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**Generation of Scenarios
for an Intercultural Sensitizer:
Chinese and New Zealanders
in a university context**

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1. Intercultural Sensitizers: Purpose, Composition and Construction

An intercultural sensitizer is an instrument that is supposed to help its user increase his awareness of a certain “subjective culture”, that is, the characteristic way of a group to perceive and interpret their social environment (Triandis, 1972). Usually, an intercultural sensitizer consists of many elements, ideally up to 200, all of which have three components: a critical incident, four or five attributions and feedback (see Appendix A for examples).

The main goal of working through these episodes is to gradually induce more complex reasoning about and more detailed attributing of cultural influences on behaviour (Triandis, 1995b). When facing culturally sensitive situations, it might be useful to have an idea of what the exact reason for certain behaviour might be. However, knowing how to weigh and prioritize circumstances and different explanations is a more generally applicable skill that really constitutes cultural awareness (Triandis, 1995a). Therefore, useful critical incidents should not just lead to an intensified internalization of vaguely understood but idiosyncratic cultural differences, such as broadly reducing critical situations to collectivist vs. individualist attributions (Albert, 1983). Taking this a step further, some incidents even trick the reader by providing seemingly obvious solutions based on a more superficial analysis of the incident. The possibly resulting confrontation with ones own, potentially oversimplified behavioural attributions is able to produce an even stronger learning effect (Triandis, 1995a; Wang, 2000).

In this sense, using an intercultural sensitizer should lead to the realization that rarely explanations for cultural misunderstandings are purely right and wrong. What it comes down to is the acquiring of the ability to discern which attribution is more likely to be valid for this specific “subjective culture”.

1.1 Constructing an Intercultural Sensitizer

Basically, there are two different ways of constructing an intercultural sensitizer: empirically and theoretically. Empirical construction of an intercultural sensitizer involves gathering information from cultural experts of both relevant cultures. Theoretical construction on the other hand refers to the consultation of ethnographic literature and research for providing the basic concepts underlying the specific scenarios, such as for example ‘differences in deference to authority’ (Triandis, 1995). In this project as in most other cases, both approaches are simultaneously utilized by combining established concepts with first-hand experiences.

2. The Present Project

In the following, an explanation and documentation of the reasoning and the sources behind ten newly developed scenarios (see Appendix A) will be given. These scenarios are contributing to the development of an extensive intercultural sensitizer that is supposed to help increase the awareness of cultural differences amongst New Zealanders and Chinese in a university context. Intended as a part of a long-term project at Victoria University of Wellington, this text comprises only the first of the procedural steps necessary when developing an intercultural sensitizer, that is, the construction of scenarios and the four to five possible attributions (Albert, 1983). The validation of the scenarios as well as the formulation of feedback for the different attributions will be carried out and documented in another context.

More specifically, for these scenarios the underlying empirical information was gathered in two different settings: a focus group with three Chinese and an interview with a New Zealander, all students at Victoria University. In order to clearly present the reasoning and the sources it is based upon, the construction of the scenarios will be retraced along the different underlying themes that emerged in these two settings. Additionally, the implementation of the literature that served as a foundation for the scenarios will be illustrated.

2.1 Focus Group

The focus-group was carried out with three female Chinese students, all of which are studying undergraduate programs at Victoria University for 1 or 2 trimesters and all of which have arrived in New Zealand within the last 2 months. The total time was 30min, and it was recorded and partially transcribed, with two exemplary and relevant excerpts documented in Appendix B, Excerpts 1 to 3. In the following, it will be elaborated how the aspects that emerged during this focus group were incorporated in the construction of the specific scenarios. Many expectations from the literature surfaced during the discussion and in these cases the reference is made to the respective research.

2.2 Interview

The interview was conducted with a postgraduate student from New Zealand. It was recorded and partially transcribed and lasted for 25min. In the same way as the focus group, some aspects of the scenarios created for this project are based on this interview. Three relevant excerpts can be found in Appendix B, Excerpts 4 and 5.

