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Student and Teacher's Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

By

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Thesis for the degree of PhD in Applied Linguistics for English Teaching

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Abstract

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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After the announcement of the World Health Organisation (2020) to classify COVID-19 as global pandemic (Crawford, 2020), the education system has undergone a transformation to be fully online in considerable number of educational institutions. Web-based learning resources were already integrated into education before the pandemic, but its integration deepened during the outbreak as it became even more essential tool for teaching and learning. The pandemic resulted in the temporary closure of schools and universities; international higher education, in particular, has been heavily influenced by how the virus spread across affected countries (d'Orville, 2020). Accordingly, this study investigated the abrupt change in learners' and teachers' engagement with educational systems after the outbreak of COVID-19. The focus was investigating the perception of the unexpected and forced transition in the education system and the extend of influence of this change on the roles and identity positioning of students and teachers of higher education. The programme used for data collection was the 11-week virtual Pre-sessional Programme offered by the University of Southampton. It is a full-time intensive academic programme that aims to improve international and EU students' capability and confidence in using academic English language for their further study. As this is phenomenologically-informed research, it is interested in understanding the experience, as its purpose is collecting information in order to illustrate the perception of individuals or groups of people (Lester, 1999). The research instruments used in this study were documentation analysis, classroom observation, and unstructured and semi-structured interview.

The results of this study revealed that there were lower than desired levels of student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and teacher-teacher interaction during, and sometimes beyond, live classes. Participants highlighted the importance of academic and social interaction within the educational environment. This was despite the availability of different features on the used online platforms such as chat, camera, and sound functions, and despite the various factors that facilitate communication. The experience of undertaking this programme during this time of the pandemic was stressful and isolating, and the majority of participants seemed to lack a sense of shared ingroup membership during this time.

Based on the findings, teachers often relied on traditional teaching methods in the online setting due to the sudden nature of transition. This shift introduced power dynamics that placed the teacher as the authority figure, which conflicted with the declared learner-centred philosophy of online education adopted by the programme. Teachers struggled recontextualizing their knowledge and skills into the programme, as their professional academic identity was constructed based on their previous experience. While students had to deal with common aspects of UK HE transitional programmes, such as focusing on research skills, being independent learners, and developing

criticality. Students and teachers apparently needed more time to adapt to the new learning and teaching environment to be able to use it effectively. The negotiation of teachers' and students' roles in this environment made the way the programme was delivered differ significantly compared to the ways it was structured and outlined in programme documents, tutor induction materials, and learning/teaching resources. During the interviews most of the participants stated a preference for the face-to-face learning environment, as they saw it as a space that would allow them to interact in a more meaningful and effective way, and really live the experience, as one participant described.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Design

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Appendices

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

Appendix E

Appendix F

Appendix G

Appendix H

Appendix I

Table of Tables

Table of Figures

Table of Images

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Malak Elyazidi

Title of thesis: Student and Teacher's Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era**.**

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

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2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
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7. None of this work has been published before submission.

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Date: September 2023

Dedication

To my country, Libya

To my beloved family

I dedicate this thesis to you with heartfelt gratitude.

This journey would not been the same without your support, encouragement, and love.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. **Background**

Despite the increasingly important role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), based on Prensky (2008; 2011); Evans (2008) the Web has been largely seen as a supplementary tool in relation to traditional educational methods and approaches, although it offers a variety of sources and materials that could enhance face-to-face content and wider student experience. Examples of approaches that embody ICT in educational research are E-learning, web-based learning, Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL), and Digital Learning, and these include research on engagement through Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), or Learning Management Systems (LMSs), as well as other technological and methodological dimensions relevant to the current study. The viewpoint taken in this thesis might not be representative of all fields equally, as scholars in these fields may see the transformative potential of the Web, technology enhanced communication, and networked learning from different perspectives.

In English-medium environments in British educational institutions, most schools and universities are using online education to some extent, and related approaches have been implemented to engage students with discipline-specific content, as well as activities to develop language and study skills (Clark & Mayer, 2016 & Kim, 2020). A feature of recent develops is the use of asynchronous and synchronous learning, and associated platforms, often including physical classrooms. The benefits and drawbacks of this blending of asynchronous and synchronous instruction has been studied by many educators (see Ng & Gunstone, 2002; Nugent, Soh & Samal, 2006; Qing Li, 2007; Means, Toyama et al., 2013), and this informs this study on a programme that shifted to online engagement due to COVID restrictions at the time.

Recently, educational systems around the world have changed dramatically due to the global pandemic. For example, before the pandemic, in most UK universities, integrated technology was employed in face-to-face lecture and seminar activities, to some extent, though blended learning (Underwood, 2009; Bowyer & Chambers, 2017). Blended learning is defined as the merging of the predominant components of traditional education with the use of technology and the Web, as would be seen in distance learning (Gebara, 2010).

Chapter 1

In December 2019, it was reported by the Wuhan City Health committee, 37 cases of pneumonia which were caused by unknown aetiology. Later, the World Health Organisation (2020) declared that COVID-19 had become a pandemic (Crawford, 2020). The pandemic has created significant changes in every aspect in people's lives around the world, not only in the education sector. It has resulted in the temporary closure of schools and universities; international higher education, in particular, has been heavily influenced by how the virus spread across affected countries (d'Orville, 2020). As a response to the virus outbreak, many countries around the globe shifted face-to-face teaching and learning to e-learning or digital learning (Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020; Basilaia et al, 2020). Due to the long-term emergency state and the transformational change in the HE system, many universities have integrated digital learning, or turned to it completely, for what were traditional, physical programmes.

This has changed the environment, or ecosystem, of higher education. Despite the rise in the number of students who have chosen to register for distance learning programmes in the last 10 years (Belanger and Jordan, 2004 & Sadeghi, 2019), within the COVID-19 era students were forced to switch to digital or distance learning. Students and staff, with different skills, ideas, and motivations, were forced to redirect their operations fully/partially online, which has implication for meanings being expressed, skills being developed and valued, and behaviours and identities being emerged. A shift in practice and shift in media will always come with implications for students and staff, and the practices (communicative, academic, and cultural) with which people engage. Understanding practices and perceptions during this period provides insights into perceptions of the present, past, and future.

In pre-covid era, the conventional method of teaching was in-person, with students attending their educational institutions in physical classrooms with their teachers and classmates. Teachers would actively interact with the students using the traditional teaching approaches (Shahzad et al., 2020), which consist for example of groupwork, case studies, lectures, and/or collaborative teaching (Belias et al., 2013). Dominant approaches to materials, pedagogy, assessment, and, therefore, teaching and learning, were largely predicated on regular physical interactions. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the distinction between digital and 'traditional' education was disturbed by official lockdowns and social distancing restrictions, in addition to an immediate response to the pandemic by seeking to replicate the dynamic nature of face-to-face teaching to the digital classroom (Affouneh et al., 2020; Basilaia et al. 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). According to Li & Lalani (2020), over 1.2 billion students were out of schools due to the pandemic. Also, UNESCO (2020) announced that "…more than 87% of the world's student population – over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries – have been affected by the temporary closure of educational institutions''.

Within the higher education sector, the reaction of the effected countries differed not only from one country to another, but also from one institution to another. Several institutions were ready to start their courses online without suspending their learning activities at all, while other educational institutions could not shift their systems immediately, and had to suspend learning activities in order to redesign their programmes and train educators to be prepared for the shift online (Crawford, 2020). Accordingly, this study investigates the abrupt change in learners' and teachers' engagement with educational systems after the outbreak of COVID-19. The focus is investigating the perception of the unexpected and forced transition in the education system and the extend of influence of this change on the roles and identity positioning of students and teachers of higher education. It will particularly focus on relation to the forms and directions of learning/teaching, the types of roles enacted, and the approaches to academic English that are taken. The lens of identity, performance, and meaning making is useful in researching a context where roles, discourses, and relationships need to be renegotiated and recontextualised in new forms of interaction and structures.

1.2. **Personal Motivation**

My original area of focus in my MA dissertation, and the PhD plan that followed, was the use of technology in the English language classroom, as my interest revolved around e-learning and the integration of technology in learning and teaching. At the time, I saw technology as a supplementary tool in the language classroom that had growing potential to impact on students' presence and performance. As an English language teacher, I was also motivated to enhance my knowledge and understand the potential of technology to affect language learning and teaching. However, after changes began to occur in global education systems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I saw the potential for a paradigm shift from the way students and teachers were forced to engage online, and the leap in technological skills needed by students and teachers. I therefore redirected my focus to try to understand the affordances and implications of this recent transition to fully online education in such unfamiliar circumstances. From this, I intend to see how people see this in relation to their roles and perceptions, their trajectories (past, present, and future), and their motivations for engaging with language education, whether as educators or students.

As a former student in the Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton, I am aware of the purpose and structure of the programme, and I was interested in exploring the process and adjustments made to transfer the programme into fully online format. More recently, I joined the online Pre-sessional (PS) programme as Listening & Speaking tutor, allowing me to see the

programme as a face-to-face student, and as an online tutor. Being part of the PS programme gave me the chance to closely observe the ongoing changes in the structure and syllabus of the programme. Working on this research, I believe, offers me the chance to develop a contextualised understanding of the recent shifts in an area of education I have experienced as both staff and student, and one that is highly influential as a facilitator of transitions to international higher education for thousands of students per year.

1.3. **Aims and Objectives of the study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the pre-sessional programme students' and teachers' experience and engagement with digital learning using web-based learning resources during the COVID 19 era. It aims to understand the emerge of practices, positionings, and ideas during the pandemic, which feature more online activity that is both institutionally organised and individually chosen. Such changes will impact on learning and teaching, and wider roles and perceptions, in any educational setting, as is the case in the context of this pre-sessional programme. The study aims to investigate students learning habits and behaviour towards learning using the Web and technology, as well as their ideas of their roles and identities as students transitioning to a UK Higher Education context under these conditions. By the same token, the project will study presessional teacher engagement with the web-based resources, structures, and interactions. Understanding their perspective towards their roles and identities in coping with unexpected changes provides a fuller picture that can be gained by looking at students only. In addition, it aims to explore their perceptions of the behaviour of their students, and how they evaluate that against their idea of what they should be doing in this context. Moreover, it intends to explore the influence of pandemic on learners and teachers' trajectories, performance, and opinions towards distance and blended learning/teaching, as this provides an impression of how the COVID-19 response might transition into future practices and orientations. According to this, the research is going to answer the research questions that follow.

1.4. **Research questions**

The following questions guide the current research. In line with the study's qualitative orientation, they seek to understand phenomena in a way that is open and participant-centred. This is necessary, given the unpredictable nature of what the investigation might find, as the research focuses on students and staff at a time of transition before and during the Pre-sessional programme.

1. How do students and teachers perceive the shift to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic as impacting their roles, identity positioning, and engagement on the Pre-sessional Programme?
2. What choices, affordances, barriers, and ideologies do students and teachers encounter in the pre-sessional environment, both around the course structure and delivery, and around wider Web-based activities?
3. How do students and teachers perceive shift to online education during the pandemic as influencing their trajectories and students' transitions into UK higher education?

It is worth noting that other insights can be gained from this investigation, such as how participants see future iterations of the Pre-sessional delivery being informed by COVID-19 responses, but these are not the core investigation, and so can be commented on in the processes of answering these questions, and can make revealing implications or limitations. This study intends to focus on ongoing interactions, and embed insights in, or close to, activities in which participants are engaged.

1.5. **The context and participants**

The context of this study is a summer Pre-sessional Programme at a UK university, which was delivered online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This involves both local shifts towards online education during lockdowns and travel restrictions, as well as students arriving with their own COVID-19 influenced online learning and communication experiences. These students enrol on the programme to gain an introduction to, and skills for, their upcoming study in UK HE, and these students initially had to enrol on the distance (online) programme, but they now can opt to do so (with an in-person programme being available, running alongside the online programme).

The participants of this study are international (including EU) students, who are from different national, cultural, and academic backgrounds, and the educators who are involved in the PS programme, who are also from different linguistic and national backgrounds. In the process of selecting the participants, whether learners or educators, I was not focusing on particular nationalities, cultural groups, or destination modules. I was relying on those who would offer their voluntary assistance, as motivation to participate would be important for gaining deep insights into the regular thoughts and practices of participants. The programme used for my data collection is the 11-week virtual Pre-sessional Programme offered by the University of Southampton. This is a full-time intensive academic programme that aims to improve students' capability and confidence in using academic English language (reading, writing, listening, speaking, and study skills) for their

further study at the University of Southampton. This programme is mainly designed for international students to prepare learners to progress to undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. Learners should be able to extend and develop their existing English language knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of universities in the UK (University of Southampton website, 2021).

The majority of HE institutions use online platforms / virtual learning environments (e.g., Blackboard and MS Teams), as well as providing students with other support tools, including library support guides, data/literature search engines, and other software to facilitate their disciplinary studies. This study seeks to contribute to research not by evaluating resources and outcomes, which many universities will be interested in doing, but by understanding the ideas, experiences, practices, and trajectories of students and teachers, whose identities, positions, and practices have been transformed in recent years, with various Web-based learning and communication practices that they are given and others they can engage with independently.

The environment has also undergone a significant shift in the adoption of online learning, both in terms of the number of programmes that incorporate digital learning and interaction (either entirely or partly), and in terms of the forms of digital learning and communication that have become integrated into the teaching and learning experience in a short space of time. This is obviously apparent in online Pre-sessional programmes as that is the medium of teaching, learning, and communication on the programme, but it is also present in the learning outcomes, which prepare students to the transition into a higher education environment in which digital engagement is increasingly required (Evans, 2008; Woollard, 2011; Williams et al., 2012; Kwon et al., 2021).

Investigating teachers in this study will help understanding of their changing roles and practices, and their relationships with their students, at this time, which provides important insights into the learning environment (including the perspectives, trajectories, and identities they bring, and the meanings, structures, and ideologies they engage and align with during the programme). A final note is that, as well as seeking to understand what is happening now, this study could help raise awareness of emerging trends that students, teachers, and universities would benefit from considering in future, as the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns and the emergence of various Webbased HE practices could have a lasting impact on people's ideas, identities, and learning experiences. In particular, technological tools and methods have been adopted in recent years at a greater pace than they could be contextually understood from the perspective of students and teachers, and through this study, I seek to understand present practices in greater qualitative

depth. By doing so, the study provides insights into the future implications of the phenomena investigated here.

1.6. **Online Pre-sessional Programme**

After the spread of the pandemic, the University of Southampton was one of the many educational institutions that shifted to fully online programmes within weeks (University of Southampton Website, 2020), and the Pre-sessional programmes were among the first to be offered fully online, from beginning to end, during this period, as opposed to being a programme temporarily diverted to online delivery. PS Programmes broadly aim to develop language and associated academic and cultural practices that learners need to study and research through the medium of English (Gillett, 2022). In other words, they aim to prepare students for further studies in the university that provides it. The University of Southampton online Pre-sessional programmes are designed to develop international students' English for academic purposes, their broader study skills, and their awareness of what is expected from a student (of a particular discipline) in the British educational system. During the summer semester, the University of Southampton offers three Pre-sessional programmes that vary in length, i.e., 6, 11, and 16 weeks (University of Southampton website, 2020). All three programmes offer five modules that focus on developing students' academic skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, as well as developing their independent learning skills.

Based on the University of Southampton website (2020), the primary objective of each module is facilitating students' understanding of the academic demands of each skill. In Reading and Writing modules, students should learn how to plan, research and structure assignments, reference academic sources, use relevant academic language, and develop approaches to reading that incorporate themes from basic comprehension and retention strategies to the critical evaluation of information and ideas. In the Listening and Speaking modules, students should be learning how to discuss different topics with classmates, create and deliver academic presentations, and identify the most salient points of a lecture. The fifth module in the programme is Independent Learning, where students should be guided to control their learning, developing their own goals, and making decisions regarding their studies. The programme includes at least 20 hours of study time every week, including live online sessions, live one-to-one tutorials, live and/or asynchronous small group interactions, and asynchronous materials (including pre-recorded videos) and study tasks. Students on the Pre-sessional Programme are assessed through online tasks, for instance researched reading and writing tasks, listening-based discussions, and individual presentations (University of Southampton, 2023)

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

On the 29th March 2020, there were 17,093 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 in the United Kingdom, with 1,019 recorded deaths (World Health Organisation, 2020a). As a result of the high rates of Coronavirus infection, the British authorities, on 20th March 2020, announced an initial official lockdown all over the country. This meant the closure of public houses, restaurants, and other such institutions, to restrain the pandemic, which was followed by various other interventions and distancing rules that affected people's personal, workplace, and educational practices. Accordingly, the UK higher education sector responded by closing physical campuses and shifting programmes to online provision only, encouraging to work from home, postponing graduation ceremonies, cancelling open days, and changing assessment methods (Crawford, 2020; Dolton, 2020).

During the change, educators and content designers had to cope with the new situation and created an alternative environment to learners, which had to both evolve through teacher development, ongoing technological adaptation, and negotiated practice between educators and students. One of the common challenges for most educators was the ability to interact with the online platforms which are offered from the institution to assist them with providing students with the appropriate substitute for face-to-face courses (Nambair, 2020). The online platforms needed to have certain requirements such as the ability to link lecturers/tutors with students, to facilitate discussions, to upload the recorded lectures, especially for students who suffer from shortage of or poor internet connection, to be accessible for different users via different devices, and to complete assignments, quizzes and tests (Basilaia et al, 2020). Eventually, to resume the courses online, educators around the world have had to master the use of different online platforms such as MSTeams, Zoom, Blackboard, Moodle, and various Google tools (Doltan, 2020; Kim, 2020); however, the assumption that the content and engagement is simply re-channelled into the new online space is a false one, as many scholars highlight the very different experiences that accompany online learning and digital pedagogies as opposed to more traditional face-to-face delivery (Krishnmaurthi, 2000; Hodges, 2005; O'Lawrence, 2005; Nazari & Seyri, 2020; Chun & Yunus, 2023).

