

Exploring Cultural Barriers for Social Inclusion of East Asian International Students at a Dutch University Campus

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ABSTRACT

Exclusion among international students can lead to loneliness and depression. In this explorative study on cultural barriers for social inclusion of East-Asian international students, eleven local Dutch students and nine East Asian international students shared their perspectives on social inclusion and intercultural relations. An interview tool was used to help participants express their perspectives on inclusion and reflect on their own position in the inclusion process. The interview data was analysed using a grounded theory approach. This study shows that cultural differences can lead to exclusion of international students in social events and that the attitude of local students is a relevant factor for inclusion. The results can be used for improving cohesion at international campus communities.

Author Keywords

Authors' choice; of terms; separated; by semicolons; commas, within terms only; this section is required.

CSS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing~Human computer interaction (HCI)**; *Haptic devices*; User studies; Please use the 2012 Classifiers and see this link to embed them in the text: https://dl.acm.org/ccs/ccs_flat.cfm

INTRODUCTION

Social inclusion of international students is an important factor for wellbeing. Social exclusion can result in experiences of loneliness, which can lead to depression and suicidal behaviour [28, 29]. For successful integration students not only need to succeed in their study but also participate in the student culture outside of the learning environment [16]. Cultural distance and existing social networks of local students can influence social integration of international students [13, 17].

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Universities are getting more awareness on their responsibility on the wellbeing of international students [15, 31, 33, 34]. At western universities, events are an important part of integrating and connecting with others [30]. Universities should strive to promote social interaction between all students with the goal of building a diverse community and shape a sense of connectedness for all cultures [16, 33].

Having a diverse student body has many benefits for both students and universities [13, 16, 31]. The university is enriched by new perspectives, viewpoints and ideas [15]. Cross cultural participation sparks cultural awareness and the abilities to recognize cultural differences in thinking and acting, which improves the intercultural competence and international attitude of local students [6]. Despite the rich benefits of intercultural interaction, the behaviour of local students can form a barrier for social inclusion [14] and internationals experience a social barrier when interacting with local students [11].

Loneliness of international students is strongly connected to cultural barriers for social interaction [14]. Because East Asian student experience the most difficulties with social and academic integration, the focus is on East Asian students [7]. This research aims to identify cultural barriers for intercultural interaction between Dutch local students and East Asian International students. The researcher hypothesizes that the attitude of local students plays an important role in the social inclusion of internationals and that cultural barriers in the inclusion process exclude internationals due to cultural differences. To learn about the role of cultural differences in social inclusion this study addresses the following research questions:

What are cultural differences in perspectives on inclusion?

How do students perceive their role in the inclusion process?

What are perspectives on intercultural social interaction?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Exclusion at Universities

Social exclusion of international students is a complex problem that is well addressed among scholars. After moving to the host country, international students lose existing social support structures such as family and friends [17]. The students have difficulties replacing these relations in the community of the host country [13]. Cultural distance and different worldviews make it more difficult for students with a non-western cultural background to integrate at western universities [13]. In particular the students with an East Asian background [7, 18]. There are reports of disrespect towards international students [34]. Chinese international students report issues such as discrimination, superior attitude of local students, not being taken seriously in the classroom and local students carrying images of exaggerated preconceptions and stereotypes. They feel that these issues remain no matter how much effort they put in themselves [11].

Role of local students in inclusion

It becomes evident that the attitude of local students plays an important role in the integration of internationals. International students desire to interact with local students but have difficulties expressing themselves due to a lack of knowledge on language, cultural references and communication [13]. Local students are unwilling to interact with international students and form friendships [11, 18]. Loneliness is strongly linked to obstacles for social interaction in the host country [14]. These barriers seem to be a problem of the local culture rather than a lack of effort of internationals. Considering the importance of local students' behaviour in the inclusive process raises the question, what is the role of local students in the social inclusion of internationals? According to Forbes-Mewett & Nyland (2007) social inclusion should be an act upon by all students in a community:

“improving relations between the international students and the local students need to be addressed from a holistic perspective where both cultures can adapt to a new set of circumstances rather than expecting international students to forgo their original culture to adopt to the unchanging culture of the host country”

Despite the fact that local students benefit from intercultural interaction, their social behaviour forms a barrier for social inclusion [18]. To our knowledge there is no literature regarding the reasons of local students for avoiding social interaction with internationals. This study takes in account local students' attitude on intercultural and how it affects social inclusion.