3. Themes Underlying the Scenarios

The represented list of underlying themes for the construction of the scenarios in Appendix A is partially adapted from Wang and Brislin (2000). Since the sensitizer is to be utilized in a university context, the focus of this specific selection of themes is due to the applicability of the topics to a university context.

Due to the gaps in specified research comparing New Zealanders (NZs) and Chinese, the more extensively researched cultural differences between US - Americans and Chinese were used as scaffolding. This is partially legitimized by the similarities between the US and NZ as measured by Hofstede (1986; 2001), especially concerning the dimensions most relevant in the scenarios at hand, Power-Distance (PDI) and Individualism (IDV). However, it is somewhat restricting the notion that these incidents are created exclusively for the encounter between NZs and Chinese. Referring to this issue on the scale of the whole project, the validation process itself should provide an impression of how adaptable the US – American concepts are to the NZ context. Additionally, the empirical parts of the research, the interview and the focus group, are meant to probe the validity and transferability of the established underlying themes to this specific context.

3.1 Individualism vs. Collectivism

This cultural dimension is fundamental and broadly applicable, as its effects can be retraced to many cultural differences one way or the other. Referring to its definition by Hofstede (2001) as ‘the degree to which individuals are integrated in groups’, one can connect it to most of the differences that surfaced in the focus group. E.g., Chinese students, as opposed to NZs, “always like to stick to a group” and “are quite independent” (see Excerpt 3). From the perspective of a New Zealander, “they [the Chinese students] tend to stick together so much, it is no surprise they have little contact to Kiwi classmates” (see Excerpt 4).

In Scenario 6, the discrepancies on this dimension are exposed by the Chinese student willing to fulfil an unwanted role in order to support his team. When he is playing as goal-keeper, he thought somebody else would share the burden, replacing him in the goal. The others were expecting him to say something if he wants to play in the field while he was expecting them to anticipate it. This serves as an exemplary situation for a critical difference between NZs and Chinese: the commonness of voicing your preferences and expectations greatly differs in various situations and contexts (Hamid, 1994).

3.2 Interpersonal Relations and Guanxi

The term ‘interpersonal relations’ can be extended to include numerous kinds of interactions, however, here it is mainly referring to relationships such as friendships. More specifically, the term *guanxi* is used in this context, as it translates as ‘connections’ and describes the system of interpersonal relations and obligations in China (Wang, 2000).

In the case of scenario 5 (Appendix A), the situation is culturally stressful as a result of the fundamentally different perceptions of interpersonal obligations. Since Zhang made it possible for Wendy to stay with somebody in Beijing, Zhang might believe that the favour will happily be returned. In alignment with this, she expects Wendy to be able to utilize her uncle, since he is after all a member of her closer family. That Wendy might not actually be in a very interactive and supportive relationship with her uncle is something Zhang might be surprised about (Wang, 2000). In this case therefore, even though answer b) does provide the best explanation, a) and d) are also viable.

In accordance with the opposing orientation towards individualism and collectivism, friendships are perceived and handled differently, with Chinese tending to have fewer but closer friends (Hamid, 1994) and a preference for not being alone (Gao, 1998). This emerged during the focus group as well (see Excerpt 3) and was integrated in Scenario 3, where the Chinese student would not want to let one of his friends walk home by herself.

3.3 Hierarchies and Authority

When attempting to shed light onto expected dissimilarities in approaching hierarchy and authority in two cultures, the level of power-distance as measured by Hofstede (2001) can be used as a starting point. As China is categorized as a culture of high power-distance as opposed to New Zealand, differences in hierarchy in a university context should result in a distinctively stronger perception of authority (Hofstede, 1986). Furthermore, this manifested in a preference for knowing who the high status person in an interaction is and by showing more obvious superordinate and subordinate behaviours (Triandis et al., 1988). In scenario 2, even though the Chinese student feels treated unfairly, she is uncomfortable with side-stepping and disregarding her lecturer’s authority. As implied by Scenario 9, from the student’s perspective even a small difference in authority can exert a decisive impact on how you interact.