2.2 **Digital learning & Web-based resources**

Within the development of research into technology in education over the last few years, digital learning has been presented with different terminology, for instance e-learning, online learning, and digital learning, which expand to areas such as blended and distance learning (Lin et al., 2017). Digital technologies and the World Wide Web have, for many years, empowered online learning through providing authentic, interactive, and pedagogical content (Pacheco, 2005), which have become an advanced and popular approach in higher education that resulted in the emergence of WebBased Learning Environments (WBLE). According to Pacheco (2005), web-based learning resources employ the characteristics and resources of the Web to offer an encouraging and meaningful learning environment. Web-based learning focuses on learning from an online programme, where students could engage with pre-set input/tasks, and communicate on official channels with other participants and their educators. The web-based learning tools include Virtual Learning Environments and Learning Management Systems such as Moodle, Blackboard, library catalogue tools, emails, videoconferencing, and communication platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams (Dolton, 2020; Kim, 2020). All these tools have been involved recently in most higher education online programmes during the COVID-19 era (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020; Littlejohn et al., 2021; Kalmar & Aarts, 2022; Alzyoud et al., 2023)

Regarding the people engaging with digital learning and Web-based resources, it has been declared that the majority of students currently in higher education can be considered digital natives, who interact spontaneously with the Web and technological devices, while teachers have been framed as digital immigrants, due to lower technological competence and experience (Prensky, 2001). By the same token, based on Allen & Seaman (2007) and Hsu et al. (2009), educators and researchers tended to believe that digital education was a win-win deal for learners and teachers, but, in education, there are rarely win-win scenarios across contexts and stakeholders, so this claim needs further investigation in different contexts, especially in relation to the sudden shift to Web-based education and interaction that has been experienced in relation to COVID-19 restrictions on face-to-face learning. Accordingly, this study aims to understand the impact of the alterations made in the educational system as well as learners and teachers' perception to the interaction with web-based resources.

2.3 **The impact of education system alteration**

Despite the fact that closing the educational institutions was effective in minimizing the risk of spreading COVID-19 by preventing physical interaction in schools and universities, it was also

effective in changing people's habits and mindsets, such as paying attention to personal hygiene, increasing health awareness, and understanding benefits of physical activity (Aristovnik et al, 2020).

A considerable number of previous studies emphasize the fact that using technology in general as a learning and teaching tool can have a positive and/or negative impact on learners as well as teachers (see Chen, Liu & Wong, 2007; Hughes, 2005; Wang, 2005; Huddar et al., 2023). According to Lall & Singh's (2020) study, students reported positive perspective towards distance education due to its flexibility. According to students, online classes offer them the flexibility to share information and the accessibility to learning materials whenever they need (Oliver, 2014; Sadeghi, 2019; Pustika, 2020; Huddar et al., 2023).

Despite these benefits, pandemic and lockdowns influenced higher education students' academic lives (Shahzad et al., 2020), as it caused such disruptions as library closures, changing in communication channels, different assessment methods, and online lectures/classes/tutorials. Their social interaction with friends, classmates, and relatives, as well as were changed by prohibiting travelling and socialising. Accordingly, this caused many emotional health issues such as increased levels of anxiety, frustration, and boredom (Aristovnik et al, 2020). Based on Bashir et al.'s (2021) report, there was an increase of 20% in the number of students who experienced negative feelings such as low mood, sadness, despair, anxiety, and depression. Adnan & Akram (2020) identified challenges students face in online learning environment, coming from a lack of social communication, group studies, and feedback from instructors. The student participants of Adnan & Akram (2020) emphasized that they did not only encounter challenges with the lack of socialization, but they also reported challenges from technical issues, such as the lack of internet access, and their own lack of technological competence. Based on Amir et al. (2020), only 34% of the learners who participated in their study expressed negative feelings towards distance learning after the pandemic. Negative feelings came related to unstable internet connections, issues with time management, and concentration difficulties. In contrast, 44% of the participants of this study preferred distance learning over the traditional face-to-face classroom. They agreed, for instance, that distance learning motives them to prepare for the class content before discussions take place.

Other researchers believe that online learning should not be expected to provide similar outcomes as the face-to-face classroom. Previous studies were conducted by Bali and Liu (2018), Adnan and Anwar (2020), and Setyaningsih (2020), and these declared that digital learning cannot produce the same expected results as face-to-face interaction in the physical classroom, as the latter generates more effective and meaningful performances. Pre-sessional pedagogy concerns teaching method and strategies employed in the programme which is designed to enhance students' academic skills

before commence their academic programme, which are typically at the undergraduate or postgraduate level. EAP, or English for Academic Purposes, is described as teaching English to enable learners to pursue their studies or conduct research in English (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) add a cultural component, suggesting that EAP teaches not only literacy skills but also the communication skills necessary for various academic and cultural contexts (Papadima, 2020). Forms of pedagogy could differ from other teaching methods as ESP where the method of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language, where learners intend to use English in a specific field (Paltridge and Starfield, 2012). ESP is a broad and varied field designed to cater to specific learner needs (Papadima, 2020). The methodology of ESP focuses on the language, skills, discourse, and genres relevant to those specific activities and is intended for intermediate or advanced students (Papadima, 2020). Pre-sessional programme aims to ensure that students have study skills to persuade their studies based on UK universities requirements. A key component of pre-sessional pedagogy is the focus on academic English as developing the four main skills within an academic context. For example, in the studied pre-sessional programme, students had to be familiarized with techniques for note-taking are taught to help students summarize and organize information effectively from lectures and readings. Critical reading strategies are provided to help students analyze and evaluate academic texts, promoting engagement with programme materials. Writing skills focuses on constructing coherent essays, reports, and research papers, including proper referencing and citation practices. Presentation skills training is also provided, which is an important aspect of many academic programmes. Cultural orientation is integral to pre-sessional pedagogy, helping students understand the academic culture of the hot country. This including familiarizing students with expectations around academic integrity, participation, and independent learning. Students also learn about classroom dynamics, particularly the interactive and participatory nature of classroom in many educational institutions. Interactive and student-centered learning in emphasized, with collaborative tasks used to encourage peer learning and teamwork. Discussion and debate activities are designed to develop students' abilities to articulate their ideas and engage in academic discussions. After the change caused by COVID, the integration of technology is another significant aspect, with digital tools and platforms, such as Learning Management System and online libraries, used to support learning.

The transformation of the conventional classroom to the online environment influenced teachers as well. Based on previous studies, the transition of the traditional learning to online programme was met with diverse reactions from teachers, with some reacting positively and others reacting negatively. For example, there were many teachers from previous studies such as (Nambiar, 2020) who expressed positive feelings by declaring that the online learning boosted their confidence and

upgraded their technological competence. Around 42% of Nambiar's (2020) participants confirmed that they became more confident with using technology. Instructors of Nambiar's study were asked to identify the positives of online learning 37% highlighted the convenience and flexibility of online classes, while 22% declared that they improved their technological competence, helped to learn innovative teaching methods which boosted their confidence as teachers. 15% reported online classes are comfortable and save commuting time. Several other positives were included, for instance structured approaches to online teaching, less interruption, the use of innovative tools such as screen sharing, and visual aids such as graphs, charts, and videos. In addition, online classes facilitated the retention of course material for future use as the recorded lectures could be used as reference to students who missed the class, making teaching more systematic (Nambiar, 2020; Deepika, 2021). Saving time was not mentioned only by the students, but also by the tutors who stated that the distance learning saved their commuting time (Nambiar, 2020).

Despite the fact that online classes offered the convenience of working from home and saving commuting time, not all teachers perceived online classes as effective as the traditional teaching methods (Nambiar, 2020). In 2020, UNESCO identified teachers' stress and confusion as the main consequences of school closure, as well as uncertainty and unfamiliarity in relation to the unknown duration of the change (Kim & Kathryn, 2020). Rapanta et al. (2020) reported the challenges teachers encountered during the pandemic relating to Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK), which focuses on the design of learning experiences and environments; the necessity to adapt assessment practice; and the difficulty to maintain teachers' 'presence' in attempt to establish relationships with their students. According to Mailizar et al. (2020), teachers encountered a range of obstacles when it comes to e-learning, including knowledge limitation and assessment difficulties. One of the studies showed that 33% of the teacher participant in Nambiar's study (2020) stated that a lack of computer skills caused difficulty in using teaching methods online. The participants of the same study mentioned other negatives related to distance learning, for instance, technical issues relating to poor connectivity, power cuts, broadband issues, and poor audio or video quality. Moreover, their inability to monitor and control students' behaviour, in such situations as students making excuses to not attend or not being fully attentive and focused during online sessions. The students of this study might have encountered similar conditions, challenges or affordances, which they might introduce to the UK PS setting.

Teachers expressed the necessity to establish work patterns that would enable them to perform their duties while protecting their well-being, particularly with the increasing overlap between work and home life. They also discussed the challenge of integrating additional responsibilities like the responsibilities they have with their children within this framework (Kim & Asbury, 2020). The

change required teachers to re-contextualise their skills and knowledge to suit the new medium of teaching. They had to reshape the circumstances and resources to incorporate them into different contexts using communication strategies, which links to the idea of recontextualization.

Recontextualisation is a useful tool to understand, from a research perspective, the impact of education system change, especially as relates to the UK higher education context during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Van Dijk (2008), recontextualization is the process of shaping and modifying both existing situations and texts, incorporating them into different contexts by employing communication methods. As texts, situations, and practices change contexts, their meanings, implications, and even their purposes change, so a word, action, or item could take on new meanings, impacts, or roles when adopted in a different or new context. Van Leeuwen (2008) added that the core of a social activity is a series of ordered actions which could be modified to a greater or lesser level, and these may or may not offer options or choices for some or all of the participants. This is an important consideration when researching student and educator experiences of shifting practices, and their associated identities within that, considering what were traditionally performances embedded in classroom practices, but have shifted online, possibly taking on different pedagogical approaches and learning processes. Recontextualization relates to the development of different actions occurring simultaneously at certain points, or throughout the entire sequence.

Van Leeuwen (2008) also stated that the classroom should meet specific criteria to be considered a learning space, and this can be extended to digital learning spaces too. These criteria relate to aspects such as the room's dimensions and configurations, and even its decorations, which includes flooring materials and the colours employed on the floor and wall. During recontextualization, a number of abilities and variations can emerge, particularly in diverse settings that have embedded cultural, linguistic, and institutional dynamics, such as a Pre-sessional programme with staff and students from around the world, who, at that time, are experiencing educational and personal shifts, with different implications for meaning and identities, due to the pandemic. Van Leewuen (2008) makes the point that, in the process of recontextualization, one of the transformations is the substitution of elements of the social phenomenon, whereby meanings can be replaced by other meanings in process of resignification in new contexts or settings. The nature of substitutions is impacted by the specific context into which the practice is reframed. Also, deletion could be one of the transformations that occurs during the process of recontextualization of a social practice. During the transformation process, the elements of the social practice could be rearranged, elements could be added, and elements could be repeated. This could mean that something that is highly valued in one education system could lose its value in a different educational context. The

online Pre-sessional programmes during the pandemic offer potential to identify shifts that accompany the shift online, the transition between educational cultures that students undertake, and/or a shift in thinking around teaching, learning, and academic communication that becomes more apparent by recontextualization processes.

Those who studied online in one national setting, for example, might have been encouraged to take in information, and interactions could have been related to knowledge retention, whereas another setting might emphasize engagement and interaction. An important element of recontextualization is that these processes can be hidden, even from participants involved in an interaction, and the meanings and values being communicated can be seen differently by, for example, those learning and those judging their learning. Therefore, the online shift in higher education presents a great deal of potential for institutions to enforce their values on students' practices, and for educators and students to have to renegotiate assumed meanings of the styles and content of their interactions. On an online Pre-sessional programme that aims to help students transition from one educational system and medium of instruction to another, it is particularly valuable to understand where students are coming from (influenced by COVID responses in their own countries), and how they perceive the context they are transitioning towards (influenced by COVID responses in UK higher education).

As different studies have revealed different positives and challenges of online programmes, this research aims to explore the process of setting the digital learning environment as a sudden replacement for the traditional learning in the context of under-researched and transitional groups of students and staff – in a transitional and changing international context. Teachers and students of the above-mentioned studies stated the affordances and challenges encountered in the virtual learning environment, and, therefore, it should be considered that technological change in the UK higher education system could have dual effects. Accordingly, the following section will review students' and teachers' engagement with and perception of web-based learning environments as well as the influence of web-based resources on them. Within the online learning environment, the interaction process is frequently seen to include four components, which are instructors, students, course content, and digital technologies, and many studies affirm the importance of synchronous and asynchronous communication between learners and teachers as the crucial element in online learning process (Bouhnik & Marcus, 2006; Moore, 2001; Picciano, 2002).

2.4 **Synchronous and asynchronous communication in WBLE**

The dynamic engagement in online environments is diverse, and could include forms of interactions such as student-student, instructor-student, student-content, and learner interface (Chou et al., 2010). Regarding the interaction, the implementation of web-based tools can create a collaborative and cooperative environment between teachers and learners through communication technologies which can be categorized as synchronous and asynchronous communication (Sarıca & Çavuş, 2008; Jung & Choi, 2002; Cong-Lem, 2018). Synchronous communication is defined as communication that occurs at the same time, such as text chat and video conferencing, while asynchronous communication happens over longer periods, during which participants can choose their preferred time for engagement, for instance emails and ongoing discussion boards (Chen et al., 2007). In traditional classrooms, learners can interact and engage in active learning that encourages critical thinking through discussions, and they are able to observe their progression with others in the same environment. The ways of interacting in face-to-face environments could be one-on-one, small or/and large groups, indoor or outdoor activities, and oral interaction, such as discussions and presentations. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that the majority of the previously mentioned activities can be implemented interactively, for instance in small/large groups. York (2016) stated that the students' relationships with their tutors and their peers could be reinforced with body language and the effective use of non-verbal cues. It might be challenging to apply the components of interaction from effective face-to-face learning to digital learning in order to fulfil similar outcomes (Krishnmaurthi, 2000). A number of these challenges have appeared in research on online learning (Marcus, 2003; Yang, 2003; Hodges, 2005). One of these challenges was the inferiority, or absence, of classroom atmosphere and the physical gap which could be one of the drawbacks for learners and teachers, as it could cause a lack of academic, collaborative, and social interaction, as well as students' inability to control their learning process independently (Marcus, 2003; Yang, 2003; Hodges, 2005). Sulaymonov (2016) affirmed that the physical gap between the instructor and the students, and between students themselves, can influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

For example, there are previous studies showing that students' interaction with their peers is important to increase their perception of learning and learning outcomes, as well as increasing their commitment to the learning process, as they can gain a better understanding of what they are learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Rovai & Barnum, 2003; Hay et al., 2004). Students in the traditional learning environment can have various opportunities with their peers for collaboration, socialization, and engagement, such as in-class discussion, group projects, study groups, peer tutoring, lunch/coffee breaks, social events, and gatherings, while online class activities could

involve discussions/debates, collaborative projects, quizzes and assessments, peer feedback and reviewing. In contrast, Okmawati (2020) mentioned that the online learning environment encourages students to be self-sufficient, independent, motivated to use and adopt the new technology. Moreover, students' interaction with their teachers is crucial in the learning environment as it is major part of their learning process in most curricula. One form of interaction that occurs between students and their instructors is the giving and receiving of feedback.

Feedback is a familiar task that teachers should perform in the classroom to inform students about their performances, outcomes, and ongoing learning needs (Lee et al. 1993). Feedback is provided after students' performance, or to guide students in their performance (Brookhart, 2008; Henderson et al., 2019; Pinheiro Cavalcanti et al., 2019). According to Sadler (1989), feedback is significant in enriching and shaping students' academic progress. Feedback an also be delivered physically, in written notes, proformas, or in oral feedback, or electronically (Hatziapostolou & Paraskakis, 2010). Teachers are increasingly adopting electronic feedback due to its ability to improve the process of exchanging feedback (Race, 2001), with the possibility of greater clarity and easier storage compared to written or oral feedback. Providing feedback could be one of the challenges in an online environment from the learners' perspectives, however, if responses to students' work is more asynchronous than in face-to-face educational settings (Yang, 2003). Virtual feedback can involve innovative tools and platforms, or be in a simple form of emailed comments (Hatziapostolou & Paraskakis, 2010). Based on a study conducted by Kemp & Grieve (2014), students declared their preference for class discussions as they felt more engaged, and felt they received more immediate feedback. This study sought to understand the possible impact that changes to the learning environment had on perceptions of students and teachers regarding feedback. In the rapid shift in the education system, most institutions offered online tools and websites such as emails, online chat tools, and delivery features such as written, audio, and video responses, and learning management systems could assist, and also increase, the level of interaction in such environments.

Once again, we see digital learning being seen as having both drawbacks and opportunities for learners and educators, in relation to different learning outcomes and reasons. Transitioning to new environments, as the Pre-sessional programmes are centred around, involve a requirement to understand the behaviours and meanings being communicated and assessed on the programme. This opens questions about what the effects of different learning opportunities and barriers are, from online and face-to-face learning, and how these impact on students' perception of types and values associated with how and what they are learning. With the available websites and videoconferencing applications like Blackboard Collaborate, ZOOM and MS Teams, which offer

more possible and manageable features specifically during the lockdown (Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020), instructors and students were offered different functions to facilitate their interactions, such as audio and videoconferencing, recorded lectures, social forums, text chat, and using visuals, for example pictures, gifs, videos, and graphics, which can be used asynchronously or during synchronous communication. These products were designed with the possibility of using sound pedagogical techniques that could provide opportunities for teachers and learners to interact effectively, in similar ways as they do in the face-to-face classroom. For example, it could include an interactive environment which encourages students to engage in spoken activities with tutors and peers (Pacheco, 2005; Wei, 2014).