Cohesion at a diverse Campus Community

In his work on constructing belonging in a diverse campus community, Cooper (2009), writes about embracing diversity and creating a sense of belonging for all cultures at

a campus community without making a specific distinction between locals and internationals. To create a sense of belonging at a diverse campus community, it is vital that institutions embrace cultural diversity. Students need to have the feeling they are being cared about. Facilitating an affinity for student groups connects students to the campus community. Recognizing multiple cultures and identifying values that unify these cultures shape a collective identity [16]. According to Cooper's model, the components that support a construction of belonging are *involvement, identity, support and recognition*. The research conducted by Cooper was done from a western perspective, and it has not been validated if this model generalizes to non-western cultures as well. Therefore, there might be barriers that are inherently connected to cultural differences.

Intercultural Competence

There are many ways in addressing intercultural interaction [1, 3, 4, 8]. However, several scholars state the value of intercultural competence related to internationalization efforts of universities [10]. Despite the large body of literature, scholars throughout the past three decades have not agreed on how intercultural competence should be defined [10]. In search of a definition, Deardorff (2016) shares three prevalent elements to describe intercultural competence being: *awareness, valuing, and understanding of cultural differences; experiencing other cultures; and self-awareness of one's own culture*.

Bennet describes intercultural competence by analysing a persons' worldview and communicative abilities [12]. According to Bennet, intercultural sensitivity is the ability to have a more complex experience of otherness and intercultural competence is a result of this sensitivity in the forming of behaviour to create meaning across different cultural contexts. The complexity in one's experience of otherness is the basis for the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.

By means of a model the perceptual structures of otherness can be better understood. The model separates worldviews in stages of “otherness” dividing them between worldviews of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. The model consists of 5 temporal stages that model the process, each stage has its own characteristic perceptual structure of otherness: *denial; defence; minimization; acceptance; adaptation; integration*.

Intercultural competence is a valuable aspect of social inclusion and measurement of it is complex. However inconclusive on the definition, it seems clear that the development of intercultural competence always starts with an attitude of awareness and openness [10]. And that the development of one's cultural competence is dependent on the need to become more competent in communication across different cultures [12]. However, it is not clear how this attitude comes about, and how it influences social interaction between cultures.

RESEARCH GOAL

Connecting cultures

The ultimate goal is to improve the connection between international students and local students so that all students can benefit from the culturally rich campus body [17]. This is challenging since people tend to prefer social interaction with people of similar cultural background [18]. In order to connect students from different cultures, this study aims to learn more about cultural- and systemic barriers for intercultural interaction by looking at students' their perspectives on inclusion, their intercultural competence, and its effect on intercultural interaction. We explore the barriers for social interaction between local Dutch students and east Asian international students with the goal to find cultural friction areas that prevent social inclusion of internationals. The insights can be used to improve community cohesion at university campus and reduce the exclusion and loneliness experienced by international students.

Due to the complex nature of this topic, an explorative approach is deemed appropriate. The research builds partially on the field approach within the Constructive Design Research Methodology [23]. The process is iterative and builds on previous learnings and is a suitable approach to guide through this complexity. This study consists of two iterations, the first being an explorative co-design workshop on inclusion events and the second being in depth-interviews with an interview tool.

METHOD

Iteration #1: Co-Design Workshop

The first experiment consists of a co-design workshop on barriers for inclusion (Figure 1). The purpose of the workshop is explorative. It provides a rich set of insights through both process and output. The goal of the workshop is to explore common addressed topics and frictions on inclusion in the perspectives of both locals and internationals. The workshop is also a behavioural experiment where we observe the social dynamics during the workshop addressing the following questions:

- How do students act with different cultures present?
- How do students respond to social nudges?
- What are perspectives on inclusion?
- What are barriers for interaction?

Participants

The participants were acquired via snowball sampling. The workshop was done with 9 participants of mixed cultures: 2 Dutch, 5 Chinese, 1 Taiwanese, 1 Bolivian. We chose to underrepresent the Dutch participants to see if that would stimulate the social interaction of both locals and internationals during the workshop.

Study Design

Upon entering participants received a consent form and a short questionnaire asking about their demographics and social preferences. During the co-design session we start with sketching a dream scenario for inclusion, followed by an ideation on personal and contextual barriers that prevent that scenario from being a reality. Next participants form mixed groups and freely combine parts of different dream scenarios with a barrier and brainstorm on opportunities in that area. Finally, every group presented their work and the concepts were discussed in the group.



Figure 1. The co-design workshop setting

Cultural probes [35] and collaboration were used to stimulate the social behaviour of participants during the workshop. In the start of the workshop Asian snacks were placed at the table and there was some time reserved for social interaction. Also, halfway through the workshop, the participants were requested to make groups with mixed cultures before proceeding.