3.4 Saving Face

The term *face* is literally translated from the Chinese *mien-tzu* and refers to a multifaceted concept of impression management (Ting-Toomey, 1988). In Chinese culture, managing and preserving your face and that of others, also called *facework*, plays a leading role amongst the social factors influencing everyday interactions (Hui-Ching and Holt, 1994). It is different from what is generally perceived as *status*, since it not only incorporates your social position, but also how well you fulfil that position and how acceptable your behaviour is perceived in general (Ting-Toomey, 1988). For example, losing your temper, behaving arrogantly or putting somebody on the spot can cause a loss of *face*. The consequences of a high sensitivity for these *face* concerns amongst Chinese international students can express themselves in situations such as depicted in scenario 7 and 10.

In scenario 7, the main reason for the students to indicate continuous understanding is to allow the teacher to save *face*, which is implied with answer c). Alternatively, answer b) also indicates a certain degree of cultural awareness, as it refers to the tendency to avoid interrupting a lecture (Excerpt 1; Zhou et al. 2005). However, since the teacher is directly addressing the students, it is not the most suitable explanation in this case. In scenario 10, losing your temper during the game could pose a loss of face for the Chinese student, which is why he is trying not to show his annoyance. Even though it is not the dominant underlying theme, *face* aspects are also relevant in scenario 2, since the Chinese student is uncomfortable with reporting her lecturer's behaviour, thereby avoiding a loss of face for him and possibly for her.

3.5 Ownership

Derived from a more collectivistic approach to ownership, the boundaries between "mine" and "yours" are perceived differently amongst Chinese and US-Americans (Wang and Brislin, 2000). In scenario 1 & 4, two different aspects of this are incorporated and transferred to the present specific cultural context. Scenario 1 depicts a situation in which a Chinese student might not be aware that asking for permission to use someone else's property is socially required. Usually it is regarded acceptable when a friendship exists, but it is still expected in most cases (see Excerpt 5). Scenario 4 is covering another dimension of this issue, the ownership of ideas and words. As an extension of the lesser emphasis on clarifying the 'who owns what' in Chinese culture, the concept of referencing words and ideas is new to many Chinese international students. This aspect is included in both answers c) and d), with c)

being superior since it can be expected that the student has at least heard of the different expectations at Universities in New Zealand.

3.6 Educational styles

Paralleling the preceding concepts on a more concrete level, diverging educational styles are intended to refer to an institutional as well as a psychological differentiation. Therefore, a more complete analysis need to take the educational system into account, as it defines numerous aspects of university life. As illustrated in scenarios 7 and 8, unfamiliar priorities in assessment methods, teaching methods and even academic reasoning can be the root of misunderstandings and frustration amongst Asian students in New Zealand (Selvarajah, 2006). Critical class participation and being an active student is a core element of successful studying in New Zealand. For Chinese international students, this poses a severe challenge (Excerpt 1).

4. Evaluation and Commentary

In general, the crux of constructing scenarios for an intercultural sensitizer appears to be finding the balance between rather obvious vs. rather intricate incidents. The more obvious a situation is and the more clearly the different alternatives can be discounted, the more likely it might be to actually be able to successfully validate them on a sample of respective cultural experts. Then again, the more complicated the incident and the harder the actual determination of the best answer, the greater the expected sensitization for multilayered cultural differences could be. It seems difficult, if not impossible to predict which incidents will eventually prove to expose cultural differences most distinctively. Obviously, this is why the validation is such an important step in the process of developing an intercultural sensitizer. The ability to construct incidents like could be compared to the ability to formulate survey questions: without putting one's formulations to the test with a sample, the actual feeling for how feasible results will be produced is hard to acquire.

The experience of conducting a focus group and an interview was more fertile in terms of personal practical experience than in terms of actual contribution to the development of the incidents. The topics that surfaced were often adhering to a rather superficial perception of culture, such as language, weather and what NZs do with their leisure time. The cultural ascendancies on psychological concepts such as individualism barely surfaced, with for example communication problems exhaustively reduced to language issues. In this sense it

might have proven more illuminating to gather data from students of social sciences, such as e.g. psychology or sociology. Then again, since the purpose is to construct scenarios close to everyday experiences, it made sense to gather data from students of other subjects.