In fact, emotion and personality are often under-researched in the area of international higher education, and particularly in language and study skills preparational programmes, but emotional engagement has established implications for language learning, and learning in general. Studying in an international setting, through another language, can have implications for emotional engagement in a way that influences academic and language learning success. Many studies have declared that online learning platforms provide a comfortable environment for shy and low confidence learners. Students who are described as shy in the face-to-face classroom can feel more encouraged to participate in online environment (Freiermuth, 2002; Chu, 2008; AbuSeileek, 2012; Eskandari & Soleimani, 2016; Khoshsima & Sayadi, 2016). According to Sullivan's research (2001) in the online learning environment, shy students might experience feelings of greater comfort to express their opinions and create deeper connection with their peers. A potential reason for this, drawing on Kemp & Grieve (2014), is that shy students could be more encouraged to provide written responses rather than spoken forms of communication, as they feel less judged. Despite the challenges, based on another study conducted by Warschauer (1998), computer technologies and web-based resources have helped students in their writing skills as they enhanced the written interaction between learners and their teachers and their classmates through emails, text chat, and group forums. Such studies provide interesting findings and possible insights for the current age, but these studies were conducted pre-COVID, and the format and possibilities of online platforms, along with the digital literacies (e.g., application of multimodal and multilingual communication) of learners and teachers using them, requires open reconsideration of how such findings apply to the current age, and what students might do online to overcome potential issues. Of particular interest is the options of platforms and tools today, whereby students might be required to communicate more through writing, or be given options of how they receive and share ideas. Such options and obligations will be influenced by cultural and ideological approaches to education, as well as prior experience and abilities of those interacting (educators and students).

This research aims to discover more about these open possibilities, and recognise how acts in this unusual environment illustrate both emerging and established aspects of identities, roles, and learning processes before, during, and beyond the pandemic. In other words, it is investigating the ways learners and teachers cope with their shift in circumstances, and their ways of interacting, or not, with different aspects of the syllabus, materials, and other people around them.

It is of significance to point out that there are many issues that could be generated within the online learning environment, for instance issues that relates to the type of interaction, number of learners involved in an activity, mode of interaction, tools needed, training required, language used, and the tone of interaction, including its timing, volume, visibility, and frequency. To some teachers, as mentioned above, online classes negatively influenced their potential to act in accordance with new situations, based on their standards and expectations. One of these issues is the lack of interaction, lack of eye contact with students and lack of students' feedback (Nazari & Seyri, 2020). During the coronavirus pandemic, many educational institutions were trying to find suitable online platforms with features that could assist the transition process appropriately. Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) was one of the most useable apps as a substitute to face-to-face classrooms. MS Teams provides a wide range of student-instructor and students-peers opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous communication, collaboration, and substantive interaction, regardless of their location. MS Teams is a digital communication and collaboration software tool, which can be installed on Mac or Windows computers, and smart mobile devices. It has features such as video calls for virtual meetings, instant messaging and presence, document collaboration, and discussion forums (Gruenwald, 2021). This app has been common and used among students in the COVID-19 era in many educational institutions including UK universities.

Based on the results of a study conducted by Kanthikeyan (2020), more than 82% of participants declared easy interaction and communication with instructors and peers within this app. Moreover, the results revealed that students ranked MS Teams as a "good" application compared to other apps such as Zoom and Google Meet. The majority of students declared their satisfaction with the features of MS Teams such as easily recorded classes/lectures, collaborative class notebooks, and convenient uploading of documents. On the contrary, MS Teams could influence negatively on learners, for instance, their attendance, as they might depend on recorded sessions. Therefore, this study aims to investigate learners' and teachers' perceptions towards the affordances and challenges of using technology and MS Teams during the pandemic, with the idea of potential positive and negative effects of shifts online, but also open questions about how institutions, educators, and students might seek to use technology differently, and with different aims in mind.

2.5 **Students and the Web-based learning environment**

Before Covid-19, many institutions integrated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a supplementary tool in the physical classroom. Education systems worldwide have been developed by the integration of the web-based and computer-based technologies throughout the 21st century (Woollard, 2011; Kwon et la., 2021). As previously stated, this generation of students are labelled 'digital natives', as they have been surrounded and familiarised with technology since they were born (Prensky, 2001). It is interesting to note that this applies to some teachers as well as students, considering that the label has been applied for more than two decades, forcing researchers to consider digital divides between teachers and students with more care and scrutiny. Nevertheless, this generation is not presented in research as being concerned about utilizing technology (Motteram & Sharma, 2009); however, students might feel uncomfortable in adopting technology due to low computer skills (Deepika, 2020), and research before and during the pandemic revealed unequal access to technology and Web connectivity for students from different locations and backgrounds. One of the objectives of this research, therefore, is to investigate both students' and teachers' relationships with, and expectations around the use of technology in the context of this online pre-sessional programme during covid-19 era.

Along with similar shifts in many areas of education more widely, Pacheco (2005) advocates that effective web-based learning environments should reflect the change from an instructor-centred to student-centred approach. Creators of digital learning environments have often emphasized the importance of learners' role as being autonomous, independent, self-controlled, and self-motivated, which accordingly has decreased the emphasis on the teachers' expert role (Goulão & Menedez, 2015). In other words, literature in Web-based learning frames student engagement as moving from a passive participant in the learning process to an active one, who constructs his/her own learning and knowledge, and who engages with problem solving activities rather than memorizing.

According to Cook (2007); Ravenscoft & Cook, (2007) the importance of shifting the focus to the learner instead of the teacher in the process of designing the learning programme starts from learners' preference, devices, and behaviour. From the students' perspective, Web content can motivate them to access authentic and enjoyable materials (Pacheco, 2005). For example, Hung and Huang (2013) conducted a study to explore the effectiveness of online forums with 17 university language students from Taiwan. The students declared that online learning offered them a space to develop their language, where it could be involved in the scaffolding process with peers.

The discourse surroundings the influence of emerging digital literacies on present and future educational methods is not recent development.

The field of language education has undergone through many new literacy practices and the use of multiple moods of communication in the educational context (Kalantzis & Cope, 2020). In the past decade, the widespread adoption of mobile devices and social media platforms has brought about significant shifts in communication norms which necessitating the incorporation of digital critical skills into language learning environment to leverage the new possibilities for collaborative learning (Pegrum et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of digital advancements within the education sector. Consequently, a dominant theme identified was the notable shift in teaching methods and educational techniques during this period (Herrero & Spence, 2023). Referred to as emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al.,2020), this involved a transition to online synchronous and asynchronous activities, supplemented by various online resources like web content, videos, and educational games. Additionally, communication platforms such as MS Teams were utilized to promote class engagement and collaborative learning. The shift to online learning and teaching was seen as a difficult adjustment of underpinning "pedogeological strategies" (see Rapanta et al., 2021). Many teachers found incorporating technology into their teaching methods to be quite difficult (Chan et al., 2021). Different situations and perspectives influenced how people viewed the extent of this change, with options varying based on both institutional factors and personal teaching beliefs. The difficult experiences with digital tools during this crucial time highlighted the importance of taking time and careful planning to create teaching resources that are effective for online any hybrid settings. Therefore, while a considerable number of materials were developed to aid teachers, their usefulness varied in some instances (Herrero & Spence, 2023).

As the context of this study is the Pre-sessional Programme which is an international and variable environment with students who belong to different cultural backgrounds, the sudden change during COVID restrictions to face-to-face teaching could be a challenge, even if they are used to interacting with technology as a supportive element within the traditional learning curriculum, under the guidance of their teachers, or as part of an initial COVID educational response in their own institutions, which could take many forms. Despite the digital native label that accompanies students today, and the fact that they are likely to have grown up with smart phones and the Web, their interaction with educational technologies and web-based resources will differ, and even similar activities could influence them differently.

Learners' competence in interacting with technologies is a crucial element of how they engage with online educational environments, as this influences their engagement with the main tools in their

learning process, including how they communicate with other people (students and teachers). Keller (2008) characterised technological competence as an essential factor that shapes students' expectations, and significantly affects the level of effort they invest, and motivation they have, in their academic studies. Lack of digital competence could discourage students, as they might encounter difficulties, for instance, access problems, especially off-campus when technical help is not available (Yang, 2003; Pacheco, 2005). The same could be true of teachers, although students are more prominent in research. Students' inability to use technology, or some aspects of technology, and their lack of training and familiarity to interact with educational online platforms, could cause a feeling of anxiety, frustration, and boredom (Aristovnik et al, 2020), and, as a result, it might influence their learning progress (see Moras, 2001; Qing Li, 2014). Many studies have investigated the drawbacks and the challenges that learners might encounter when using technology as a learning tool. One of the most common drawbacks is heightened anxiety, which might demotivate learners and cause negative and unpleasant learning outcomes (e.g., Campbell, Brown, & Weatherford, 2008; Ocampo, 2017; Tseng, 2010; Yaghoubinejad et al., 2017). The current research considers how students and teachers might encounter variable emotions, at different points on the programme, and around different types of tasks or interactions, which could affect their confidence, perspectives, and engagement in what they are learning and the relationships they are building.

2.5.1 **Learners' anxiety in online classroom**

During the learning process, learners could have negative or positive emotions and affective factors that influence their learning progression. As this research considers emotions and affective factors, most of the found studies were focusing on the feelings of anxiety that students might have during the unfamiliar environment including the virtual one (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Aydin, 2018; Qing Li, 2018). Anxiety is a normal feeling that students might experience during the process of learning, especially if it is through an additional language, which often comes with uncertainty around expectations and cultural conventions around learning and communicating academic content. Anxiety is an important variable that could impact the process of second/foreign language learning, as well as satisfaction and engagement in a higher education setting. It is defined as one of the emotional responses in which the learner perceives danger, and feels powerlessness and tension in relation to an expected risk or danger (Blau, 1955). Low levels of confidence around various areas of communicating and learning online in a UK higher education context could be considered as situation-specific anxiety, as defined by Ellis (2008).

Based on Qing Li's (2018) research, teachers think that using technology with students who have low technological competence could be time demanding as students will need time to be trained and guided. Based on this, students could be stressed about their progress in their technological skills knowing that they need more effort to follow course requirements. When considering the sudden shifts in international technological use in the last few years, both in education and in social communication, it would be wrong to consider somebody 'good at using technology'. Instead, it is preferable to consider the various forms of interactions and types of communication that exist online, which require different levels and types of skills and experience, and which might lead to contextual feelings of anxiety, confidence, or indifference. Therefore, again, qualitative research can be seen as useful in informing research in the current era, but more phenomenological questions can be asked about what students actually do online, what they perceive as familiar and comfortable, and what they perceive as new and anxiety-raising. The answers to these questions are situational, as technologies, programmes and resources around them are so diverse that researchers should understand what student do and perceive in order to understand where affordances and barriers exist in their transitional studies into UK universities.

Spielberger (1983) added that learners might go through anxiety in particular moments as a reaction to certain situations during the learning process. Aydin (2018) has also included certain situations that might cause anxiety to the learner, such as learners' lack of communication skills and their fears to communicate with peers, and to communicate with teachers and advanced speakers. Another point is that receiving negative reactions might cause feelings of fear to use the language in the institution and in social settings. The students and teachers communicate and/or perceive evaluative comments and reactions to their language performances online is a very underresearched area in this era, so the fact that empirical research shows the potential of negative feedback to cause anxiety leads to questions of what students perceive as negative responses to language in today's online programmes. Also, how and where they perceive them are important, as well as their impact. Yan & Horwitz (2008) declared that learners might get Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) for several reasons, such as class arrangement, learning strategies, motivation, and interest. FLA referred to the feelings of fear to use/communicate by a foreign language (Aydin, 2018). Negative evaluation when they feel uncapable of using the language could lower their selfconfidence, which could affect their feelings of anxiety and their identification with others, the programme and the forms of communication in the context. Developers and educators have already realized many issues with platforms and practices and keep developing opportunities for learners to create effective learning environments (Pacheco, 2005). A key feature of the research mentioned above is how issues and successes are situated in contextual practices, and interactions

between individuals. This informs the open approach to this research, and emphasises the need to observe, and enter dialogues around specific activities, moments, interactions, and features of online tools being used.

2.5.2 **Autonomy in digital learning**

As mentioned above, in the interactive context on many of today's digital learning environments, students are expected to be responsible for their engagement and interaction, and be more independent from reliance on teachers, in order to gain more autonomy in learning process (Oxford, 2003; Valizadeh, 2016; Cai, 2017). Technology has as an essential role in promoting autonomy and studying off-campus, and many studies have revealed the importance of autonomy to help learners in achieving their learning goals (Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Nguyen & Gu, 2013 Doğan & Miric, 2017). Autonomy is defined as the independent work and person's self-governing behaviour (Collier, 2008).

In accounts of autonomy in education, learners should achieve their goals through focusing on the methods and tools that suit their needs (Doğan & Miric, 2017). Researchers have declared the positive influence of autonomy on acquiring a new language (e.g., Ridley, & Ushioda, 2003; Balçıkanlı, 2008; Little, 2009; Üstünlüoğlu, 2009; Nakata, 2010). In particular, Nguyen & Gu (2013) conducted a study to investigate the impact of learner autonomy on language learning, the results of which revealed that autonomy developed student's language skills and cognitive abilities. However, learner autonomy could be realised differently in specific learning contexts. For example, expectations on and perceptions of autonomy might differ according to different learners' and teachers' backgrounds, cultures, and familiarity with different education systems. In addition, the cultural features of the learners could impact on the exercise and the development of learner autonomy (Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2018; Palfreyman, 2018).

Based on a study conducted by Littlewood (2001), who contacted 11 participants from different countries, students from different learning contexts prefer being autonomous rather than being controlled, and the study found that autonomy could be perceived based on cultural conditions. Individualism (referring to individuals' ability to get rights and freedom of choice to fulfil selfregulation, even if they sometimes conflict with the interest of the ingroups to where the individual belongs) and collectivism (referring to a value system in which a person's identity, attitudes, and actions are controlled in a large degree by the groups to which he or she belongs) can have implications for international education settings, as this can influence students' expectations and behaviours, and also institutional treatments of knowledge and learning

practices. Individualism and collectivism demonstrate different social value systems which are relate to teachers, peer learners, and wider society in influencing learners' autonomy in different tasks and areas. Autonomy is an important aspect to be researched in relation to the shift online resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, because the claimed links between digital learning and learner autonomy have not been researched in a transitional context like pre-sessional courses, and it is important to understand these implications in online activities where students are engaging with academic, cultural, and linguistic affordances and barriers. Current practices see students entering this virtual space that could involve ideas and activities between dominant cultures, ideologies, languages (or language varieties), or practices, and how students and teachers navigate that is important to understand, as it is likely to provide insights into how students will continue to use the Web after COVID, as well as how they see its use now. It also might uncover how students and teachers already used the Web, but this was not researched until it became prominent from the shift to online learning.

2.6 Teachers and the Web-based Learning Environment

As mentioned above, technology and the Web have been used as supplementary tools which helped teachers to integrate different resources into the classroom (Dogoriti, 2010), and therefore using technology in language teaching has helped teachers to enhance and enrich face-to-face activities (Chen, Liu & Wong, 2007), rather than being the medium and tools of learning on a higher education pre-sessional, transitional, or language programme (research on MOOCs and individual digital learning, e.g., via smartphone apps, has a different focus on engagement or individual retention, rather than programme delivery, transition, and assessment).

To some extent, within the traditional classroom, especially within some educational cultures, teachers are the authority who play the role of controller in the classroom during the teaching and learning process (Han & Yin, 2016; Li, 2016; Chiu, 2017). During COVID-19 era, as mentioned above, the web-based learning environment has changed the role of the learner, and has had the potential to change the teacher's role to a facilitator, resource provider, and instructor rather than a lecturer who should be able to organise the computer-assisted instructions (Crawford et al, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Marinoni et al, 2020). According to Balluerka et al. (2008), after the transition from the traditional classroom, where such transitions have taken place, it has been emphasized that a teacher's role should be as a facilitator, providing a learner-centred environment where the educator manages the students' learning rather than transferring information. This follows wider directions in education, but these have not always been successful in transforming traditional roles and practices, particularly in higher education, where lectures and delivery still play important

roles. Teachers in the online environments observed by Balluerka et al. (2008) tended to work on programmes that encourage learners to be autonomous and self-directed, but how they do this successfully, and how they struggle to do this with some of their students, will relate to the specific environments in which they operate, including the students and how they engage with such facilitation and direction.

Using Web-based language learning resources could put teachers under pressure as not all teachers feel confident about their teaching competence through this medium, and some of them might feel more confident in a physical classroom. According to Baylor & Ritchie (2002), teachers need to have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be able to integrate learning resources in an effective supported way of learning online. Many challenges that teachers might encounter include the need to learn skills to suit the web-based learning environment such as their ability to specify learners' characteristics through online interactions, create materials to suit the new technology, and evaluate students' achievements, attitudes, and perceptions in an online environment (Mubarak & Al-Arimia, 2019).

In summary, the change that occurred in education systems worldwide influenced the interaction between students and teachers. As was stated in the above-mentioned studies, the use of online platforms as a channel of communication between the students and teachers during the pandemic presented a new environment where traditional learning components need to be adapted, changed, or replaced in order to be implemented meaningfully, which links back to recontextualization, which opens up questions of types of behaviours, values, and knowledge that become prioritised or seen as less important. Teachers' and learners' interactions had to be modified to suit these changes, which could have positive or negative impact on them and their learning or teaching. This has implications for the forms of communication in the learning environment around course content, the learning materials, and interactions around these, which is the focus of the following section.

2.7. **Interaction with content**

Interaction with content is a vital element in any online learning programme. The clarity and effectiveness of the programme content is a fundamental aspect in determining learning outcomes and ensuring learners success or failure (Sarıca & Çavuş, 2008); however, considerations also have to be made around how content positions learners, makes assumptions about abilities, needs, or preferences, and prioritises some actions over others.