Data Analysis

The social dynamics are studied in a participant observation. One of the researchers observed social dynamics and the effect of the stimulants on social interaction. During the workshop the researcher observed the initiation of social contact across cultures. A video recording was made of the room to review the observations afterwards. The ideas that were generated during the session are collected and processed by the researchers in a thematic analysis.

Workshop Data Findings

The results of the workshop were analysed in a thematic analysis [19]. To prevent a cultural and personal bias, the data analysis was done in collaboration with an east Asian international student [20]. Seven themes came from the thematic analysis (Appendix B) of the generated workshop data:

(1) Perceived negative attitude of others: Internationals perceive that others are not interested in them. (2) Social Norms: Participants are afraid of doing something that is culturally unacceptable which prevents them from taking initiative. (3) Different Interests: Participants state that different cultures have different interests and that this forms a barrier for finding common interests. (4) Already formed groups: Participants see closed social groups as a barrier for

engaging in social interaction. (5) Lack of external opportunity: Participants state that they would like more activities to bring people together. Because there are too little opportunities to connect to students of other culture. (6) Fear of new things: Participants are afraid to step out of their comfort zone especially when they have to do it alone. This is more applicable for introverts. (7) Investment: Not willing to invest in social interaction due to being busy with other activities or because of staying for time that is too short to build relationships.

Observation Findings

The snacks only encourage interaction between same-culture students. It's noticed that there is no social contact between cultures prior to the moment where participants are forced to form groups. After this intervention the atmosphere changed notably. Participants became more comfortable engaging with other cultures and appear to enter a different mindset. It stands out that both cultures don't take any initiative in engaging interaction. To learn more about this behaviour, the next iteration dives deeper into the subject of initiative and responsibility.

Iteration #2: Stakeholder Responsibility Tool

From iteration #1 it became apparent that there is a friction in the initiation of contact and the motivation to invest in social relations. Based on this observation the responsibility of inclusive actions is chosen as the topic for further study. What do people expect from each other and who do they find should take responsibility? To provide rich insights about these frictions a tool is designed to guide the interviews.

Design Stakeholder Tool

The purpose of the tool (Figure 3) is to facilitate a discussion during the session by giving participants a platform to express their perspectives and reflect on them. Based on the theories of participatory sensemaking [21] and stakeholder mapping [22] the tool allows for expressing perspectives on a complex system in a physical manner. This supports participants in considering, understanding and discussing their statements. Since it is otherwise difficult to talk about these complex structures, the tool supports a deeper level of interviewing. This process makes participants more aware of the complexity of this problem and allows them to reflect on their own role in this process. The field represents the landscape of stakeholders in the inclusive process and the markers represent relevant stakeholders.

Participants

The recruitment of participants was acquired via snowball sampling. The interviews were done in groups of two or three. The groups were divided by cultural background to make sure participants felt comfortable expressing themselves. A total of 8 sessions was done with 20 participants, 6 Chinese, 3 Taiwanese, 11 Dutch.

Study Design

The study was held in a meeting room (Figure 2). Data was acquired through a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and the Stakeholder Tool.



Figure 2. The study set-up

Sessions

The session started with explaining the purpose of the study and the role of the Stakeholder Tool during the interview (Appendix C). After that, the sessions consisted of three stages: discussing responsible stakeholders for the inclusion goals, open discussion, filling in the intercultural sensitivity questionnaire.

There are three goals defined which represent the challenges that international students face whilst finding inclusion. Based on interventions of loneliness [24] and insights of the iteration #1. The goals are: *learn about culture*; *meet new people*; *get social support*. These goals form the structure of the interview. Every goal is addressed individually and for every goal the participants are asked to discuss which stakeholders they consider relevant in achieving this goal. The aim to spark a discussion among participants. After discussing all goals, the participants are asked to place themselves in the field to make them reflect on their position and responsibilities in the process.

After the interviews there is a discussion to address the topics that weren't discussed during the process (Appendix C).

To search for connections between perspectives on inclusion and intercultural sensitivity of the participants, a questionnaire on intercultural sensitivity was handed out after the session [25].



Figure 3. Stakeholder Responsibility Tool

Data Collection

During the sessions the audio of the interviews was recorded. After the interview, the final state of the Stakeholder Tool is photographed. The questionnaire data is processed in an excel sheet. For timing purposes, the interviews are selectively transcribed taking into account the following criteria.

- The quote is related to the topic of social inclusion.
- The quote helps understand the perspective of the participant.

Data Analysis

Given the nature of this study, the analysis was performed using a qualitative method for the construction of theory through the analysis of qualitative data, called Grounded Theory [26]. Grounded Theory has become an important method in social sciences and is meant to serve exploratory research aimed at understanding a phenomenon through inductive reasoning on qualitative data.