On the level of personal skills, the interview and focus group exposed how difficult it is to 'extract' information in such settings without heavily biasing the retrieval of just that information. For example, asking questions with a certain concept at the back of one's mind can speed up the process as much as it can distort it. Apparently, a balance has to be struck between exploring the width vs. the depth of the interviewees' experiences, since attempting both simultaneously is challenging at the least.

In addition to this realization the opportunity to listen to the recordings of one's own style of interviewing was revealing as well as entertaining. As an interviewer, one might be inclined to rephrase questions to make sure a certain aspect comes across. However, if a question is rephrased once or twice before actually giving the interviewees a chance to respond, it can perceptibly inhibit their ability to respond intuitively.

To conclude, the experience of construction the scenarios was varied and worthwhile and curiosity was sparked concerning the results of the validation of the incidents.

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APPENDIX A

SCENARIO 1: The New Movie

(Ownership)

Feng lives in a dormitory, sharing a flat with 4 other students. One of his flatmates, Jackson, lives in the room right next to his. They like to chat about all kinds of things, and often they show each other their new favourite music and movies. One day, Feng comes home and sees that the new movie by the director they both like is lying on the kitchen table. He assumes that Jackson just bought it and is really curious about how the director has developed his techniques since his last movie. He takes the DVD to his room and watches the movie on his laptop. When Jackson comes home a little later, Feng is excited to tell him what he thinks of the movie. He starts elaborating about how he feels that the director has completely changed his style, but Jackson is irritated and does not seem to want to hear about it. He just asks Feng to please return the DVD back to him right after he finishes the movie.

Why is Jackson irritated?

- a) He just bought the DVD and he wanted to be the one watching it first.
- b) *He might have borrowed it from another friend and does not know if this friend would allow Feng to use it. (italics indicate viable alternative)*
- c) **He feels that Feng should have asked him first before watching the DVD. (bold text indicates correct answer)**
- d) He had waited with watching the DVD because he wanted to watch it together with Feng. Now he is disappointed that Feng did not do the same.

SCENARIO 2: Presenting in English

(Hierarchies and Authority, Saving Face)

Xie studies biology in New Zealand. Her English skills improve quickly, but she is still having a hard time giving presentations. In one of her classes though, most of the assessment is done through several presentations. She knows it will be difficult, but she wants to challenge herself and the topic, marine biology, is one of her favourites. During her first presentation she has some language difficulties, but she feels like she tried hard and improved a lot since the last time. It was also a difficult topic with lots of complicated terminology, even for the native English speakers in her class. Afterwards though, she is crestfallen when the lecturer gives her his feedback: "It was so hard to understand you, I'm sorry, but I cannot grade content that is not communicated clearly. You will have to improve your English a lot, otherwise I cannot let you pass this class, since the assessment is done through presentations. It is not fair for the other students." Xie believes this is unfair, since she is trying hard and her English is not worse than that of many other international students. However, she does not want to argue with her lecturer, so she says she will work on her English as much as possible.

When Xie later tells her good friend Jill about the incident, her friend tells her she knows that lecturer and thinks it is hard to talk with him about such a topic. Therefore, she recommends going to the lecturer's superior and inform him about how she was treated. Xie does not want to do this and says she will find a way to get better. Jill cannot understand why she would just accept the situation and she tries to convince Xie that she needs to do something. Eventually, Jill is able to get Xie to go with her to the lecturer's superior and complain. The superior says he will talk to the lecturer about the situation, however, he thinks he can understand both sides, since this is a common problem both sides have to try to arrange themselves with. Jill is satisfied that at least he will talk to the lecturer and she is glad she could help Xie.

How does Xie feel?