In general, course designers select materials and assessments based on their analysis of learners needs and interests. The importance of selecting the content based on learners interests and needs as well as suiting individuals' abilities and different learning styles is accepted in literature in the field (Son, 2007; Sarıca & Çavuş, 2008). For example, in language learning, and based particularly on a study conducted by Kung & Chuo (2002), high proportions of students have had positive attitudes towards using web-based language learning resources for years, due to its usefulness and enjoyable activities for language comprehension; however, this has never been a shared view among language learners, with one-third of the participants in this study disagreeing about the benefits of web-based language learning for them. This study captures the general trend at the time, and for many years since, around technology, as mentioned above, as technology has a more established and positive role in education, but its use is not a perfect match with everybody. To make things more complicated, these mismatches can be for different reasons. Although Chen et al., (2007) stated that computer-based instructions are increasingly helpful to learners, whatever their individual needs are, perhaps a reason we lack understanding of how and why technology works differently for different students is because many studies focus on the use of technology for programmes of study rather than use of technology by students and teachers themselves. It is important that teachers support learners in the digital environment because learners need to be guided to be familiar with the use of the content so they will not be confused by the provided materials. Learning in higher education provides input, but also encourages students to use the Web to enhance their own knowledge and skills, making this a complex context for understanding web-based learning, particularly on a short international programme that focuses on communication and transition, such as a pre-sessional course.

During the pandemic, teachers and course designers had to transfer the full curriculum used in the traditional programme within a short period of time, often without changing the learning outcomes. It is important, however, not to omit that many educational institutions have already integrated the technology and incorporate e-learning into the traditional teaching mechanism (Evan, 2008). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was effective for teachers to deliver their content to many learners who are located in geographically different areas (Chen, Liu & Wong, 2007). The general notion of a virtual learning environment, shared discussion board, or conference call would be familiar to teachers and students; however, their role in delivering the curriculum, and establishing the classroom culture, e.g., roles, ethos, and goals, would not have been familiar to most on a pre-sessional programme.

There might be pressure on teachers as they need to follow certain requirements to be able to apply digital learning in a useful way in this context. For example, a study conducted by Dogoriti

(2010) showed that 74.2% of the participant teachers declared difficulty to choose suitable materials for their content. Teachers need to consider organizing the classroom, e.g., with individual, pair, or group work, as well as considering the types of web activities to suit learners needs and differences (Son, 2007). Khan (2005) has created an instructional eight-dimensional framework that provides the educational technology community with guidelines and practices to help them develop course content. This eight-dimensional e-learning framework includes the following dimensions: institutional, pedagogical, technological, interface design, evaluation, management, resource support, and ethics (Khan, 2016). Figure 1 below shows the eightdimensional e-learning framework:

Figure 1 Khan eight-dimensional framework

Khan's each dimension from the framework is listed below with further explanations regarding their concerns:

- Institutional dimension consists of the three sub dimensions, which are the issues of administrative matters which relates to financial aid, registration, payment, grades, and graduation; issues of academic matters related to accreditation policy, faculty and support staff, and class size; and issues of student services which related to e-learning that covers counselling, library support, bookstore, internship, and alumni affairs.

- Pedagogical dimension covers the issues related to teaching and learning, for instance the design of course content and how to provide it to the target audience, and the possible ways to achieve the learning outcomes.

- Technological dimension investigates problems related to hardware, software, and infrastructure, the E-learning environment, LMS, server capacity, bandwidth, security, and backup.

- Interface design incorporates elements including Web and content design, navigation, web accessibility, and usability testing.

- Evaluation dimension covers the analysis of E-learning at institutional level and learning assessments evaluation.

- Management dimension concerns maintenance and modification of the learning environment; it also relates to issues of quality control, staffing, and scheduling.

- Resource support dimension refers to all technical and human resources support to generate meaningful online environments, which consists of web-based, digital libraries, journals, and online tutorials.

- Ethical dimension covers issues related to social and political influence, diversity, and legal issues including plagiarism and copyrights.

Each dimension represents a division of issues that should be taken into consideration in terms of producing a successful e-learning experience (Khan, 2001). This framework is considered as an approach that guides development of content in e-learning programmes in public and private institutions, and aids in shifting the programme from traditional to online learning (Basilaia et al, 2020). As this study has a contextual, student- and teacher-focused approach, within a wider institutional and national settings, it is useful to consider the different dimensions that might impact on programme design, and might uncover alignment and non-alignment between different people in the process (e.g., between teachers and students, or course designers and teachers).

Course designers need to ensure the clarity of the materials and ensure that it is suitable to students' needs (Osuna & Meskill, 1989; Kung & Chuo, 2002; Bouhnik & Marcus, 2006; Son, 2007). Learning needs in changing online educational spaces are also important to consider, but can be difficult to access. According to Johns (1991), needs analysis is the primary step in course design, and it provides validity for all course activities that follow. It is a systematic process that refers to collecting information about required outcomes, skills, and behaviours, in order to ensure programme effectiveness and encourage students to learn and take the responsibility for their needs (Lawi et al. 1999). One of the aims of this study is understanding to what extent digital content could be designed fairly, to include the needs of various learners on a transitional

programme, especially considering that this involves students with different backgrounds, abilities, and motivations.

This section discussed the students and teachers' perception towards the sudden transformation in the education system, and useful dimensions to consider in this process. the main focus was the interaction between the elements of the virtual learning environment, which are students, teachers, course content, and technology. The following section will explain the theoretical framework employed in this study.

2.8. Theoretical framework

As this research aims to investigate the student and teacher positioning in online environments, the two prominent theoretical themes framed in this research are identity and the ecology of learning. The former, identity, is relational, as it is continually constructed and negotiated between people who draw on their trajectories, their contextual positionality, and sociocultural backgrounds to construct identity positions. Elements of the environment, and associated discourses (including the structures created within institutions), can encourage or limit identity, whether through treatment of language, or through other mechanisms (see Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Shohamy, 2016). The second theme centralised in this research is the ecology of learning, which is connected to identity but draws focus to the interactions and material conditions of the environment, which contribute to identification of students and teachers in this environment. It aims to investigate the interrelations between the components within the learning environment, which focus on interaction between language and the surroundings. Van Lier (2004) defined the ecology of language as "…the totality of relationships of an organism with all other organisms with which it comes into contact" (p.3). In this section, identity and ecology of learning will be examined in detail in relation to the goals of this research.

2.8.1. Identity

The concept of identity is defined as the social positioning and labelling of self and the surrounded groups and situations (Mathews, 2000; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Individuals socially produce and negotiate their positions around sharing and contrasting knowledge, believes and behaviour (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2003; Hacking, 2000 cited in Koole, 2014). The general meaning of identity in sociology mainly relates to people's understanding of who they are and what is meaningful to them. In other words, our identity is mainly being the narrator to tell 'who we are' but we cannot control who we are (Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). Main sources of identity include gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or ethnicity and social class (Itulua-Abumere, 2014).

Bucholtz & Hall (2005), highlight that identity is not pre-existing, it is emerged, constructed, and developed through the use of language within social and cultural contexts as individuals use their identity elements to position themselves within society. In other words, it is constructed through interaction and involvement of relationships with others and in context in where it is being performed (Campbell, 2000; Moje, 2008; Seargeant & Tagg, 2014; Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). In the sociological field, there are two main types of identity, the first of which is social identity, meaning the individual features which are attributed by others and involve collective dimensions, for instance being a student, a mother, married, Muslim or Christian. The second type identified is self-identity, meaning the individual's own formulating and positioning of self and others in the society including their past, present, and future selves (Itulua-Abumere, 2014). Bucholtz & Hall (2005) debate that identity is a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that develops in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than a pre-existing and stable structure situated in individuals or the established social categories. They have outlined a framework to provide a general sociocultural linguistic perspective, which they call it the sociocultural linguistic which is defined as ''the broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the interaction of language, culture and society'' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; 586). They identify five principles of identity, which are emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality and partialness, and these are the key elements to study identity, based on their research and studies by others.

2.8.1.1 **Principles of identity**

In this section, I will briefly explain the main arguments of each principle to present identity as intersubjectivity and interactionally constructed, as it presents a clear, theoretically grounded and useful taxonomy of identity that helps me frame both my object of study and, further below, my methodological and analytical frameworks involved in accounting for it as a factor in online interactions and engagement in a pre-sessional learning environment.

2.8.1.1.1 **The emergence principle**

The first principle argues that identity is a social and cultural product that is emergent and created through the use of language within social and cultural ground rather than a pre-exciting phenomenon. Bucholtz and Hall, here, argue against static psychological views of identity, and instead see identity as a discursive concept constructed through interactions.

2.8.1.1.2. **The positionality principle**

This principle, similar to the previous one, criticises about the psychological and static perspective. It corresponds with 'the social behaviour with macro identity categories such as age, gender, and social class' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; 591). This principal views that identities include demographic categories, local ethnographically-informed cultural positions, interactionally-informed attitudes, and participants roles. This draws attention to the constructs and elements of identity that people use to position themselves in relation to others. It is useful to both notice the importance of performance to identity, as mentioned above, but also for researchers to notice and account for how certain features are perceived and used to position us socially and allow us to adopt identities in relation to others in a socially understood way.

2.8.1.1.3 **The indexicality principle**

Linguistic forms are linked semiotically to social behaviour and connected to ideological and linguistic structures (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 1985), but this goes beyond language too. Identity emerges through many indexical processes such as, the clear stating of identity categories, implicatures and presupposition of identity positions, the linguistic structure used, and associated ideology within individual and groups. For a study that looks at meaning and perception from a phenomenological perspective, it is important to place emphasis on labels participants have for others, objects, and themselves when engaging with learning environments. It is also important to understand the significance, power, and relevance of some labels and constructs when people account for their perceptions of their interactions with the online learning environments. As environments change, people also change, and so do the meanings of their words and the relevance of the constructs around them, which is a useful aspect to consider when looking at people's interaction with Web-based learning in this era.

2.8.1.1.4 **The relationality principle**

This principle concerns the relational foundation of identity which emphasises the point that identity is not autonomous or isolated. Therefore, the construction of social meaning requires discursive interactions, such as similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy, with different surrounded identities. This provides a specific focus that helps us understand what identity is, how it works, and its significance and implications in specific sites of online learning where students interact in spaces that are transitional (between their home countries and the UK), and characterised by change (from the COVID-19 effect on Web-based interactions, digital literacies and online identities). This is a context where

relationality is key to students' transitions, trajectories, and identity negotiations, but the space of higher education and students' personal lives and habits could be altered by an acceleration in online teaching, learning, and wider engagement.

2.8.1.1.5. **The partialness principle**

In the last principle, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) discussed the restrictions and limitations regarding individuals' intentions in the process of identity construction. People's identities, according to this principle, are not logical and coherent, but rather are products of various contextual forces and experiences, and our interpretations of our worlds and identities are always partial. This again links in with both phenomenological and critical research, as it is important to recognise things such as perceptions and researchers' accounts of labels, constructs and interactions with online learning as personal and subjective rather than fixed or mapping onto a shared truth about their meanings.

2.8.1.2 **Learner identity**

Learner identity is seen as being established through learning activities that emphasize participation, exchanging ideas, and working together with others (Kown et al., 2020). Virkkula & Nikula (2010) stated that learner identity will be influenced by the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) environment, especially for those who travel and study abroad. ELF research brings into question the shared forms of language, the meanings of words and evaluations of speech and writing, which links closely to the points above. How this is negotiated in Web-based learning in the COVID-19 era, and how that learning is influenced by wider trends in the effects of changing online intercultural environments is important to understand. Possible changes to identities and practices through online educational practices justify a research approach that not only explores people's practices and the meaning of those practices, but also considers meaning to be a negotiated and subjectively understood process rather than a property of words and actions.

Shohamy (2005) provides a comprehensive approach to Language Policy, which goes beyond taking simple policy declarations at face value. Instead, she advocates examining various mechanisms that lead to enacted language policies through practices and structures around those practices. She argues that language cannot be confined to fixed boundaries associated with specific languages, as it extends beyond individual words and linguistic markers. Steiner (1998) suggests that language, regardless of which language it is, possesses infinite resources within it, and is constantly undergoing change. Languages have life cycles, experiencing periods of enrichment, acquisition, political-cultural library dominance, as well as periods of decline and decay. At the individual level, languages serve as forms of open expression, creation, and interaction. Language is compared to a

living organism, characterized by its dynamic nature without fixed or distinct markers, free from imposed definitions of correctness or incorrectness, native or non-native status, or other artificial categories intended to control and limit people's interactions and use of language. Instead, language is personal ad unique, varying from person to person. Attempts to dictate how individuals should use language, including accents, grammar, and vocabulary, can be seen as invasive and manipulative.

When considering language in broader terms, it surpasses its traditional boundaries, embracing the legitimacy of infinite combinations, hybrids, and fusions. It encompasses a wide range of devices, modes, and codes of expression that facilitate successful and effective communication and interaction. These devices include various forms of creation and expressions, as well as diverse modes of representation such as music, dance, art, images, icons, visuals, clothing, architecture, gestures, silence, and other "non-linguistics" or "non-verbal" elements. The usage of language varies among individuals, as language adopts to different shapes and forms depending on the person, context, and time. These diverse language uses provide broad and open avenues for expression, promoting freedom and creativity. The term "languaging" is employed to emphasize language's integral and natural role in interaction, communication, and the construction of meanings.

Learners in the online learning environment, and with the needed guide from tutors, represent themselves through written language, chosen self-images, video conferencing backgrounds, and a range of other possible ways. Tomei et al., (2008) assert the necessity of negotiation and engagement between learners. However, they point out that learners might face feelings of anxiety, isolation, and disorientation as well as opportunities to engage with new forms of identity expression and affordances from the online learning environment, which is another reason for the need to understand how people see what they interact with online, and how they perceive themselves personally, emotionally, and academically when interacting with them. In traditional classroom, it is easier for learners to deliver unintentional and non-verbal thoughts and expressions; however, in the online learning environment, learners' personalities could be represented through their writing styles, or other forms of symbolic representation, and this requires us to rethink social identity in the online learning environment (Blake, 2000; Tomei, et al, 2008).

This opens new questions for an online EAP transitional programme in this era, as the traditional goals of teaching language and teaching writing are caught up in processes of communication and identity work in a range of ways, just as students and teachers engaging outside the educational environment in the current era. Lastly, behavioural identity concerns the interaction with the

academic community online which could develop learners' online identity in different ways (Blake, 2000; Tomei, et al, 2008). It is important to consider whether the COVID-19 era and the emerging roles of technology in internationalisation are having an impact on both students and the international academic community (e.g. what is disseminated and how it is disseminated). Traditional communication patterns within the community of practice can be transformed in terms of what people engage with and the meanings interpreted within the environment (Wenger, 1998), and this study investigates such tranformations in a timely manner and on an impactful programme that is responsible for helping more than a thousand students transition to UK higher education each year.

Joining a new environment, possibly including students with variation of attributes such as beliefs and values, cultural and academic backgrounds in a WBLE, could influence their attitudes, learning habits, and their constructed identities. As the context of this study is a Pre-sessional programme at a UK university, it is an environment that includes learners from different backgrounds, and with different identities and learning styles, who are asked to interact with each other within the context of developing their academic communication. Exploring learners' identities in the virtual educational environment is one of the aims of this study, as it allows us to gain insights into the impact of the new medium of learning, and change from traditional learning, on the people involved. Some aspects of identity are stronger and are more important to individuals than others, but these are drawn on and negotiated in communication and practices, and negotiation is even more obvious in intercultural contexts, such as in international universities. Based on Tomei et al. (2008), learners' identities, in face-to-face classrooms, involve students showing their identity through physical, kinesthetic, and linguistic interaction. While engaging in online learning, learners might have limited or altered options, as the image of student's identity could be created through alternative strategies such as using words and/or selected images (Tomei et al, 2008). Concerning the change wihtin this educational shift, this study is investigating the limitations and affordances for identity work among learners in the pre-sessional online environment, as identity is the base from which learners engage with content as well as communication with others. Ultimately, successful learning, communication, and transition involves identity, and so does successful teaching and guidance.

This leads me to consider the types of communities created in the virtual learning environment, which have been proposed as the learning community and social community (Arbaugh, 2001). The social community could be started from the moment students logged in and start welcoming each other. The ice breaking activities could help students to create a social community with their peers and humanize the course. The constant verbal and non-verbal communication in the online

learning platforms is a way to enhance the social community and reduce the physical distance (Arbaugh, 2001). The learning community 'is created when learners can explore new concepts through communicating with others' (Tomei et al, 2008).

2.8.1.2.1. Learners' online identity

Although complex and relational, learners' online identity can be represented through three main aspects, which are textual, visual, and behavioral identity. These are outlined briefly below, as they present different elements which are particularly interesting to consider in online interactions, and among learners, and teachers, from whom English is not a first language.

Textual identity can relate to learner's quality, style, and choices when writing, as it could communicate their thinking, understanding, and aspects of their social and cultural backgrounds. While students create their substantial written identities, they launch alternative academic modes of discourse (Tomei et al, 2008). Academic identity shows an overview of students' learning, which is meaningful in an educational environment with set goals and positions (Blake, 2000). Some students might find it easier to express their thoughts through writing in the online learning platform, which inspires a higher level of discourse and learning in an anonymous classroom (Burbules, 2002; Walker, 2003). However, as much online learning is text-based, students with poor writing skills, or with language difficulties, could spend more time editing before sharing their writing with the class, and could have the accompanying anxiety that their writing does not really represent their abilities (Tomei et al, 2008). The emergence of the textual identity is traditionally, in this view, due to the lack of physical identity (Blake, 2000). Social identities are represented by learners' names, gender, race, or nationality (Blake, 2000; Tomei et al, 2008), which can relate to textual, visual, or behavioural identity. Blake (2000) stated that social identity could be illustrated through the word choices and modes of discourse for instance slang and humor. Social identity could involve exploitation regarding students' communication and interaction within the social context, in this case through management of language and style.