The data analysis of the transcriptions is based on the grounded theory approach to coding [27]. Analytic memos are used to document growth in reasoning whilst coding the data. Through three cycles, the codes are reviewed and clustered into categories. The relevance and quantities of the codes were taken into account when shaping appropriate categories.

Due to time constraints, the coding was conducted by one researcher. To determine the effect of this approach on the data, the first interview was coded by two researchers separately. Whilst comparing the codes of the two researchers, it became apparent that the results were similar enough to proceed with coding individually.

FINDINGS

The data from the questionnaire did not show any significant results. From the analysis of the interview transcriptions, six themes arose. The themes are discussed on in the next section.

1: Roles of the Students

It is commonly addressed by nearly all participants that it is the responsibility of the international student to take initiative in social contact. It's mentioned by both international- and local participants that the contribution of a local student could be valuable in supporting inclusion, however, it is not considered a responsibility. International participants state that local students should be more pro-active in including other cultures. Several internationals have experiences of disrespect and state that local students should be more respectful and open to other cultures. However, none of the local participants feels responsible for supporting the social inclusion of internationals. Most local students state that they are not interested in investing energy in relationships with international students and that they are not responsible for the social life of others.

P2: Maybe it's the solution that we should do more. But if you would ask me if I would like to do that, I would say no.

P2: Maybe the biggest role of the international student is to be pro-active in that

P2: No I don't feel responsible for that, but I don't feel responsible for anyone else's social life anyway

P4: But the international student wants to make friends? Than they should also take responsibility in this.

P15 Dutch people are quite open if you if you involve them by yourself, they're willing to talk English with you.

2: Role of Organizations

The organization that is considered most important, is the university. Nearly all local participants consider the university responsible for inclusion by informing internationals on the available facilities and stimulating these facilities. They consider that the university should take responsibility for facilitating inclusion.

P4: I actually think that the university can only have a facilitating role but cannot really ensure that people actually integrate with each other

P3: I think the TU does play a role, at least in facilitating, giving opportunities to meet new people, so promoting student associations, study associations and intro-week.

P6: The university is crucial in the provision of information.

P14: I would say university at the in the beginning can give you some guide to show, like where you can go and what you can use.

Local students consider associations an important part of social life. However, they also state that associations take little effort in attracting international students and communicate in the local language. International students address that the dominance of the local culture in associations makes it uninteresting for them to join.

P4: If you look at the student associations, they refuse to speak English, and they don't have any international students.

P14: For example, in the study association, I think all the board members are Dutch. Most of the people they're Dutch so I think it would be nice that the associations initiate to recruit more international board members or committee members.

The government is mentioned as a stakeholder mainly by local students, they consider the municipality as an appropriate stakeholder in facilitating housing and informing about culture. Internationals are not interested in events by the government. Some international- and local participants

state that housing agencies should play a role in the social cohesion at a campus living environment. The living environment of internationals is usually separately organized. Finding accommodation can be difficult for internationals since local students prefer roommates with the same background.

3: Barriers for Interaction

How social life is valued, is personal. According to several participants, students who stay less long are less interested in social interaction with locals. Some students are focused on academic success and have no interest in building relations. This influences the motivation to invest in social inclusion.

Language is considered the largest barrier for social interaction. Locals often switch to their native language during small talk. They can be difficult to engage in social contact with locals due to closed social circles. Another frequent barrier is the cultural habit of drinking as a social activity. All international participants dislike drinking. Upon arrival, Chinese participants use different social media channels than local students which forms a barrier to connect online. International participants note that they are not used to the separation of social life and academic life and that the serious attitude at school forms a barrier for building relations. Lastly, differences in interests, lifestyles, norms and values are commonly addressed as barriers for building intercultural relations.

P14: Definitely, not half year but for a full year or three years for example. For them it's like "I just come here to study and have nice grades and then I will just start looking for a job in China" so they don't really care as they have some friends from their home country so that they will survive these years.

P10: Sometimes we can feel like we're not in this group or something.

P15: I don't know how to make friends in the beginning of my life in here. I would wish the school can arrange some teacher or coach or students with same background as you but they have experience in here and they can give you some instruction and teach you how to use social media and how to be open minded how to join the events.

P11: I think language like matters a lot, because in class everyone's speaking Dutch, and we can only speak English, sometimes it's very hard to, get along with others or have a small chat with the people just beside you.

P14: Because it's not an important topic I think it makes sense that they want to do it in Dutch, but for me that's kind of a pity I have to miss that.

P15: It's quite nice but maybe more considering from the perspective of the other culture people, not only arrange drinking.

P14: I would like to join activities like hanging out in around the city, visiting the museum or having a picnic, but not only Dutch drinks, maybe they could consider different activities.

