading volunteer
learning culture proofreading
individual sessional workshop alias buddy
literature essay academic tutorial design
confident skill tesol group discussion practice
improve alice course presentation standard
motivation grammar writing native master chinese british
project focus speaker lecture business
contribution party education research reference setting relax
professional interview english report school sense
policy conference international worst speak study
richmond accent language seminar engineering
experience interviewee identity supervisor
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share