Visual identity is the way students represent their physical selves online. Students might be asked to post a picture of themselves with couple of sentences to create their virtual profile, or they might choose their photo, animation, or avatars to represent themselves in the way they think they are or the way they would like to represent themselves (Tomei et al, 2008; Hawisher, 2000). Online learners vary in their social presence based on how much they share identity within the course communication (Christopherson, 2007). An element of online education during the COVID-19 response is how people interact in live meetings (e.g., classes, group work, or tutorials), as this involves a visual engagement that recontextualises how people present their personalities,

preferences, and demographic elements of identity. Choices could include whether or not to turn on cameras, what backgrounds are used, what spaces are presented, or what body language is used for particular purposes. Investigating visual identities can help understand learners' interactions and attitudes towards the opportunities and challenges in the online environment.

When considering identity options, it is important to repeat, as stated in the previous section, that students might develop new identity positions, but might also reposition themselves in ways that are not necessarily original, but can be seen as different versions of their typical identities (Burbules, 2000; Tomei et al, 2008). Gee (2014) applied discourse theory in framing identity development within the social processes. Discourse relates to the social practices that allow humans to create meaning, and our concepts of self and acts of identity draw on discourses around us, which is particularly prominent in high-stakes educational environments. For example, learners in higher education are often required to develop identities that help exercise agency in authentic social and cultural contexts (Duran, 2008). In language learning, Kasper and Rose (2002) state that the meaning of L2 pragmatic ability is "how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language" (p.5), which positions language use as a discourse-related practice. This is fundamental to understanding learner experiences in an online pre-sessional environment, as what they have learnt before will meet what they do in the course environment, which links to what they seek to do after they complete the pre-sessional programme.

Students' behavior during the process of learning online reveals a clearer image about their identities such as how they want to frame their knowledge and voices. Do they prefer working in groups or independently? Do they help others, or work for themselves? Do they prefer to stay in the background, or do they feel comfortable being noticed and sharing their ideas? Based on a study conducted by Daher & Shabarin (2020), learners' identities could be influenced differently during online education. The study targeted mathematics students who started learning online due to the global pandemic. The results showed that the changes in the features of students' identities could be divided into three themes: A feature that does not appear/disappear, a feature that appears/disappears, and a feature changes its extent. Most of the features in this study relates to emotions, effort, and persistence in learning mathematics. In terms of the features that do not appear/disappear, some students indicated that their emotions, effort, and persistence towards mathematics have been continued while some of them have noticed changes in their responsibilities towards mathematics, whether these responsibilities were negatively or positively influenced their progress and learning performance. On the other hand, many students reported changes to the extent of certain features of their identities within the online educational environment (Daher & Shabarin, 2020). As my study focuses on a pre-sessional programme, it

requires consideration of the effects on myriad elements, including commitment to developing language, willingness to communicate, perceived relationships with the content of their disciplines, and their wider trajectories as students (McCroskey & Bear, 1985; Norton, 1995; Wenger, 1998; Bukhari et al, 2015). All of these points are likely to influence each other, and different stakeholders (related to communication, study skills, or academic content delivery) should be interested in each area and the relationships between them. Some students increase their effort, persistence, and responsibilities in learning when communication with teachers is limited, and that might increase feelings of responsibility (Gray & Diloreto, 2016).

Students in an online learning environment might appreciate the sense of anonymity provided in this environment as they are physically unknown. In other words, their race, gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, and culture, which might impact heavily on student's interactions with others in face-to-face environment, are likely to be more negotiable online (Tomei et al, 2008), which has clear implications for identity and ecology. This might have a positive influence on students, as this anonymity could reduce the biases and preconception and focus on the content and performance; however, implications for their identities and interactions, as they transition towards their disciplinary studies, are clear, as anonymity might be counter-productive to developing their academic identities and voices with their peers. Based on the options available, learners can often control the amount of anonymity they would show, and they construct their identity based on their social and learning needs (Tomei et al, 2008). Despite the sense of anonymity provided in many online learning environments, many students might encounter questions regarding their personal life such as relationship status (Tomei et al, 2008;). These findings align with other studies who stated the online learning environment and identity shift (e.g. Sarac, 2014; Foster & Shah, 2021)

Some students might encounter issues fitting in with others in the virtual educational environment. Such challenges could involve shy students, who need time and space to interact comfortably with instructors and peers. As a result of this, some students will perceive that they do not belong in this environment and are therefore not transitioning through, but more trespassing on, this space. Lawenthal & Dennen (2017), who investigated the correlation between social presence, identity, and community, state that students' sense of (non-) belonging within the online environment might cause feelings of disconnection in different ways within the online environment, in relation to, for example, professional, academic, and ethnic factors, which is called marginalisation. Marginalisation is the feeling of being an outsider among others, who are seen as the in-group. For instance, Chinese students have been reported that they have been laughed at in international English-medium settings (Lam, 2004). In another study, Kramsch et al. (2000) have stated the

Chinese immigrant high school students encountered discrimination because of their 'weak' accent while speaking English. Fong et al., (2016) confirmed the point that certain types of students are being classified as nonproficient. As a result of this positioning, learner's confidence might be decreased which might lead to a decrease in their interaction with fluent speakers.

On the other hand, in terms of comparing interaction throughout face-to-face or virtual environments, Jarrell & Freiermuth (2005) reported that English as a foreign language Japanese students indicated that the online environment is more motivating for several reasons, such as experiencing less pressure, and reducing social barriers due to the focus on the content rather than the individuals features or characteristics. Moreover, Beavois' (1992) study, explored English native speakers learning French through an online platform, and they indicated the amount of freedom to express themselves without fear of being rejected by the natives. These issues may not impact on students directly, but they could be seen as potential issues related to ways of communicating and identifying online, and they might influence teachers' or students' actions and choices on the presessional programme. Eventually, the virtual environment might provide the chance for students to create their version of identity. Not only students who might create their own version of identity in the new learning environment, but also teachers who adopted a new form of teaching.

2.8.1.3 **Teacher identity**

Teacher identity is defined 'teachers' self-understanding in relation to contextual idiosyncrasies, which, in connection with other participators and discourses, shape the teachers' dynamic perceptions' (Nazari & Seyri, 2020; 3). This means it can be seen as the teacher's sense of self which is unstable and dynamic entity that is in on-going changing process. Teacher identity is constructed by teacher's personality, historical background, sociocultural localities, knowledge, skills, learning history, previous experiences, and communities they belong to (Bukor, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Yazan, 2018; Nazari & Seyri, 2020). It involves agency, emotions, self-efficacy, and positioning, and it is negotiated through the sense made by any experiences including personal and professional aspects (Sachs, 2005).

Teachers' professional identity is one of the basic concepts of their profession. Teachers' professional identity helps them to construct their ideas and thoughts about their ways of teaching and acting in the classroom and with learners in the educational institution (Sachs, 2005). Teacher identity is the essential component of teachers' professional learning and shapes their cognition and professional practices. Identity has been seen as related to concepts that guide and characterise educational stakeholders' functioning such as cognition, practice, professional

membership, and professional growth. Teacher identity could be defined as a significant aspect that involves teacher's decision-making about practices, course content, and their relationship with students (Beijaard et al., 2004). It stresses understanding the individuals' socio-historical backgrounds in shaping their perceptions and future selves (Burke & Stets, 2009; Nazari & Seyri, 2020).

In many areas of educational development, teachers have been found to recognise the importance of transformation in their roles and identities (Nazari & Seyri, 2020). During the pandemic, teachers had to adopt new context of teaching and carry on the process of learning within unfamiliar and unexpected circumstances (Flores & Gago, 2020; Flores & Swennen, 2020). Changes that resulted from COVID-19 crisis have raised questions regarding the nature of the new environment as well as the encountered challenges to rethink ways and educating teachers to adopt the new scenarios that are unknown. As teacher professional identity is not stable, this is important for my study to expose the influence of the change in the education system on teachers' practices, thinking and identity positioning.

2.8.1.3.1 **Teacher online identity**

In the online environment, teacher's identity has been seen as shifting from "a didactic purveyor of information" to "an interactive instructor" (Park, 2011, p. 179). Online platforms have offered the opportunity for teachers to reshape and reconstruct their professional practices (Lantz-Andersson, Lundin & Selwyn, 2018; Nazari & Seyri, 2020). Using technology and the Web in teaching processes promote teachers' engagement with various affordances in online communities that provide easy and fast access to educational resources and access added benefits such as access to cross-cultural or intercultural communication (Nazari & Seyri, 2020).

Online teaching could reshape the teachers' sense of agency and their feelings of belonging to their communities. Therefore, on online platforms, teacher identity involves the way teachers utilize multiple linguistic and extra-linguistic artefacts to establish their changeable identities in response to membership in their communities through applying technology and Web (Nazari & Seyri, 2020). There are several types of online teacher identities that could help in analysing the data that will be collected to understand teachers' attitudes within the e-classroom. A study was conducted by Lu & Curwood (2015), who examined 61 teachers' posts in an online discussion group on Facebook and interviewed eight teachers to investigate their identity work/identity positions. The results revealed six types of teachers' identities: sociable, supportive, open, helpful, reliant, and hidden. The previous categorization of these identities were combined based on relational and performative perspectives on identity. These emerging identities do not fully cover the entire

personalities; alternatively, they illustrate how they present and conceptualise themselves based on their comments and postings. Consequently, participants, in their comments and posts, showed multiple identities, such as being supportive and reliant all at once.

The shift in teacher's identity could happen as a shift in their modes of belonging, such as changing an educational institution or a forced change due to particular circumstances (Flores & Day, 2006; Cheng & Cheng, 2014). Zimmerman (1998) claims that identity is usually visible and is assigned based on physical or cultural signs, like the shift from physical to online communities. An example for that is the change in the educational system due to the spread of COVID-19. This shift does not only provide categorization of teachers as online instructors but also gives priority to teaching in acquiring particular identities due to the change. The latter type of shift is key to the focus of this study, as teachers have been forced to shift and extend their identities online as well as being forced to react immediately to a global event. Teacher's perception of the shift in the education system differs from one teacher to another, and could relate different disciplines and subjects too. The transition in the classroom could influence the identity components which are stated by Yazan (2018) in the following figure, which are contextual factors, cognition, emotions, agency, their learning, and community membership (see figure 2).

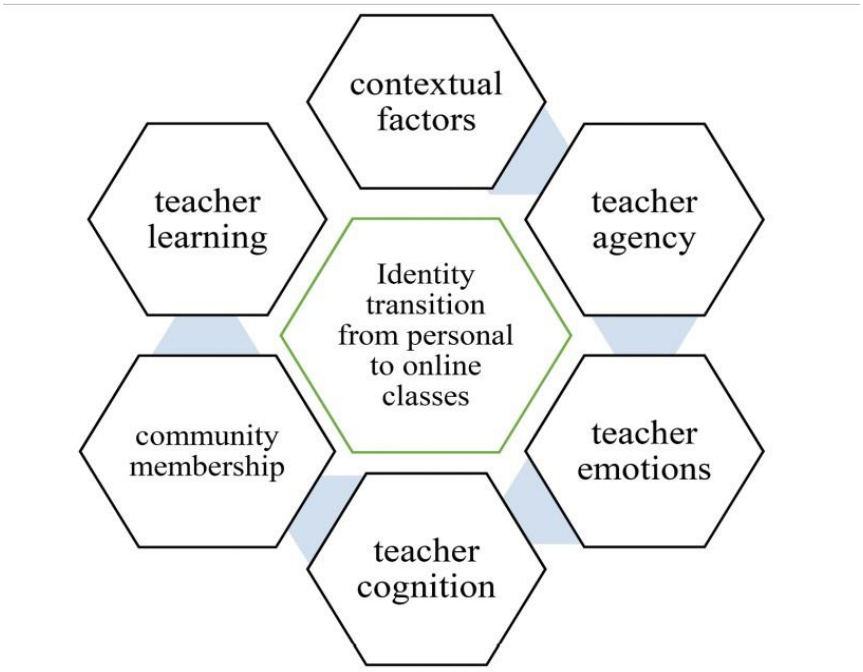


Figure 2 *Factors underlying the teachers' transition from personal to online classes.*

Accordingly, Nazari & Seyri (2020) investigated teacher identity transitions from one-to-one classrooms to an online course (see figure 3). They employed a qualitative approach to develop an understanding of the issue by using six teachers from different disciplines, with ages ranging from

40 to 47. Teachers declared that the unexpected shift created tensions in teachers' transitions, as it increased their responsibilities, as mentioned above, to cope with the sudden situation despite the lack of preparation or the ability to exercise their agency. Accordingly, changes certainly occurred regarding teachers' identities leading to questions about how this happens in other programmes and settings, particularly large-scale and high-impact settings like pre-sessionals, where teachers are mostly employed on temporary contracts, while managing student transitions into their international university studies.

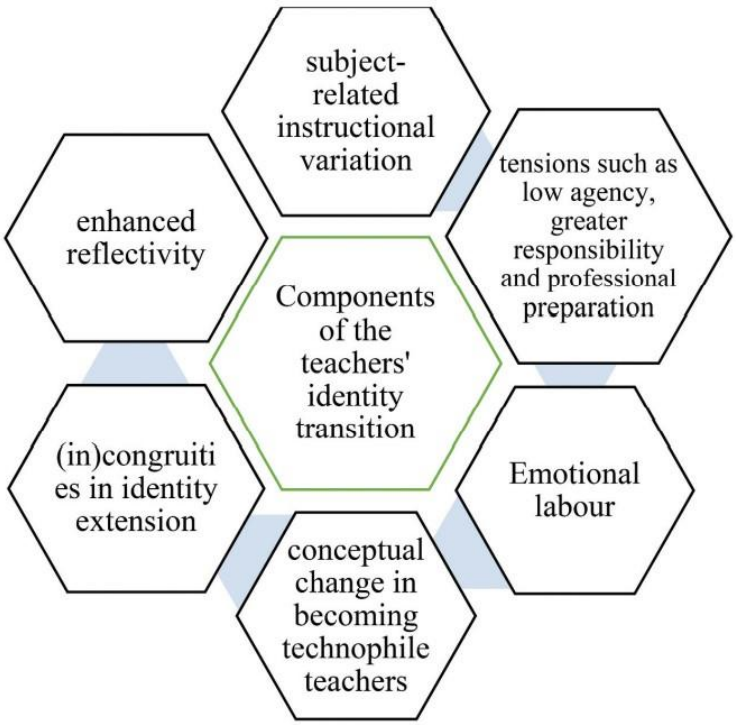


Figure 3 The features characterising the teachers' identity shift.

Based on Nazari & Seyri (2020) study's findings, the following framework of the six teacher identity components was developed, describing the teachers' identity development from the physical to online environment.

1. Subject-related instructional variation: this shows how teachers from various disciplines perceived the online context differently. For example, the teachers of hard sciences, e.g., chemistry and physics, prefer the traditional teaching context as it is more suitable environment to explain and demonstrate the content more effectively.

2. Tensions such as low agency, greater responsibility, and low professional preparation: participants mentioned many tensions regarding the transformation to the online context. They stated several elements that negatively affected their ability to act in alignment with their standards of conduct, including lack of facilities, internet connection issues, lack of interaction

with students, and assessment challenges. One of the examples is students who do not have internet access or cell phones, or who struggle with internet costs. Teachers expressed the increase of their responsibilities due to the shift to online classes, associated with the lack of preparation to transfer to online teaching.

3. Emotional labour: teachers expressed the shift of the education system caused a highly emotional change, with multiple feelings of excitement, surprise, confusion, and selfsatisfaction. According to the framework, the emotional labour was originated from two themes. The initial theme concerns self-perception during the shift to online classes. The second theme relates to their varied emotional states in relation to their students, comparng their online and face-to-face identities.

4. Conceptual change in becoming technophile teachers: several teachers perceived the new medium of teaching as an opportunity to enhance their understanding of professionalism and professional practices. The transformation to the virtual environment enabled them to familiarise themselves with technology and possible techniques to be employed in education. The shift to online teaching allows them to transfer from technophobe instructors to encompassing technology as technophile teachers. It also influenced their perception of communication with students via online platforms.

5. (In)congruities in identity extension: an interesting aspect during the online discussion is the differences and similarities in the way teachers showed their perception of their face-to-face and online classes. Group of teachers preferred to retain the same identity, adjusting to a perceived negative sociocultural influence of the constant changing of their identities. On the contrary, there are teachers who support the idea of developing new identities as online tutors, clarifying that the new context provides affordances that enables developing such identity.

6. Enhanced reflectivity: teachers stated the positive impact of the shift to online classes on their perspectives regarding educational practices. Besides offering new chances for learners' engagement, it offered them the opportunity to be more technology oriented as they improved their skills in utilizing technology, explore creative teaching techniques, as well as understanding the advantages and disadvantages of education in general, besides their own teaching practices in particular.

Shifts in the UK higher education system during the pandemic could influence power dynamics within the classroom. Literature on power dynamics highlights how the classroom can be a small community that mirrors the prevailing ideologies, expectations, and perceptions of the larger

community. These broader influences on the classroom environment are discussed in many studies (see Green & Bloome, 1997; Crang & Cook, 2007; Darder, Baltodoano & Torres, 2009).

Fairclough (1989) explained the process of establishing, cultivating, and sustaining the rights and wrongs within specific communities, which often serve the interests of the dominant group, and often at the expense of the marginalized. He emphasizes how these standards have become established and accepted as common knowledge, often without being challenged as well as maintaining the existing social hierarchy.

The interconnection between ideology and power plays a pivotal role in the formation and persistence of power dynamics. Berlin (1988) asserts that power is an inherent component of ideology, as both shaped and strengthened by it, ultimately deciding who has agency and what can be accomplished. Considering the profound influence of commonly accepted assumptions on shaping societal norms concerning behaviour, values, and beliefs, deviating from these norms is often met with limited social acceptance. Consequently, individuals who dare to challenge or disregard these norms, whether consciously or unconsciously, face the risk of being stigmatized, rejected, looked down upon, or at the very last, misunderstood. According to Kearney et al. (1984), power in education is often defined as the teacher's capacity to influence students to engage in actions they would not have otherwise undertaken if not for that influence. This definition underlines teacher's ability to shape student behaviour.