P15: When it's mostly Dutch people they want to social with each other and just talk Dutch.

P12: Normally Dutch students they are together and speak Dutch. So, for us it's hard to be included in the whole discussion.

P13: Yeah but I feel like sometimes in your group meeting you only talk to study related things, and then after the meeting you don't see each other at all.

P14: Yeah, because usually, I became friends with most of the people in the class, but for example, in a squad now, I only know like the people in my group and few others, but the majority I don't really know them because we don't really talk so much.

P2: It seems easier to link them together instead of with the locals.

Most local students state to have no interest in interacting with other cultures. Barriers for investing in intercultural relations relate to putting in extra effort in communication and not finding it worth to invest in relations that will only last for a semester. Several local participants state that they are already very busy and are not interested in making new friends.

P5: I don't want to put a lot of effort into it because I already have a lot of things that I just have to take care of myself.

P4: I am open to it but I am not looking for it. And because we only have local students at the student association, that doesn't help, since I'm mainly concerned with that in my free time.

P5: We don't always want to speak English in our own time either.

P3: You don't get much in return because they are often gone after six months.

P4: I also think that the threshold is high for local students, that they think "ah with internationals, you have to put effort into it and you have the culture barriers and stuff".

4: International Community

It becomes evident that the international students have community separated from the local community. Internationals prefer to make contact with people from their own culture or other internationals prior to locals. International participants like to share experiences with people who have encountered the same cultural differences. International students invest in meeting people with the same background.

Online groups play a large role in this information exchange. There are various online groups with different purposes. Groups where former students and other internationals with the same background give tips and advise on practical issues. Other online groups help to find and meet people in the same building, university or city. The groups are only mentioned by Chinese participants.

P3: They keep hanging out with other internationals because they are in the same situation.

P7: For example, someone from China can explain to another Chinese what the cultural differences are because they have already experienced the differences. We cannot explain what the differences are because we don't know what the culture is like there. We can only mention characteristics of our own culture, but we do not know whether that differs from the culture there.

P14: Normally we would have an official group for these kind of people with just one person organized a lot at first and the group members send invitations to many other followings students.

P14: Also the former students, when I first came here, everything is unfamiliar for the operations of our department and also which course is a very good course to choose, which coach is horrible and don't choose them. So these kind of tips are useful tips to ask former students.

P15: We have a lot of groups, for example only the TU Eindhoven students or the all Eindhoven students.

P14: Like some Chinese students in the same year as us. they did the premaster or bachelor here so they know more and I will ask them a lot of questions.

5: Learning Culture

Learning culture happens both through teaching, and through experiencing culture by engaging with it. Multiple participants state that learning a culture is a different experience for people depending on their background and personality. Teaching culture is found less suitable than experiencing it. The social circle is considered most relevant in learning and experiencing culture. Several participants mention that there could be a role for the local student in learning culture, buddy systems are often addressed as example. International participants consider it difficult to judge if something that they consider inappropriate is just a cultural difference or is actually inappropriate.

P12: Culture is quite abstract, so learning by doing it's the best way to do.

P13: Sometimes I don't know if I am polite enough or not. But, you know, other people will not tell me so I don't know, I need to figure out it by myself.

P15: Learning the culture is nice, but when you've learned it is always feel It's like you read it in a book,

but when you experience it your like :Oh, that's the thing".

P12: Because you live here, everyone you've met and everything you've experienced will help you to shape what is the culture here, what you need to deal with and how to deal with other people.

6: Opportunities for Interaction

Although local participants are not willing to put in extra effort in intercultural relations, they state that they enjoy intercultural interaction and that it broadens their horizon.

International participants find it more natural to have social events with a purpose and feel uncomfortable with events that are only about socializing. Several international participants state that having a meal is the natural way of meeting people and building relations. They value informality and openness in events and dislike drinking alcohol. They consider reoccurring events as more effective for building relations in contrast to events where they meet a large amount of people only once. Participants make friends based on shared values or interests, which they consider most likely to occur between people with similar backgrounds.

Most international participants experience that locals are not respecting cultural differences in the campus community. All international participants state that they are interested in events that consider all cultures in order to create a two-way culture exchange instead of a one-way culture exchange that they currently experience whilst attending events. They feel their culture is not represented in the campus community.

P12: When we first came here, for me, I have had the Dutch language course. So during that month, we also recognize a lot of the Chinese students that are coming from different departments.

P12: Because you're learning and also making friends at the same time it's always more natural, I think. In the intro-week they only ask you to make friends and that makes you feel like a little bit weird.

P13: For Chinese people having a meal is a very important way to socialize, it's the natural way.