- a) She is grateful to Jill for helping her. At least she did something about the situation.
- b) She is impressed by how brave Jill is, she feels like she is too shy to be able to do something like this on her own.
- c) She is disappointed that there will be no larger consequences for the lecturer than just a talk with his superior.
- d) She thinks in the future she will try to complain more often in this way, since otherwise nothing is going to change about the way she is being treated.
- e) **She knows Jill just wanted to help her, but she really regrets that Jill was able to convince her to complain.**

SCENARIO 3: A Night Out

(Individualism/Collectivism, Interpersonal Relations)

After turning in an important and challenging assignment, Li, a Chinese international student in New Zealand goes out to the bars in town with some of his classmates to relax after the hard work of the last week. Li had been working on a group assignment together with Sarah and Ben, and they became friends along the way. They go from bar to bar, enjoying themselves along the way and savouring the fact that they do not have to get up early in the morning to get back to their studies. At 10pm, Sarah lets the others know that she is tired and that she is going to walk home. She is surprised when Li says that he will accompany her. She really does not want him to go home already because of her, since he is obviously not tired and still having fun. Also, the city is not dangerous at this time and she has walked home at this hour on many occasions. Ben is disappointed, and tells Li he should stay and keep on celebrating with him. However, Li says even though he is enjoying himself, he does not mind going now.

What could be a likely explanation for Li wanting to walk Sarah home?

- a) **He thinks it would be impolite to let her go home by herself.**
- b) He likes her, and he would like to have some time to talk to her alone.
- c) He is being careful, since something might happen to her even though the city is not supposed to be very dangerous at this time.
- d) He was tired, but he did not really want to show it. Now he sees an opportunity to go home, since he is not the only one leaving.

SCENARIO 4: Different Approaches to Psychology

(Ownership)

Zhou just arrived in New Zealand a short while ago to participate in a postgraduate program in psychology. He is curious about the differences in the approaches towards the subject and he hopes he can contribute to discussions by providing the other students with a glimpse of the Chinese perspective. In the third week he already has an important assignment due, which is supposed to discuss exactly these culturally different approaches to psychology. He is excited about this assignment and puts a lot of thought and work into it, elaborating his first impressions in New Zealand along the way. He also includes many things he has learned in China that he thinks would be new and interesting for the lecturer to read about. Eventually he is very satisfied with the result and has a good feeling when the lecturer is giving them their grades and feedback in class. To his surprise, he gets a C- on his assignment, and the lecturer wrote in bright red letters: "It is a very interesting paper and I enjoyed reading it. However, it is dangerously close to open plagiarism, since some of the things you write appear to be quoted directly from somebody else's work, without any clarification where it comes from! You have to reference the sources of at least some of the basic research that is underlying your argumentation!" Zhou is disappointed about his grade, and he is not sure he really understands what went wrong.

Why is Zhou confused?

- a) He knew that the lecturer would be critical about his references, but he thought writing an interesting account on his perspective would be more important.
- b) He used to have only the best grades back home and he cannot understand why this should be different this time, since he had worked even harder than usual.
- c) **He feels like those were his own ideas, since he wrote most of the text himself and only included a few longer quotes.**
- d) *He does not understand why he has to reference everything and wonders what exactly he should have done differently.*

SCENARIO 5: The Lecturer's Niece

(Guanxi / Interpersonal Relations)

Zhang is studying economics in New Zealand. She is very ambitious and wants to bring honour to her family by getting a good education in New Zealand and creating a foundation for a successful business career in China. One of her flatmates, Wendy, went to China for her last break, and Zhang offered to contact her family so Wendy could stay with them in Beijing for a couple of days. Wendy is still excited about their generosity and hospitality, and she hopes she will be able to return the favour one day by inviting Zhang to stay at her parent's house.

A couple of weeks later, Zhang knocks on Wendy's door. She tells her about how she has a very bad feeling about an exam she just took in one of her classes. Wendy mentions that the lecturer of that class is actually her uncle. Zhang says: "I know, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Can you please talk to him, so that I don't fail the exam? I will get into a lot of trouble if I fail it, I can't let that happen. Can you please do that for me?" Wendy is shocked that Zhang would actually ask her to do this, even though she feels sorry for Zhang and she would like to help her. She can't think of what she should actually say to her uncle, and tells her this. Zhang leaves, obviously desperate and disappointed. Afterwards their relationship is not as good as before, and Wendy wondered what went wrong. Did Zhang really expect her to convince her uncle to cheat?