Analysing classroom interaction through discourse and conversation analysis offers a rigorous approach to assessing power dynamics at the micro-level, making it particularly suitable for an empowering curriculum. Discourse analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings conveyed in classroom interactions, while conversation analysis specifically focuses on power relations manifested through turn-taking, questioning, interruptions, arguments, challenges to authority, or compliance with it. In other words, it examines the quantity and quality of students' speech in relation to the teachers' speech and how teacher power interacts with student dynamics.

In Bartlett's (2005) study, although a teacher initially expressed desire to hear from all the students in the class, it became evident that students' freedom of expression was consistently constrained by the limits set by the teacher. For example, during the study in one of the initial class sessions, everyone experienced a sense of overwhelm due to the extensive course requirements, readings, and assignments. The teacher's authority was particularly evident on that day, even though their humour frequently concealed it. However, the exercise of power was subject to negotiation right from the beginning when one of the participants voiced her dissatisfaction with the obligation to observe two sites as part of the course demands. She explained her challenges as a full-time

teacher, the responsibilities of caring for a child with special needs, and her enrolment in other courses, making it impractical for her to observe two sites. This prompted the researcher to wonder how many other students shared similar concerns about the two-site requirement, but hesitated to voice them. It also left the researcher curious about the relief experienced by some students when their classmate raised the issue. The extent of these feelings became apparent when all the students, without exception, chose to observe only one site. The revelation of this unanimous choice offers insights into classroom discourse that may or may not come as a surprise to those familiar with such dynamics. It also shows the layers of structures, interactions, and power dynamic that interact, and require researchers to operate with an open and critical lens when researching perceptions, choices, and practices in an online environment.

Power is generally recognised as the capacity of an individual or collective to exert in influence over others or compel them to act in ways they would not have done otherwise, and has been characterised through various perspectives. Hooks (2003) observed how power dynamics and authority, particularly with regards to race, gender, culture, and class, permeate the educational environment. In her work, 'Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope' Hooks advocated for educational relationships that foster learning between students and teachers, ensuring that no one holds the power to dominate the classroom space. This approach entails embracing a decentralized hierarchy and fostering a sense of community and autonomy. According to Hooks, the classroom should be a nurturing space that enriches lives and expands minds, promoting an empowering sense of mutual support where teachers and students collaborate as partners to effect social change.

Engaging in intercultural dialogue fosters an exploration of an individual's preconceptions and understandings of culture, identity, citizenship and society (Merryfield, 2000; Paige, 1993; Sunal and Christensen, 2002; Tyson et al., 1997). By discussing power dynamics within the learning environment from an intercultural perspective, teachers and students can actively compare and contrast their cultural and social experiences, while critically examining how their notions of identity, race, gender, culture and class are shaped within a supportive and secure space (Sears, 2011). This type of dialogue becomes particularly enlightening when comparing educational contexts between North and South America, as limited research has been conducted in this comparative context.

2.8.2 **Ecological Perspective**

This section maps the second theoretical frameworks connected to the concept of this study, which is the ecology of learning. This study aims to explore the interrelations between the components within the learning environment, and the COVID response in (higher) education intersects individual roles and practices, and the characteristics of online spaces, and the institutional and social contexts and purposes they had to bridge.

Ecology as a scientific discipline is defined as the study of the interrelations between any environment and its organisms, and the interaction between the organisms in the same environment (Haeckel, 1866). Van Lier (2004) has defined ecology as the study of the environment or specific ecosystems. Two approaches were identified as basic approaches to ecological research, which are shallow ecology and deep ecology. Shallow ecology concerns such fields as environmental engineering, recycling, and pollution control, while deep ecology concerns critical perspective and methods that consider the full complexity and mutual processes that combine to produce a certain environment (Van Lier, 2004).

This study will provide a brief overview relating to the ecology of language, or eco-linguistic approach, which focuses on interaction between language and its surroundings, and which is emerging in the interdisciplinary field of linguistic and environmental studies (Chen, 2016). Linguistic ecology is defined as the study of relationships between the language and the elements of its environment (Haugen, 1972). It is necessary to include with these further considerations that encompass wider study skills, transitions, and the objectives connected to promoting diversity and internationalisation in higher education. This goal requires exploring and understanding wider ecology that goes beyond language, including the factors that influence academic success and academic integration. Pre-sessional programmes have a focus on language within academic communication, but this focus relates to broader institutional and disciplinary factors, as well as narrower factors relating to the task and group dynamics at a particular moment.

Haugen's writings in linguistics and philosophy primarily study the spoken and written forms of different languages and the ways they exist and are used in multilingual communities. The ecological approach focuses on the interaction, activities, and language use of learners and tutors, and all the elements among the learning environment, not only socially but also physically and symbolically (Van Lier, 2004; Garner, 2005). Haugen believes that ecology consists of three components, which are the organism, its environment, and the interaction or the connection process between them (Garner, 2005). Van Lier (2010) stated that the approach's main focus is academic, professional, and pedagogical work, and that 'work' incorporates practices, research,

and teaching in equal measurements where teachers, researchers, and students are all involved in the teaching and learning process. This study aims to understand the surroundings of the targeted context and the social and cultural settings of teachers and learners in the pre-sessional course at the University of Southampton. It aims to understand the layers of meaning in teachers' and students' interactions within the language use and learning environment. The true environment of language is where the society uses the language (Haugen, 1972); however, in distance learning, the interaction and use of language will be through the interaction with teacher, learners, content, and technology. Further questions can also be asked about the international nature of language and communication in academia, whether considering the forms of English used, or the multilingual potential of communication in international higher education.

In the learning environment, all the communication acts have multiple reasons, causes, and interpretive potential, which all depend on all the participants in the setting (Swain, 2008). For language ecology, Fill & Steffensen (2014) explained that language doesn't exist in one ecology, it exists in several of them, such as symbolic ecology, natural ecology, and sociocultural ecology. Symbolic ecology relates to the language or symbol system in the multilingual speakers' brain. While the natural ecology relates to the biological and topographical surroundings where the language is spoken. The sociocultural dimension consists of social and cultural elements that influence the speaker and speech community. Lastly, cognitive ecology consists of the dynamic between the biological organisms and their environment (Fill & Steffensen, 2014).

Ecology of language has several characteristics that could be involved in the examination of language learning; these characteristics are relations, context, emergence, value, and quality (Van Lier, 2010). As this study aims to understand the influence of web-based platforms on learners and teachers' engagement and trajectories, these characteristics could be used to investigate the relationship between the elements in the targeted environment in a way to understand the connection between these elements and their affordances.

Van Lier (2010) believed that every statement has multiple layers of meaning, which is not only connected to the present but also related to the past and future. In other words, every utterance relates to the past and future of the person/persons participated in the speech, the surrounding environment, and the identity the speaker conveys. As he stated, "Every utterance embeds layers of historicity and identity, as well as presenters" (Van Lier, 2010; 3). Van Lier provided an example that occurred during a content-based lesson relating to popular cases of brain damage in English Language classroom in a secondary school in the United States. They were working in groups to summarise what they had read about, when one of the students had the idea to use the word "penetrated" to describe how the piece of method went in the worker's skull. She explained to her

teacher that this is a difficult word to use, and using a simple word is more sufficient by saying *"I know English".* The teacher replied *"yes! But psychological English".* The student affirmed her identity as a competent English speaker, and pushed away from the identity of a Latina English learner. This conversation between teacher and student shows the complexity of the interaction which includes language proficiency, academic expectation, cultural background, and identity positioning.

Relationships are one of the main aspects of an ecology is defined by relationships between its components. In the human world, it is possible to distinguish between the physical (such as clouds and trees), social (such as houses, classroom, schools, and families), and symbolic (such as ideas, stories, and histories) relationships. Van Lier (2010) stated an example about the ways the previous levels could interact in the same environment "…just saying, "look at that!" relates one person to another person through language (plus possibly a pointing gesture) and establishes joint attention to a particular physical property in the environment, perhaps a rainbow in the sky. Joint attention makes further linguistic utterances relevant, such as, "Wow!" and may invoke symbolic (cultural, aesthetic, superstitious) connections, further talk, jokes about crocks of gold, predictions about tomorrow's weather, and so on." (Van Lier, 2010; 4). The provided example shows how relationships are created within and between physical, social, and symbolic levels in the human ecosystem, and how language could construct, sustain, and develop these relationships.

According to Van Lier (2020) quality is another characteristic of ecologies, which is seen as an important aspect in all educational activities; however, it is defined in different ways ignoring its structure and implementation. Van Lier explained that the quality definition could depend on personal preference, past experience, future goals, practical opportunities, and different other elements. In the education sector, following the standards and quality of learning/teaching are not similar, but closely linked. For example, if the education system established a set of standards, teachers and schools are responsible to implement them (Van Lier, 2010).

The third main characteristic of ecology of learning is agency, which is defined as the "change of state or direction, or even a lack of movement where movement is expected" (Van Lier, 2010; 4). An example of this is the movement and negotiation when someone is expected to take part in a conversation, and how this is signalled and reliant on layers of meaning within the setting and between the individuals. This is an essential concept in the process of learning, and is a wide and fundamental concept, and compares to the related concepts of autonomy, motivation, and investment. A common proposal is that inactive learners will acquire knowledge, while the cooperative learner will learn as they apply their agency. The concept of agency is connected to identity, which emphasizes the social and interactive aspects of agency. This also links to discourse,

ideology, and relational identity, as agency will link closely to structures that give students an impression of whether and how agency is valued.

The pandemic caused a process of redefining the context in which pre-sessional learning takes place. The process involves altering various elements and factors within the educational setting such as curriculum, teaching methods, polices, technology integration, and learning spaces, to adopt to new circumstances or to align evolving educational philosophies and goals. The goal is to create a more relevant and effective learning environment that meets the needs of students and supports their educational journey. In this change, teachers have to employ skills that they have acquired from their previous experience, while also developing new ones.

As mentioned above, the concept of "recontextualization", introduced by Van Oers (1998) is relevant here, and can be positioned in relation to ecological framework. The recontextualization of the environment refers to the process which knowledge is taken from an original context to be adopted or transferred to suit a new context, such as the classroom setting. A relevant characteristic of this concept is considering how the objective of the activity (i.e., the goal) affects how resources, such as ideas or symbolic practices, are utilized (Van Oers, 1998). Based on Guile (2019), the main three principles that from the foundation of recontextualisation are purpose, context, and process. Vygotsky's (1987) idea of recontextualization emphasizes the dynamic nature of knowledge, which enables individuals to apply concepts learned in one situation to new scenarios. This process facilitates knowledge generalization, transfer to diverse contexts, and adaptation to address novel challenges. Fundamentally, the meaning and significance of knowledge are not fixed but can vary based on the context of its application. Vygotsky's focus on contextualisation emphasizes the significance of considering the sociocultural and historical context in learning and development. It also highlights the exchange between individual cognition and the social-cultural environment, where learning becomes an active process of engaging with the world and its multifaceted contexts.

From my experience working on the Pre-sessional programme, a change occurred in the education system, whereby teachers had to adjust and apply their abilities in diverse ways, involving an urge to become proficient in adopting various digital tools and platforms to effectively deliver lessons in order to main the continuity of teacher and learning process (also see Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020; Lamirin, 2021). Lamirin (2021) explained that teachers must mobilize their innovation ability to design curriculum plans, incorporating expected advancements in teaching methods, tools, and aids to facilitate knowledge transformation without any limitations. Moreover, teachers should adapt to various technologies and learning applications using their technical knowledge and proficiency, as they are crucial elements for the teaching process. However, when teachers and

students are both forced to embrace new approaches in the educational process, it could lead to physical and psychological challenges. For example, in a study conducted by Almendingen et al. (2021), only 30% of teacher participants had previous experience with online teaching, while only 44% of students were familiar with online learning. This study also needs to consider unfamiliarity with the learning/teaching setting, or some of the processes or forms within that, along with the possibility of low levels of technological competence could influence perceptions, interactions, and practices.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

As this research intends to explore attitudes, behaviour, positioning, and practices, it employs a qualitive research approach. It draws on phenomenology within this qualitative framework, as it aims to explore a new and potentially unfamiliar medium of learning through different methods, including interviews, discussions, and observations (Lester, 1999). Qualitative research could be simply defined as a type of research where data is not numerus (Punch, 2014), and the focus here is on the qualities and deeper-level perceptions and experiences of students. This approach is adopted because of the shift in meaning that has accompanied 'distance learning' and web-based learning recently, and the associated need to explore the meaning of ideas and practices in new ways. This requires researchers to ask open questions about what labels such as 'English', 'presessional', 'writing', 'communicating', 'watching', 'reading', or even 'teacher' and 'student', mean to students and teachers during this time of the change and the integration of Web-based activity. As this is phenomenologically-informed research, it is interested in understanding the experience, as its purpose is collecting information about state of the interpretation of a phenomenon, in order to illustrate the perception of individuals or groups of people (Lester, 1999).

3.2 Phenomenological research

Research in the broad phenomenological paradigm focuses on the qualities and deeper levels of perception and experiences of social concepts, which can explore elements of why people behave the way they do, and how this relates to conditions around them, and, in particular, their perceptions of those conditions (Draucker, 1999; Orbanic, 1999; Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). According to Embree (1997), phenomenology identifies seven distinct perspectives which are descriptive, naturalistic, existential, generative, genetic, hermeneutic, and realistic. The two approaches employed in the majority of phenomenological investigations are descriptive and hermeneutic.

Descriptive phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and is considered as a philosophical and descriptive approach (Draucker, 1999; Maggs-Rapport, 2000). Husserl's main point is that consciousness is the essential aspect in all human experiences (Wojnar & Swanson,

2007). He aimed to overcome the personal biases which are considered as obstacles to reach the state of pure consciousness. According to Wojnar & Swanson (2007), Husserl focused on the idea of intentionality, which means illustrating the lived experience from the first-person point of view.

The second approach, hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, is the approach adopted in this study. Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology was developed by Heidegger, who is one of Husserl's students, who focused beyond the fundamental idea or essence of phenomenology (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Heidegger (1962) introduced the concept of 'dasein' which means the being or existence of the human individual. Through this concept, he emphasized that individuals cannot separate themselves from the different contexts that shape their decisions and choices, and give significant meaning to their lived experiences (Campbell, 2001). Banner (1994) summarized the main principles of hermeneutic phenomenology according to Heidegger as (1) human beings are inherently social and dialogical beings; (2) understanding is always a priority in the collective practices of the human community, within societies, cultures, languages, skills, activities, and shared meanings; (3) we are perpetually in a hermeneutic circle of understanding; (4) interpretation relies on a mature understanding between the researcher and participants; and (5) interpretation requires an interactive and dialogical relationship between the interpreter and the interpreted. Hermeneutic phenomenology is based on the belief that the researcher and participants engage in investigation with a framework of understanding that is influenced by their individual backgrounds. Through the interaction and interpretation, they generate a shared comprehension of the phenomena under investigation.

This approach is linked to the corresponding field of ecology employed in this study, which allows for an understanding of the spaces and meaningful engagement of people and processes in this context, alongside the phenomenological lens, which provides deeper focus on individuals' perceptions and experiences of the social concepts emerging in those spaces. Both of these are relevant and important for such widespread phenomenon as the post-COVID digital shifts in programmes that facilitate international transition into UK higher education, as these link to wider experiences, expectations, and experiences of students and staff.

Developing an understanding of social phenomena and the interaction between individuals within their social environment is one of the key features of a phenomenological study (Punch, 2014). Phenomenological research focuses on being open to different perspectives in order to access and understand variational behaviours and phenomena, reporting experiences and interpretation that might lead to developing new concepts as well as employing flexible, emergent, and systematic research processes (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006). One of the important features of qualitative

research is flexibility in investigating issues in real-life contexts or sensitive topics without causing discomfort to the participants or disruption to the practices being investigated, and this is a virtue in this investigation, both for the insights elicited and for the open framing of the participants and their voices. As this study looks at participants in a high-stakes educational setting during a shift in practices and experiences, a qualitative investigation that combines observations with the voices of different stakeholders is appropriate due to its flexibility, openness, and exploratory nature. Details of the methods employed are explained below.

3.3 Research instruments

Three methods were chosen to answer the research questions (see section 1.4): document analysis, classroom observation, and interviews (both unstructured and semi-structured). The reason for using more than one method is to avoid the impact of potential biases or assumptions, to allow for multiple and richer insights into phenomena and participants' perceptions of them, and to gain contextual and personal insights into what a multifaceted phenomenon is (Patton,1999; Groenewald, 2004; Heale & Forbes, 2013), A key value of phenomenological research is that it seeks to avoid assumptions of what social phenomena mean or what value they have, and it situates meaning in present interactions, which emphasise a need for the researcher to get close to the spaces and activities that students are involved with, in order to understand meanings within them. This is particularly useful for emerging phenomena, as in this transitional context involves people with different backgrounds and motivations. In order to work effectively, awareness of both the institutional context (documents, materials, and policies), and the individuals engaging with it (students, teachers, and their individual choices and interpretations), are important in developing a picture of the practices and their meaning to these participants.

3.3.1 **Documentation Analysis**

This method concerns the analysis of core programme documents, such as assessment briefs, module and programme specifications, as well as analysis of what students encounter, such as materials, information, and tasks. Document analysis is a systematic procedure to review, analyse, and interpret data to supplement the gained information to obtain further understanding of the phenomenon (Bowen, 2009; Carbin & Strauss, 2008). With a phenomenological approach looking at how artefacts, constructs, and ideas are perceived, a systematic understanding of how the programme is presented and structured to students and staff to establish shared contextual awareness in relation to perceptions of the programme, such as how criteria and learning

objectives might frame abilities that students understand and are motivated to develop, or that they struggle to understand and resist. Understanding these elements helps the study access student experience and identify affordances and barriers to learning and transitions around particular concepts, materials, or tools.