DISCUSSION

Since there are more locals than internationals, the campus culture is dominated by the local culture. Both internationals and local students experience this. International students have a life separate from the local community. This does not mean that internationals should not have a separate community, it only stretches that every student should be a part of the local community. Associations play a large role in this since, the social life of local student takes place in associations where the needs of international students are not represented.

Considering the role of culture in social inclusion, it becomes evident that cultural differences in social traditions form a barrier for intercultural interaction. Asian culture and

western culture have different norms, values and traditions in regard to social activities, and this study shows that the western social traditions contain barriers that can exclude Asian students. When cultural diversity is not considered in facilitating social inclusion, some cultures are inherently excluded due to these cultural barriers. For example, social events in Dutch universities are regularly combined with drinking alcohol, this often is the main activity during the introduction period. However, drinking alcohol is something most Asian students dislike. This means that the opportunities for social integration depend on the cultural background of the international student. This notion confirms the part of the hypothesis that cultural barriers in the inclusion process can exclude internationals due to cultural differences. In the stimulation of social inclusion these cultural differences should be addressed.

International participants address that they would like to have events where their culture is taken into account. They find it more respectful when there is a two-way culture exchange where everyone can learn from each other. This builds on the perspective of Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, that is discussed in the theoretical background. When taking into account all cultures present at an international campus whilst hosting social events, they can be attended by students of all cultures which in turn has a positive effect on the attitudes of local students towards other cultures.

P15: Yeah. They could also ask some people, who has both experiences like there could be a Chinese-Dutch or something like they could take responsibility to arrange the activity for internationals, since they have a different perspective.

P12: I think workshops really help. It's not a specific topic that could eliminate anyone because it's just about food like everyone needs food everyone interesting about food so everyone would like to join.

P14: Yeah, I think definitely a school that can do something more like for example, they can have like activity based on interests, then you can easily connect with people who enjoy doing similar things together.

P7: It's just the perspective from Dutch people to invite the international but not from the internationals perspective what they usually like. I think it is one way to export the cultural stuff "we are Dutch. So, you come and we are giving the Dutch culture to you to learn" but it's only one way. But if there was some Asian culture event or something which all people can join, that is better chance to communicate with each other, because at that moment you not only discuss about Dutch culture, but you also learn about other cultures, it's like not like one ways culture export but two ways.

P15: The internationals will feel more be respected in that way and they have more strong interest to join as well. Nowadays a lot of people are into cosplay, if they have cosplay party in here I would say that probably a

lot of people will join. In that case you can meet Dutch people who have the same habits as you and then you can make Dutch friends. In that way it will be better, more respectful.

Finally, the findings show how the attitude of local students forms a barrier for social inclusion. Their disinterest in intercultural interaction results in a passive attitude towards other cultures. Local students are not aware of the benefits of intercultural relations and this forms a barrier for social interaction. This is an important opportunity for improvement. By making local students more aware of the benefit of intercultural interaction, their attitude and behaviour towards other cultures can change which would improve social inclusion.

P1: Perhaps as local students we need to better understand what added value we could get out of it.

The final takeaway of this study is that the attitude of local students towards intercultural interaction is an important factor for social inclusion and that cultural barriers can exclude international students based on their background. This can be improved by changing the attitudes of local students towards intercultural interactions by growing awareness on the benefits of intercultural relations and considering all cultures present at the campus whilst promoting social inclusion and hosting events.

Limitations

There are some limitations that should be addressed. Firstly, language played a large role in this study; the word responsibility has a different meaning when translated to Chinese compared to the Dutch translation. This could influence the data and make it look like there is a more extreme response from the Asian participants. Also, some Asian students were not as fluent in English which forced the interviewer to use examples whilst stating questions. This can have led to distortions in the data by unconsciously guiding towards a preferable answer. Moreover, nearly all participants were industrial design students. This could lead to a distorted image of the target group. Also, it is unlikely to find participants who suffer from loneliness through snowball sampling. Finally, the questionnaire on intercultural competence is given after the session. The experience of doing the session was experienced as confronting for some participants which could influence the answers given in the questionnaire.

Future work

Building on the learnings from this study, it would be relevant to explore the interaction with other cultures from the perspective of the local student. How is the attitude on intercultural interaction established and how can people become more open to other cultures so that they can benefit of a culturally diverse campus as a learning environment. For example, by researching how to design events that are interesting for all cultures to join or by exploring the impact of cultural education in intercultural behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In this study cultural barriers for social inclusion of East-Asian international students at a Dutch university campus are explored. The researcher conducted interviews with 11 local Dutch students and 9 international East-Asian students about their perspectives on social inclusion and intercultural interaction with the use of an interview tool. The study shows that cultural barriers in social traditions can exclude international students based on their cultural background. It is also shown, that the attitude of local students towards intercultural interaction can influence the social inclusion of internationals. Further work is proposed relating to the attitudes of local students towards intercultural interactions and approaches to take all cultures present at the campus whilst promoting social inclusion.