Which cultural differences are causing this difficult situation?

- a) *Zhang does not think helping her this way would be a big deal for Wendy, since it is common in China.*
- b) **Wendy did not realize that Zhang might have expected her to do this to return the favour of being able to stay with Zhang's family in Beijing.**
- c) Even though Zhang knew it would be an unusual request, she wanted to try because she was absolutely desperate.
- d) *Zhang was assuming that Wendy was close to her uncle, which is not necessarily true.*

SCENARIO 6: The Goal-keeper

(Individualism/Collectivism)

Zeng has been living in New Zealand for a few weeks and he has already made several good Kiwi friends. Some of them are football (soccer) players, just like Zeng, so they decide to form a team and sign up for a football tournament. Most of the others are more experienced than him, but he is sure if he tries hard enough he will be able to keep up. The team does not have a goal-keeper, and nobody likes to be the goalie. Before the first game, they were discussing who could be goalie and after a while Zeng says he will do the job. The game is intense and many other friends and classmates are there, cheering for every action. Eventually the team manages to win. Zeng had been in the goal the whole time. After the game the team is cheering and congratulating each other on the win. Zeng, however, does not feel like cheering with them.

Why does Zeng not feel like celebrating the victory?

- a) *Even though he wants the team to be successful, he does not care about winning as much as the others probably do.*
- b) He feels that as a goal-keeper he did not contribute as much to the game as he would have playing in the field.
- c) **Even though he said he would be goal-keeper, he would have liked somebody to come up and replace him and let him play in the field.**
- d) He is confused that before nobody except him was volunteering as a goal-keeper.
- e) He feels that the others maybe do not expect him to play well, which is why they let him play goalie for the whole game.

SCENARIO 7: The grammar class

(Saving Face, Learning Styles)

Josh is a postgraduate teaching student at a University in New Zealand. He works as an English-as-a-second-language teacher, teaching English grammar to groups of around 10 international students at a time. Most of the students he teaches are Chinese. In his experience, they are very disciplined and hard-working, and he is impressed by how quickly they are improving their grammar skills. On many occasions though, he has experienced certain situations in class that he cannot really get his head around. Whenever tries to explain an especially complicated topic, he frequently asks his students whether they can still follow him, since he knows from his studies that it is important not to lose any of them. However, in most cases they imply 'yes, we are still following you', independent of whether they actually are, or not. He found out about this by asking them to find examples for what he just explained, and often they have a very hard time doing so.

He wonders, what could be the reason for this behaviour?

- a) The students are trying to appear competent. They do not like to admit that they sometimes have difficulties understanding the lessons.
- b) *The students do not want to interrupt the class with their individual questions concerning the language lessons.*
- c) **The students do not want to give the impression that Josh is not explaining it well enough, which is why they sometimes pretend they understood everything.**
- d) The students do not expect to be able to understand most of the lessons in class. They hope they will grasp it later when studying on their own.

SCENARIO 8: Grades

(Learning Styles, Individualism/Collectivism)

Lin just started studying in New Zealand, and he is very excited when the lecturer in one of his favourite classes announces their grades for their first presentations and their participation in the classroom during the first weeks. He gets a B and is proud of himself, since it was really hard for him to try to participate in class as much as the others do.

Afterwards, he talks to one of his classmates, Marc. Marc had been interrupting class a lot, always voicing his own perspective of what they had been studying. Lin also thinks that his presentation had been strange, because he mainly commented on the readings instead of actually summarizing their content. After all this, he is surprised and confused to hear that Marc got an A+.

Why is Lin confused by the assessment?

- a) He is ambitious and thought he would be at least as good as Marc.
- b) He did not think that Marc was working very hard and he is wondering how he still managed to get an A+.
- c) He thinks Marc is very self-centred and that should not be rewarded.
- d) **He is not used to students voicing their own critical opinions as much as Marc and he did not expect the lecturer to like it.**

SCENARIO 9: Student Accommodation

(Hierarchies and Authority)

Chen just came to New Zealand, and he is about to move into his room at a student accommodation. When he arrives though, somebody is still living in his room. He goes to talk to the student organizing this student accommodation, Will. Will tells him that a friend of his is living in that room for a while, and he will have to live in another room before being able to move to that one. Chen wonders why Will's friend is not living in this other room, but he does not say anything.