Document analysis allows me to understand students' and teachers' experiences, and the environment that they are encountering in more depth. According to Bowen (2009), documents for evaluation could include various artefacts, from advertisements to diaries and journals. Documents contain key language, positioning, and structures that can provide important insights into what the students do, what is explicit and implicit, and how tutors and students are responding to that (Bowen, 2009). Understanding the documents and online resources provides insight into student positioning in terms of structure and institutional environment, but it is important not to assume that this is the 'learning environment', as this approach taken in this study sees an environment as an active ecology, in which people interact with various resources in different ways (Van Lier, 2004). What students and teachers actually do, understand, and experience is based on their own ideas, identities, and prior experiences (e.g., educational, cultural, and social), and therefore the document analysis will form a backdrop for understanding how students and teachers engage with Web-based learning and communication in this context, and what meanings and interpretations are embedded within that.

It is therefore important that this study analyses key documents, but I have tried to divide this between documents that set the context, and documents that inform observational and interview data. While conducting the document analysis, I had to resist making my own conclusions about the meanings of documents, and this became particularly apparent when analysing and reporting other data, which did not map onto the initial document analysis. This emphasised the usefulness and appropriateness of a phenomenological approach, as most meaningful documents are embedded in practices, and are used as artefacts in ongoing interactions, and therefore their textual forms and 'objective' meanings can be out of alignment with their meaning and use in practice. I therefore decided to reduce the document analysis section to a contextualisation function, but to bring up insights from document analysis when presenting findings that emerged from students and teachers more directly. The initial document analysis is useful, however, in showing how meanings can change, be confused, or be recontextualised in practice.

3.3.2 **Classroom Observation**

Given the nature of this study, the second instrument used in this study is observations of the learning environment and participants within it. This is an important method for gaining both direct insights into the nature and types of interaction in the group, and forming shared understandings that inform researcher-participant conversations about their experiences in this environment. Classroom observations provide a wider picture of the environment of the studied phenomena as well as the interaction and interpretation on the programme (MacDonald, 2016; Ciesielska et al., 2018). As participants are asked to share their understanding, observations, and experiences on their own terms in relation to their practices and relationships relating to their role on the programme, observation helps facilitate a shared understanding of the practices, routine activities, and the nature of the context in which teachers and students engage, while also providing shared reference points for interviews.

Observation refers to a method for collecting data by monitoring and reviewing processes, nonverbal communication, individual behaviours, or the culture of people (Ciesielska et al., 2018). Without observing the activities on this pre-sessional programme, I would be more of an outsider, and conversations would lack a common foundation for co-construction of meaning. In this study, I conduct qualitative, informal observations, in which I record field notes, but not frame or record for detailed analysis, as it is not my intention to explain the activities from the researcher's perspective, but to understand what the participants are engaging with in order to understand their perceptions of what they engage with and how they engage with it. This is possible due to my close proximity to the learners and teachers in an ongoing way through the programme. As mentioned above, observations were important in providing shared contextual knowledge and experiences, which bring the researcher closer to the interviewees, and allow for deeper discussions of their practices and perceptions. As a result of the observations, I was able to recognise the practices and contexts in which teachers and students engage, and to provide supplementary data to help clearly understand and interpret the interview data, and the contexts in which different perspectives are focused.

3.3.3 **Interviews**

The third method used in data collection is interviews, which is the most powerful method used in phenomenological research (Eatough & Smit, 2017). This was elicited the most useful data for this study, as this research aims to understand perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of online behaviour and actions. Interviews could be defined as the scheduled interaction between a

minimum of two individuals to gather information through dialogue. There are generally considered to be three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Bihu, 2020). Unstructured and semi-structured interviews are the specific types of interviews used for data collection in this study.

Semi-structured interviews are the most widespread format for interviewing in social sciences, as they aim to understand and describe the interpretation of a certain phenomenon (Leavy, 2014), and this is particularly relevant to phenomenological research, which is characterised by sensitivity to individuals' perceptions and framing of social phenomena. Semi-structured interviews involve open-ended questions about the main points relating to the research topic, and a list of the main themes that the researcher needs to cover (Hancock et al. 2009).

Unstructured interviews refer to the informal and conversational interviews where the questions of the interviews are not planned and developed instantly during the interview (Gray, 2009). Unstructured interviews are also known as the in-depth conversation because they involve going deeply into units of the analysis leading to acquiring valuable information which concerns personal experiences and perspectives (Hofsi et al., 2014). Complementing semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews can establish a freer conversation, allowing for co-construction of the dialogue, and for participants to express their own framing of the discussion, which is important for a phenomenological study on emerging themes and practices (Kvale, 1996). The advantage of this type of interview is that it provides the chance to specify prior concepts that participants can clarify and refine, as well as giving the chance for them to mention the points that might not be expected or predicted by the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). Again, insights that are free from researcher framing are important forms of data for a phenomenological study on emergent phenomena that involve different perspectives, roles, and, potentially, cultural expectations or interpretations.

Unstructured and Semi-structured interviews enable this research to explore opinions and views in a way that allows for co-construction of meaning, and in a way that allows for my interest in the research to frame some of the discussion, but also for participants' ideas and accounts to be shared freely and on their own terms. Interviews facilitate interaction with participants and provide a chance to tell their stories from their own perspective (Kvale, 1996; Ryan et al., 2009; Smith et al. 2009). The programme and activities participants engage with will form a focus of much of the discussion, so the need for structure in interview topic management is reduced, and this shared contextual understanding, and co-constructed framing of the purpose and content of interviews, is suited to studies of emergent and dynamic phenomena, where assumptions should not be made

over what labels, roles, or actions mean to those in this environment. As the participants are reflecting on their engagement and practices, my role will be an interlocutor for part of the interview process, although I will draw their attention to areas for discussion at other times, as the purpose and focus of the study will be made clear from the beginning. It would be artificial to pretend that the research does not have a focus, or that the relationship between interviewee and interviewer is equal and natural (Kvale, 1996, Smith et al., 2009).

I conducted the interviews virtually, via MS Teams. The duration and the number of questions in each interview differed between participants, and between one interview and another, based on the direction of discussion and the amount that participants felt like sharing on the topics covered. The aim of conducting interviews is to reveal participants' perspectives, experiences, thoughts, and ideas towards the sudden change in the education system and shift to online programme, but to position this on different scales: micro (how this relates to actions, interactions, and identity work in ongoing, day-to-day practices); meso (how they interact with framing, policy, and goals in the institution and local groups); and macro (how they interact with their broader roles, identities, trajectories, and positions), which aligns with ecological frameworks that deal with different levels of influence in an environment. In order to understand participants' perspectives towards perceived change (and non-change) in their roles, identities, and trajectories through an ecological lens, input is needed on all three scales.

During studying the pre-sessional programme, my positionality was multifaced. My engagement was characterized by a dynamic interplay of teaching, research, and personal experience. As a Listening & Speaking tutor, not only I was actively engaged in developing the knowledge and skills of my students, but I was also simultaneously involved in researching and refining the program structure, as relevant to my role. This role was further enriched by my prior experience as a student in the pre-sessional program, providing me with invaluable insights into the challenges, trajectories, and aspirations of many of our learners. My prior experience as a former student was instrumental in shaping my perspective as an educator. This personal insight has informed my teaching approach, whereby I try to foster a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that encouraged growth and confidence, and I try to build on this each year I am a teacher in this context.

As well as having this personal experience of transitioning via the Pre-sessional Programmes as a student and teacher, I gained the insights that help me understand the differences that might be experienced by teachers and students between the face-to-face programme and the online

transitional programme. The experience of having my postgraduate work and development activities shift online during this period, and seeing the impact on students and educators around me, allowed me to understand elements of transitional education first hand, which also gave more input to help me critically examine tasks, practices, and the structure of the programme for their strengths and areas for improvements. Furthermore, my background as a former pre-sessional and postgraduate student at the same university allowed me to establish stronger connections with my learners. I understood the anxieties and aspirations inherent in new learning environments, which enabled me to offer tailored guidance and support, and to see areas where teachers and students experience barriers to achieving their goals, myself included. By leveraging my own experiences, I endeavored to inspire and motivate my students, instilling in them the belief that language proficiency is an achievable and transformative goal.

As a tutor, my positionality was defined by a blend of pedagogical responsibilities and scholarly enquiry. I approached teaching the Listening and Speaking module with a deep understanding of the curriculum's objectives and the diverse needs of our students, while being increasingly aware of difficulties that colleagues and students were having, which included myself and my students at times too. Drawing on my research background, I continually sought innovative methods to enhance the effectiveness of the modules I was teaching, incorporating new technologies, pedagogical approaches, and my understanding of student experience to optimize students' learning outcomes. This dual role empowered me to contribute to the ongoing development due to the pandemic, and this research facilitated opportunities to study the programme structure in more detail than I had before, to enter into dialogue with colleagues and observe their practice, and to look closely at student engagement, and discuss their views and practices in depth with them. I found that my approaches and practices around both teaching and research aligned well. I aimed to create a more responsive and dynamic learning environment for my own students, which catered for the evolving needs of our student body in this context, and I also sought to openly enquire into how teachers and students identified with the programme and each other, and how their engagement with the programme and its tools were seen to be successful or challenging. My role as a researcher allowed me to observe and investigate the programme from different angles via an interest in the people within it. This holistic approach and my position of enquiry not only enriched my pedagogical practice but could also contribute to the broader evolution of the programme through the insights gained, which, anecdotally, can be areas that educators relate to, and have inspired some to ask deeper questions around their own students' perceptions that lie behind their actions. By embracing my multifaceted role, I aspired to foster a culture of continuous improvement and student-centered learning, grounded in empathy, expertise, and innovation.

Perhaps the most important aspect of my positionality in this study is the way I can identify with student participants on this programme as both a Pre-sessional educator (which is relevant as they know I understand elements of the programme as they experienced it in this transitional period), and as a former pre-sessional who had experienced elements of their transitions before. This allowed me to gain trust and a kind of insider status, and also to be open in communication as I understood what they were experiencing from different angles. This also applied to teaching participants, as I could enter into conversations with them, and join their classes as an observer, not just as an outsider but as somebody who had a similar role and experience as them, and who was experiencing some of the same challenges as they were while also sharing in many of their goals. It was very helpful to be able to understand the contexts (past and present) that they described, as this allowed for open discussion that might not have been possible if the researcher were unfamiliar with the positioning of tutors, and the ways they encountered this context at the time of this research. I was surprised how sharing participants were, both in terms of students admitting they did not engage as they knew they should, or tutors revealing their frustrations and challenges. This is evidence of the way I was able to position myself as a (partial) insider to both types of participants.

3.4 Data collection process

As explained above, the framework used in the study intends to answer the research questions, and include methods to collect, analyse, and interpret the collected data in an open, flexible, and systematic way. After obtaining the permission of the programme management to access the PS programme for my study, receiving ethical approval within the institution, and receiving informed consent from participants, the data collection process began. The methods employed did not conform to a strict chronological sequence; instead, some methods were implemented at the same time.

3.4.1 **Method 1: Document analysis**

This method started a year before the programme I was researching began, and primarily revolved around the document analysis processes mentioned above, which I undertook to understand and obtain more information about the structure of the programme. The types of PS documentation analysed include core programme documents, such as assessment briefs, module and programme specifications, as well as analysis of what students typically encounter, such as instructions, materials, information, and tasks. The process of document analysis involved analysing the content

of the materials by, firstly, skimming, then reading more deeply, and finally categorizing the important points for the interpretation (Smith et al, 2009).

At the beginning of the process, I started reviewing the documents of the syllabus of the programme which were available on the staff SharePoint site. Each module had files related to the weekly objectives and materials, supplementary resources, guidelines, weekly meetings, assessment forms and templates, as well as the registration and attendance sheets. SharePoint is used by tutors (not students), and this is where all the materials and information they need during the programme are supplied. It enables easy collaboration for documents and file sharing such as PowerPoint, which could facilitate teamwork among individuals (AlJarf, 2010). I spent few months reviewing the objectives and content of the programme to be able to start the next stage of the data collection.

After reviewing the materials on SharePoint, I started analysing the structure and the materials available on Blackboard. Blackboard is the source of the programme materials prepared for the students. The PS Blackboard site includes pre- and post- live session materials, recorded lectures, library resources, discussion forums, and student support. Before each live session, learners will have pre-tasks in content folders. The pre-session tasks are the materials that students need to work on before the main live session, which help students to have an idea about the upcoming lesson, and engage with skills or activities before entering the live class. After the live session, there are more Blackboard tasks that students need to complete.

Additionally, I analysed the e-Assignments platform where students submit their formative and summative assessment, and where teachers post their feedback and marks. As Prakasha & Lhawang (2022) state, e-Assignment is a platform where students submit, and teachers evaluate and provide feedback on assessed work. Although this is not a site containing much interactive content, it is how students receive their marks and feedback, and is therefore a vital tool in how they interpret their performance.

Panopto is another platform used by teachers and students. It is introduced as software application used to record lectures and create presentations encompassing audio, video and screen capture elements (Cho & Kuyath, 2010). Students use Panopto to upload presentations, and there is an option for teachers to do the same, although there is no requirement for them to do so. Core videos are uploaded to Blackboard via Panopto by the curriculum management teams, so tutors are more likely to respond to central videos than to make new ones.

3.4.2 **Method 2: Classroom observation**

While still analysing the programme documents, the programme began, and I started preparing for classroom observations. I observed live sessions of the pre-sessional programme after obtaining permission from tutors and students of each class observed (both the students who were participating in the study as interviewees and the students who are attending the same live sessions). Four modules were observed, and I joined two live sessions of each one. The reason for observing each group twice was because I wanted to see how different content and points of the programme might influence interaction, and to begin examining the changes and differences in the attitude, behaviours, and identities of both students and teachers over time, which could be followed up in interviews. Before the observations, students were informed about the observation process by their tutors who gave them the information sheets.

Classroom observations complemented the accounts above, and these both boosted the insights I could gain as the researcher and increase what students and teachers could draw on when discussing their perspective towards the online programme with me in interviews. This allowed me to gain a wider image of the online course environment, as well as developing insights into how students' and teachers' behaviour during the live sessions aligned with the course structure (in the document analysis) and participants' perceptions of that behaviour (in the interview data). Moreover, my existence in the classrooms allowed me to be familiar to students and teachers, which helped me to form relationships with the participants of this study.

In the findings chapter (see chapter 4) classroom observation notes will be presented regarding classroom structure and students' and teachers' attitudes, as I perceived them. I observed each group twice, one session at the beginning of the programme and another session towards the end, and the way this was done also allowed me to understand more by drawing on my notes from the first observation and what I could perceive and interpret in the second session, as I could draw on my ongoing interactions with students and staff on the programme. I observed the groups of the teacher participants who were interviewed. The observed groups were a mix of the four modules: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. The following table illustrates the groups and dates of observation. I differentiated the classes with acronyms and the number of observations were referred to by numbers; for example, the first group is group A, with A1 being the first session, and A2 the second session.

Table 1 Observation timetable

Classroom No	*Date*
Class A1	*05/07/2021*
Class A2	*23/08/2021*
Class AY1	*06/07/2021*
Class AY2	*24/08/2021*
Class R1	*07/07/2021*
Class R2	*25/08/2021*
Class M1	*08/07/2021*
Class M2	*26/08/2021*

With awareness of this context, having been a tutor and student on Pre-sessional Programmes, and a teacher in other contexts, I am aware of the nuances in meaning that could be lost in a more reductive and compartmentalised approach to observations (such as those with pre-set features to account for). It is important for a qualitative, phenomenological study to see data through the perceptions of participants, and not to frame and interpret such data on the researcher's terms, as would be the case if quantifying, for example, teacher talking time, or forms of initiation, which might be perceived differently by participants in that environment, but would be framed more rigidly by a less dialogical approach to observational data. Teachers and students might also feel differently about engaging in a study that seeks to answer questions through observation rather than open lines of enquiry, and they responded positively to my attempts to develop a shared context for dialogue with them.

This treatment of observation does not come without caveats, however, as there is a possibility that the researcher misses certain points in the environment that a more systematic and recorded approach would identify. Notes are also rather interpretive and involve subjective judgement of what forms the focus in a particular class or interaction. This is why I employed multiple observations and tried to develop an understanding of practices as a participant (tutor) and from

the perspectives of others (asking both students and teachers about what I observed). Notes taken during observations mainly describe the environmental setting, verbal and non-verbal communication, feelings, emotions, and reflections/interpretations from the researcher (e.g., if an interaction links to an interview or previously observed interaction). I avoided video recording, as it is possible that participants would be made more conscious about external analysis of their performances being analysed and might make participants act more consciously (Hancock et al. 2009). Of course, my presence, which was announced through participant information sheets and consent forms, could influence the ways in which participants engage, but I tried to reduce this as much as possible through regular contact (in relatively free-flowing interviews that invite open input and participant interpretation), and by being as unintrusive as possible (not recording or systematically analysing the interaction taking place beyond other methods in which participants are involved).

As a final note, I would have liked to have conducted more observations, but two was the most I could achieve without being intrusive and demanding in an intensive and high-stakes programme. During the programme, it was clear that it is stressful and difficult when students feel ashamed of their performances, or teachers' activities and interactions do not go as planned, so two observations gave me data to discuss and insights into practices without putting pressure on participants, and making their actions feel evaluated.

3.4.3 **Method 3: Unstructured and semi-structured interviews**

During the phase of classroom observation, I have started interviewing participants. These interviews are not only reliant on the preparation done before the programme, but also on the notes collected while observing online sessions. I chose to conduct interviews to obtain more in-depth insights into the programme and practices, as well as explore more regarding students and teachers' perspectives on various areas of what they were doing and how they were doing it, and how they felt about that. As the number of the targeted teachers was 5, I was interested to have an interview with teachers from different modules. Five tutors agreed to volunteer in the interviews (2 Reading & Writing tutors: 3 Listening & Speaking tutors). The tutors were a mix of British and international backgrounds (see table below). Based on their volunteering, I was able to follow the intended observation schedule, observing students in the 4 different modules. At the beginning of the programme, as a Listening & Speaking tutor, I spoke to teachers during coordinators meeting asking for tutors to volunteer. After receiving responses from the target number of the study, I emailed the information sheet to the tutors.