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APPENDIX A: REFLECTION

M1.2 PROJECT REFLECTION

Past semester I decided to conduct a project that is relatively far outside of my comfort zone. I was interested in exploring the value of design in more complex and holistic settings and I wanted to learn how design can play a role in addressing problems of a social nature. This complex social problem in combination with little experience in research was quite the challenge. I've experienced many moments where I had no clue how to proceed where I learned that through talking with stakeholders and exchanging ideas with other students, I grew grip and clarity on the project. The aspect of this project that I considered very challenging was deciding on an appropriate direction, method, theory. After the first months of the project I realized that I was too dependent on external validation in making decisions. I adjusted my process gradually and learned to trust my judgement better. In this way of dealing with uncertainty I notably grew my creative confidence.

The nature of the project motivated me to get out in the field in order to better understand what I was working with. By searching for the right people to talk, I learned how to work with the system and find the right stakeholders. This helped me to understand the context appropriately. In my following projects, I would like to take a step further in finding and involving stakeholders in the project. I think that finding the right people to collaborate with, gives projects a completely different dimension. Whilst being hospitalized with a pneumothorax I became aware of the amount of stress that I put on myself during the project. I decided to prevent unnecessary stress for projects, and I focussed on developing more realistic planning skills. I learned to make effective use of the expertise of others and delegated extracurricular tasks that demanded too much time. I've learned to adapt to and restructure my tasks and planning according to the uncertain dynamics of a design project.

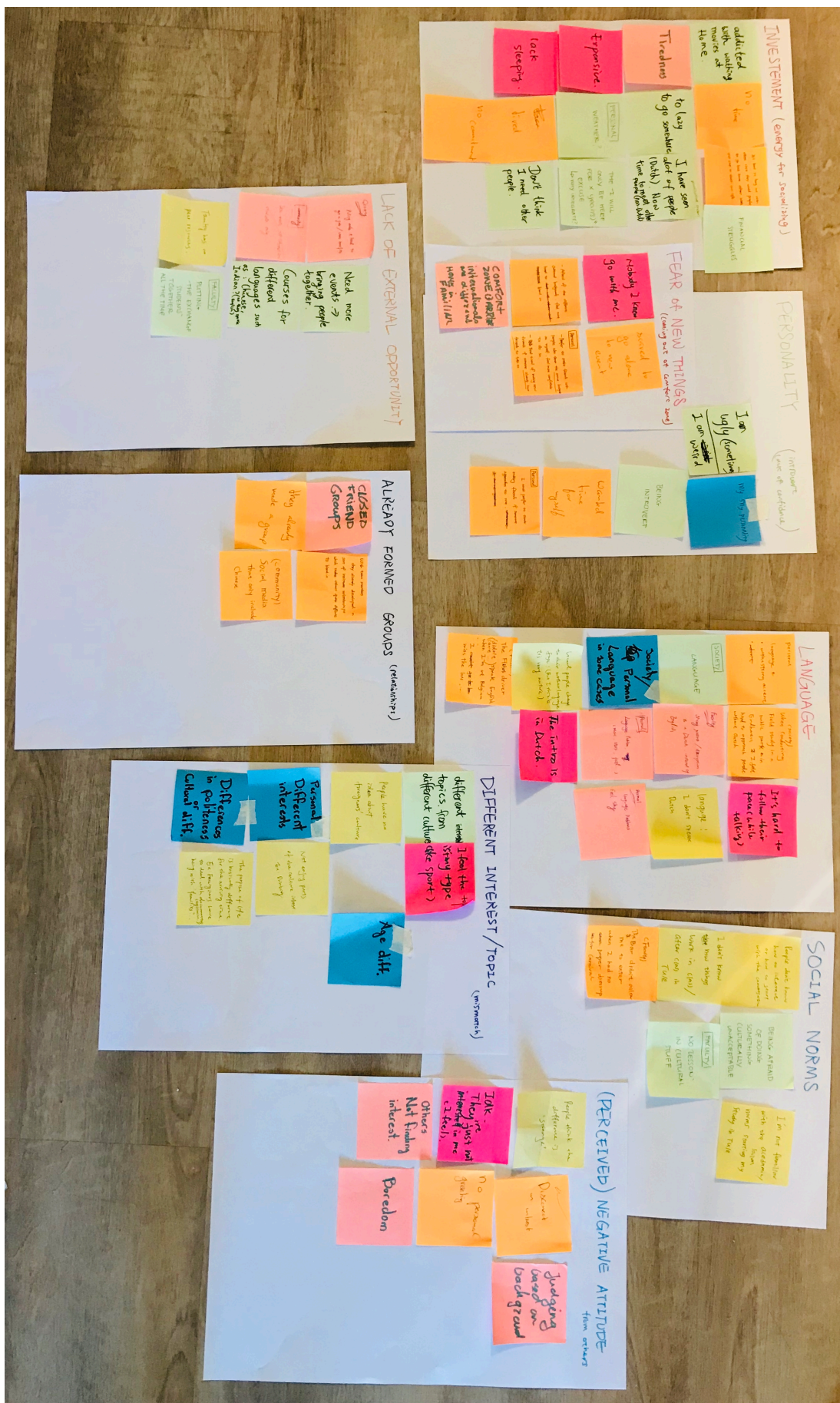
In this project I wanted to learn how to design with the goal of generating knowledge that is not about the designed object. This was something that really inspired me, and I considered it as a very interesting way to incorporate design in research. Switching the purpose of design was very new to me, and I have had endless brainstorming on how this could be done. Since I got lost in the process, I decided to start with a co-design workshop. This helped to understand how design can help the generation of knowledge. After the workshop I did several iterations on the tool and got a deeper understanding on how this can be done. Looking back, I consider the stakeholder tool is a relevant design for this project, but in the future, I would like to make probes more tailored, rich and experienceable. It was a conscious decision to make a simple design because researching the subject was a more relevant challenge for me.