What might the reason for Chen not to say anything to Will?

- a) He thinks that this might not be a completely unusual situation.
- b) *He believes there are reasons for this he does not need to know about.*
- c) He does not mind living in another room for a while.
- d) **He accepts what Will says, since he is in the student organizing the accommodation.**

SCENARIO 10: Basketball

(Saving Face)

Bao is a very active student who loves to play basketball, so he decides to join the university basketball hobby league. One day, during a very intense game, one player keeps fouling him violently. Seeing this, one of his team-mates comes up to him and asks: "How can you stay calm with him fouling you like that all the time? Let him know that you are not going to take it!" The other player keeps shoving and pushing all through the rest of the game. Bao though keeps playing fairly like before, even though he is annoyed.

What could be the reason for Bao to remain calm?

- a) He does not want to lose his temper and show that he is angry.
- b) He is not very competitive and does not mind if the others win, even if they are playing unfair.
- c) He is not used to be playing roughly, so he does not know what to do.
- d) He does not think it is worth bothering, since it is just a game for a hobby league.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group

Interviewer = IV, Interviewees 1, 2 & 3 = A, B, C

Excerpt 1 (Focus Group)

IV: "Is studying in New Zealand similar to the way you study in China?"

A: "The students here are more active. In China students are relatively passive. We wait with our questions mostly until after the class."

IV: "Why do you prefer it this way?"

B: "Shy...?"

A: "Not really, but because I do not want to interrupt the lecture."

IV: "What do you think about the students here interrupting the lectures with questions or even critical remarks?"

A: "I think it is too much. Especially when it doesn't seem necessary. Maybe they should sometimes think if it is really worth interrupting the lecture."

Excerpt 2 (Focus Group)

IV: "Can you think of any situations where the relationship between the lecturers and the students really surprised you?"

C: "Yeah, the relationship seems to be more like a friendship. I remember we had to turn in an assignment and the students added some pictures of the lecturer's bald head to their assignment, and writing something funny about it"

IV: "And the lecturer saw it?"

C: "Yeah, yeah."

IV: "Could you do something like that in China?"

A: "No, our relationship with the teachers is just like, teachers and students."

B: "Sometimes it depends on the person, I talk to my teachers a lot, and very friendly."

C: "I do not really do that in China and I think it's unusual."

Excerpt 3 (Focus Group)

IV: "Have you noticed differences in the way you behave with your friends, for example in a group of friends?"

A: "I find that many Kiwi students are quite independent."

IV: "They might have a lecture where they do not know anybody and they don't mind?"

A: "Yes, some of them seem to be always alone."

IV: "You would not expect that in China?"

C: "No. I think Chinese people always like to stick to a group. They do not want to be alone. And it is not polite to leave people alone."

A: "If people are alone, it is weird. People think you are not good if nobody is with you. They wonder, 'why is nobody with him?' So then they do not want to group with you."

B: "I'm alone a lot and I do not think it is strange."

C: "So you don't, for example, ask somebody to reserve a seat for you in a lecture?"

B: "No, why? I can sit on the floor."

Interview

Interviewer = IV, Interviewee = D

Excerpt 4 (Interview)

IV: "Why do you think the contact between you and your Chinese classmates is often superficial?"

D: "I guess it is because they tend to stick together so much, speaking their own language, so it's no surprise they have little contact to Kiwi classmates. They have their groups and it doesn't seem like it's easy to just get in there and hang out with them."

Excerpt 5 (Interview)

IV: "Can you remember a situation in which you felt cultural differences were really obvious? Since you've had Chinese flatmates before?"

D: "There were some situations in which one of my Chinese flatmates took some of my things without asking, for example some DVDs. I really didn't mind that much, but I felt that might be something he handled a bit differently in general."