During the project I experienced many challenges related to culture. It was a conscious decision to expose myself to Asian cultures as a preparation for my exchange to Japan. I found it very interesting to work with these cultural differences and it helped me better understand how people from different cultural backgrounds can think different and how to deal with these differences in designing, researching and communicating. Interviewing the participants was a very rich experience that improved my skills as an interviewer and helped me improve my cultural sensitivity and empathy as a designer. Conducting and transcribing the interviews made me more aware of my role as researcher and improved my interviewing skills. Another subject I wanted to learn about in this project, was social psychology. During the extensive literature search in the beginning of the project I got an overview of what social psychology entails and potential roles that it can play in design. In my coming semester I want to learn more about the topic of social psychology by following several courses on the topic.

This project was my first time in dealing with large amounts of data. Coding large amounts of qualitative data in multiple cycles taught me how to process data effectively. Whilst reading about coding and processing the data I learned how to code data appropriately and how to search for relevant patterns, clusters etc. Also, by conducting a thematic analysis of the workshop data and reflecting on quantitative survey data I learned how to work with data in respect to a research project. In the future I would like to use data more early on in my projects to feed the design process.

Alongside the research project I wanted to contribute to improving community cohesion at the faculty. I became a member of the Master Activity Committee and took an initiative in hosting inclusive events. Looking back at this semester, my growth makes me feel quite proud. I enjoyed working in this direction and I would like to take next semester to further explore the role of business and leadership in design when combined with social psychology. Alongside, I hope to grow my cultural competence and cultural empathy during my exchange. I want to learn collaborating with different cultures and become more aware of how my cultural background influences my design approach. Finally, I want to enrich my perspective on design, and the world, by absorbing the Japanese culture.

APPENDIX B: THEMATIC ANALYSIS



APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW FORMAT

Inclusion Responsibility Session

The goal of this experiment is to get a better understanding on the cultural discordances that lead to a lack of social interaction between local-, and international students in particular East Asian.

Steps in the study

1. Fill in the consent form
2. Use Stakeholder Mapping Tool
3. Discussion
4. Questionnaire

Process

Note: this is not a tool to map the current system it is about your perspective on how inclusion should be. What makes sense to you? The tool is a means to consider discrepancies and discuss perspectives on appropriate alternatives. Mainly about the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the social inclusion process of international students.

0. The international student, family, friends & both universities are placed in the field
1. Place a goal (received or made) around the International student
2. Add/remove stakeholders relevant for this goal
3. Connect the goal to the applicable stakeholders
4. Describe the role of the stakeholders in this connection
5. Repeat step 1/5 until all goals are addressed
6. Short Discussion
7. Answer Questionnaire

<https://forms.gle/EkuTu6XA584EYNrH6>



Discussion Questions

1. What would you consider most relevant for social inclusion?
2. Which stakeholders do you consider responsible for this process?
3. Do you think Dutch students need to take more responsibility to include others?
4. Do you think international students need to take more responsibility to include in the Dutch culture?
5. How do you value intercultural relationships?
6. What did/do you do to promote inclusion for yourself?
7. What did/do you do to get in contact with internationals?