The most important aspect in choosing the students was having variety of students, especially that most of the students were Chinese and Saudis. Eventually, I was able to interview five Chinese students, five Saudis, and two Thai, which made 12 in total. Two other interviews were cancelled as I was not able to get consistent input from the participants. As mentioned above, the types of interviews were semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour. The following table will include teacher participants' L1 and experience. The interviews were conducted in English (the second language of most of the participants and me). It is likely that interviewing participants in their first language (L1) will allow them to communicate easily and with greater control and specificity. While it is recommended to work in L1, there are limitations to consider in this context. A main point is that I am not proficient in Chinese or Thai, and participants with these L1s were not fluent in Arabic. Perhaps I could have gained more insights if I were proficient in their first language, but English was the best medium available to all participants. I was careful to communicate clearly, allow time for thinking and formulation, and to remove as much anxiety from the communicative situation as I could. I feel participants were able to communicate very well, and as we were discussing practices and structures that were communicated to them in English primarily, it was less of a challenge to speak in English than it might have been if discussing other topics. The names used in the table are pseudonyms.

Table 2

Participants	Previous/Pre-sessional course Experience at the UoS	L1
Adam	2-year F2F experience in EAP/UoS 1st online course in EAP/UoS	English
Rana	2-year F2F experience in EAP/UoS 1st online course in EAP/UoS	Arabic
Mila	Previous experience teaching in other institutions. No F2F experience in EAP/UoS 1st course with UoS/online	English
Kareem	One-year F2F experience in EAP/UoS 1st online course in EAP/UoS	Arabic
Sarah	Previous experience teaching in other institutions. No F2F experience in EAP/UoS 1st course with UoS/online	Arabic

Teachers' experience with Pre-sessional programmes

The following table illustrates student participants' L1.

Table 3 Student participants' profiles

Participants	L1
Aura	Arabic
Maria	Arabic
Hannah	Chinese
Rowen	Thai
Clare	Chinese
Ella	Chinese
Yasir	Arabic
Maya	Arabic
Kat	Arabic
Aria	Chinese
Kevin	Chinese
Nova	Thai

The following table shows a summary of the research instruments used in this study:
Table 4 Methods summary

Method	Duration	Number	Purpose
Documentation analysis	1 year	---	To check the course materials/criteria/platforms
Classroom observation	11 weeks	8 times	Students' behaviour Teachers' behaviour Interaction
Interviews (semi structured & unstructured)	1 month	12	To explore participants individuals' views and perceptions.

In summary, through this research design chapter, I outline how data are collected and analysed "in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy and procedure" (Ram, 2010:12). This research is qualitative, and it draws on phenomenology as a methodological and theoretical foundation. The phenomenological research is appropriate as it intends to explore behaviour, positioning, and practices through different communicative methods such as document analysis, interviews, discussions, and observations (Lester, 1999). This study followed three data collection instruments which were document analysis, classroom observation and unstructured and semi-structured interviews.

3.5 **Ethical considerations**

The official procedures at the University of Southampton regarding the ethical research processes were followed before embarking on the data collection phase of this study through to the completion of the research. The whole procedure was approved by Ethics and Research Governance Online (ERGO). All the participants of the study were provided with the Participants Information Sheet (See Appendix 2) that included the written information about the purpose of the study to ensure their fully understanding of the study before being involved in it. Furthermore, all

the participants in this study were asked if they are willing to participate in the study by providing them with a Consent Form (See Appendices 3 & 4) to be signed. The Consent Form gives the researcher the permission to use the data obtained from the participants in this study. Moreover, the participants were guaranteed that their names, identities, and the information obtained will remain anonymous and confidential. The participants were assured that the information will only be used for the purposes of this research and will not be made accessible to anyone else at their university.

It is very important to reassure participants about their anonymity and the ethical treatment of their data, but also, as previous researchers have emphasized, to assure them of how their participation could add value to research in the field (Hennink, Hutter, & Baily, 2010). In this case helping people understand the experiences of students and teachers in a time characterised by unique experiences around the COVID-19 pandemic. In the following section, I will explain the processes of collecting the data for the study. After finishing the interviews with students and teachers, I start analysing the collected data. In the following section, I will explain the followed process to analyse the data.

3.6 **Data Analysis**

As this study follows a broadly interpretive phenomenological approach, the data were analyzed drawing on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as it aims to understand rather than measure the content and complexity of meaning of participants' lived experiences (Smith et al., 1999; Chan et al, 2013). The processes of IPA are covered in more detail in the sections that follow, but below is an overview of the approach I took to data analysis.

Based on the IPA data analysis process, I firstly started with analysing each case separately as it is idiographic commitment. I started working with analysing the first case, then moved to the second case with the same strategy, and so on. In the first step, I transcribed each participant interview, then analysed each one of them by reading and re-reading the data. The second step was taking initial noting for any argument or relevant information within the transcript. It helped to develop descriptive comments that illustrate each participant's explicit meaning. It described participants main concerns such as relationships, processes, places, events, values, and principles, and the meaning of these concerns. The aim of step one and two is to avoid the superficial reading as well as to produce a set of comprehensive comments and notes from the collected data. Third stage in data analysis process was analysing and identifying emergent themes which were made more

explicit through the comprehensive exploratory commenting which will develop and frame emergent themes.

Data elicited provide insights into participants' ways of perceiving, reacting to, and adapting to environmental conditions during the COVID pandemic, but in order to fully appreciate these insights, it is necessary to avoid researcher bias or assumption-based interpretations by applying a systematic approach to reading, annotating, and scrutinising data. Transparency and attention to detail (e.g., how terms are used, and how people position themselves in relation to what they are describing) are necessary to understand emergent educational change resulting from social and technological shifts, and these are features of phenomenological research. As mentioned above, UK HE is experienced by individuals in specific contexts, but is subject to different scales of activity, and to understand educational change within and beyond pre-sessional programmes, an approach is needed that explores rather than assumes meaning, experience, and influence.

After processing the interviews, I analysed the notes collected from the live-session observations and connected them with the information collected from the interviews and document analysis. The role of the researcher in this study is required to provide description and interpretation to participants' lived experiences. Based on the Heideggerian hermeneutic (interpretive) approach in phenomenology (1962), the researcher should provide an interpretation to the phenomena rather only a description (Rodriguez & Smith, 2018). Although this can produce a lot of work for researchers, compared to studies that frame the subject matter more narrowly, the effort is worthwhile as the resulting data is layered, and can build a clear and more interactive picture of an environment as participants perceive it. No method can truly experience or see the world from another person's perspective, but attempting to avoid assumption and appreciate complexity is important when researching educational change in emerging contexts.

3.7 **Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis**

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach concerned with exploring individuals' lived experiences regarding certain phenomena (Smith et al., 2009; Clarke, 2009). IPA is a relatively new field of qualitative research to data collection, which was presented by Jonathan Smith and colleagues in mid-1990's (Smith et al., 2009; Clarke, 2009). Each qualitative research approach has its own requirements and preferences for a data collecting method/s. There are few steps that will be followed in analysing the data and analysing each case. Smith et al., (2009) detailed the steps that could be clarified in analysing a phenomenological research data.

The first step in IPA is to analyse the information collected and transcribed from each participant by reading and re-reading the data. Reading the data repeatedly will help to develop the structure and obtain an understanding of the overall concept of each interview. In other words, it helps the researcher to familiarise herself with the transcript and identify the key points and the issues the participants mentioned in the interview. The second step is initial noting for any argument, idea, or piece of information within the transcript. This can develop descriptive comments that illustrate each participant's explicit meaning, and documents participants' main concerns, such as relationships, processes, places, events, values, and principles, and the meaning of these concerns to them. The aim of step one and two is to avoid the superficial reading as well as to produce a set of comprehensive comments and notes from the collected data.

In general, the interpretive notes assist in understanding how and why the participants interact with these concerns. Based on Smith et al, (2009), there are many types of exploratory commenting can be conducted within the analysing process, including descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual comments. Descriptive comments should focus on describing the content within utterances, including any key words, phrases or explanations used, as well as the key objects and experiences that matter to the participant. Linguistic comments reflect the style in which the content and meaning are presented by the participants, such as pronoun use, pauses, tone, repetition, or marked degrees of fluency or hesitancy. Conceptual comments usually involve a transfer in the focus towards the participants' overall understanding of the matters that they have discussed, thus going beyond a focus on features of what they said, and moving towards a deeper appreciation of what they mean, and how they position themselves and their ideas in relation to the phenomena they describe.

The third stage in data analysis process is developing emergent themes which become explicit through the comprehensive exploratory commenting. Although identifying emergent themes is a feature of most qualitative research, e.g., qualitative content analysis, the approaches to reaching these themes differs, and IPA identifies themes through a close and systematic engagement with transcription and notes, and a wide appreciations of what falls within a study's focus (Smith et al., 2009), and is therefore useful for this study, where participants' ideas and actions are potentially varied, and repetition of elements in the data do not necessarily carry the same meaning across contexts or people. In analysing the comments to identify the emergent theme, focus is given on distinct chunks of transcript while revisiting initial notes and data.

Searching for connection across emergent themes is the next step in the data analysis process. In this stage, the themes are ordered chronologically then are then developed through charts and

maps in a way to indicate how themes connect or fit together. Finding connections between themes can be achieved through many strategies such as abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, and numeration (Smith et al., 2009). The strategies that could be used depends on the resulting data and to what extent this strategy could help in IPA analytic process. Abstraction is a fundamental strategy to become familiar with similarities in the data and to reduce complexity among the emerging concepts. Subsumption is similar to abstraction, but involves giving significance to the emergent themes that serve to unify a group of interconnected themes. Polarization concerns analysing transcripts for the opposite relationship between the emergent themes. Contextualisation concerns understanding the emergent themes by focusing on the contextual and narrative elements in the analysis. Numeration considers how frequently a theme is supported (Smith et al., 2009); however, upon reflection on the process, this last theme was the least useful for this study, as the number of times some important themes were supported cah relate to factors other than their importance, e.g., timings on the programme, or issues that came to light only from a certain point, such as a rare technological issue, an incident in class, or feedback from an assessment. The previous steps are implied in a single case, which then lead to repeating the same steps with each interview individually. In the next step, I look for patterns across cases and try to find connections and showing how themes are grouped within super-ordinate themes and illustrating each theme for each participant.

3.8 **Interpretive Paradigm**

As this research aims to understand participants' behaviour, perception, and engagement, it aligns with the interpretivism paradigm, as it mainly considers knowledge in relation to the perspectives and actions of individuals. The interpretivist paradigm holds that individuals perceive experiences through their beliefs systems and create their own perspectives differently. Research drawing on an interpretivist framework aims to understand individual's interpretation of the world around them (Cohen et al., 2007), and not frame research in a way that assumes what ideas or actions are meaningful to participants, or what their meaning is in their lives. From an interpretivism perspective, the researcher aims to obtain deeper understanding of the meanings and subjective intentions of individuals towards the studied phenomenon in its context, instead of generalising the understanding for the whole society (Creswell, 2007). In the same manner, Hammersley (2013) emphasises the fact that researchers need to understand the diversity of seeing and experiencing the world by individuals through different contexts and cultures, and try to avoid bias in studying the environment and people with their own interpretations. Cohen et al. (2007) believe that in the interpretative approach develops theory in a way that follows the research, with insights that

emerge from participants' experiences, understandings, and interpretations, making sense of their behaviour. It is therefore grounded in participants' views and experiences rather than being framed by researchers' views, agenda, or biases.

This approach has been adopted in the current study as it would help to examine learners and teachers' perception of digital learning during an emergent response to COVID-19, and the aftereffect of technological and cultural shifts in practices and expectations that followed. It helps to explore the changes in their roles, identities, and trajectories within the interpretivist research paradigm, by situating the object of study within the ideas and practices of participants, and not in the pre-framing of the researcher or based on over-reliance on the language or structures of documents.

Chapter 4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 3, the data were collected through three research tools, which are document analysis, classroom observation, and unstructured and semi-structured interviews. These are framed here as phases of the research, but they did overlap, e.g., discussions with participants came before second observations were complete, and influential documents emerged or were updated during the programme, and so they had not been analysed in the document analysis phase. The documents analysed were the course syllabi, weekly task materials, formative and summative assessment rubrics, marking criteria, and other documents used to clarify elements of the curriculum for students or staff (e.g., circulated via the programme's VLE, Blackboard). The observation process involved 4 groups and 8 live sessions (each group was observed twice; session one was in the second week of the programme, while the second observation was in the last two weeks). In the third stage, the total number of participants interviewed was 17: 12 students (5 Chinese, 5 Saudi, and 2 Thai), and 5 teachers (2 British, 2 Libyans, and 1 Iraqi).

One crucial point that needs to be emphasized in this study is that the participants expressed their opinions in relation to their previous learning and studying experience as well as their current practices. For example, two of the teacher participants had previous F2F teaching experience; however, this is their first experience teaching at the University of Southampton in the virtual setting. They stated some of their opinions based on their F2F teaching experience with other institutions. Conversely, the three other teachers based some of their insights on comparisons with their previous teaching experience in the F2F Pre-sessional programme at the University of Southampton. Students who participated also expressed their views based on their diverse learning experiences, whether face-to-face or online, with the online experiences often relating to COVID responses in their own national settings, which, it emerged, took very different forms in different settings.

The approach taken in this research places importance on prior experience in understanding the world, but it is important to note that some have encountered versions of this environment before (the same broad programme goals within the same institution), while others have experienced this for the first time, creating differences in what participants bring to the context, and what they can map their actions and ideas onto compared to others. Mixtures of new and returning tutors are a feature of summer pre-sessional programmes, so it represents the field well, but it did create a difference in how people related to the environment, so is worth noting before discussing the findings of the study.

Throughout the process of analysing the data, three major subjects were identified (via the IPA approach mentioned in the previous chapter), and subordinate topics were categorized. The main three overarching topics are: (1) students' perspectives towards synchronous and asynchronous communication; (2) teachers' perspectives towards synchronous and asynchronous communication; and (3) students and tutors' interaction with technology. The table below shows the main themes and sub-themes of the findings, in the broadest way (thematization was applied at different levels, with examples of themes and annotations presented in more detail below). Note that phenomenological research tends to present descriptive categories into which analysis and interpretation is applied, which is part of the method designed to collect and analyse data interpretively, but with minimal researcher framing.

Table 5 Sections and sub-sections of the findings

Topics	**Sub-topics**
Students' perceptions of synchronous and asynchronous communication	• Student-student interaction • Student-teacher interaction
Teachers' perceptions of synchronous and asynchronous communication	• Teacher-student interaction • Teacher-teacher interaction
Interactions with technology	• Student-technology relationship • Teacher-technology relationship

Before outlining the above topics in detail, the next section will provide an overview of the data collected from the first step, the documentation analysis, to illustrate the structure of the pre-sessional programme and understand elements of the structure and explicit framing of the programme, as stated in student- and staff-facing documentation.

4.2 **Pre-sessional Programme overview**

The documentation analysis process began one year before the start of the programme, when I started exploring the structure and the syllabus of the programme. As I have mentioned above, the programme prepares international (including EU) students for their studies at this UK HEI. PS programmes are not language programmes; they are framed as preparational programmes that help students to develop their academic skills and communicative competence to meet the British universities' requirements. The 11-week programme included four assessed modules, which are Academic Listening, Academic Speaking, Academic Reading, and Academic Writing. Students were additionally guided to be independent learners through activities in weekly workshops.

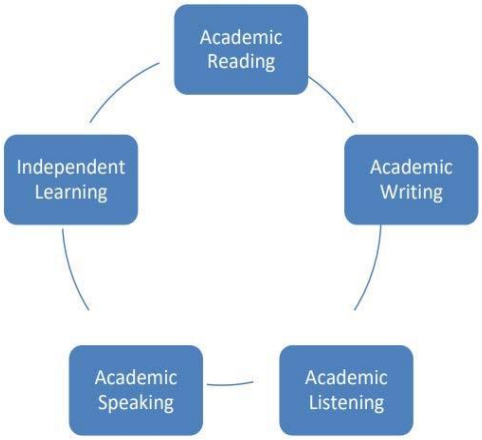


Figure 4 PS programme modules.

Students had five live sessions each week, and the duration of each session was from two to three hours. During the programme, students had to focus on modules that work with a variety of activities and practices that integrate and apply their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, while also working on their ability to study independently. Based on the analysed documents, objectives and criteria presented baseline areas that were covered in each assessed module.

In the Academic Listening module, students were required to develop strategies to enhance their academic listening skills, develop their abilities to understand and take notes during university lectures, and to use their notes in post listening discussions. In the Academic Speaking module, students worked towards developing their abilities to create academic presentations, develop their communication skills within seminars, improve the intelligibility of their pronunciation in presentations and interactive discussions, and develop confidence and communicative skills with their tutors and classmates. In the Academic Reading students were required to develop and demonstrate their reading ability through independent study projects in their discipline areas, through which VLE and assessment tasks focused on understanding and explaining the use, relevance, and reliability of the sources they used in their academic writing and presentations. In the Academic Writing module, students developed personal research projects, requiring them to plan, draft, edit, and submit an academic assignment. This module focused on organisation and voice, and was assessed in areas of content, use of sources, structure, communication of ideas, and clarity and accuracy. The last module students experienced via the VLE (Blackboard), and via weekly non-obligatory meetings on MS Teams, was Independent Learning, in which students were guided students towards developing their language learning strategies, time management, expectations around academic study in the UK, and their ability to find resources online (via the Library or the wider Web).

During the programme, students had weekly one-on-one tutorials with their tutors, where they receive feedback on their learning progress to enhance their academic abilities and performance.

Students worked on tasks, individually and in groups, before and after each live session. The weekly materials that students were required to work on before and after the live sessions were available on Blackboard (if specified within the curriculum of the programme) and/or Teams (if set by the tutor). On the Pre-sessional Blackboard site, students are required to do pre-live-session tasks where they engage with input to help with ongoing work, and to prepare for the live class (and this is one of the self- and independent group-study elements of the programme). Images 1 & 2 below show the design of the weekly materials on Blackboard.

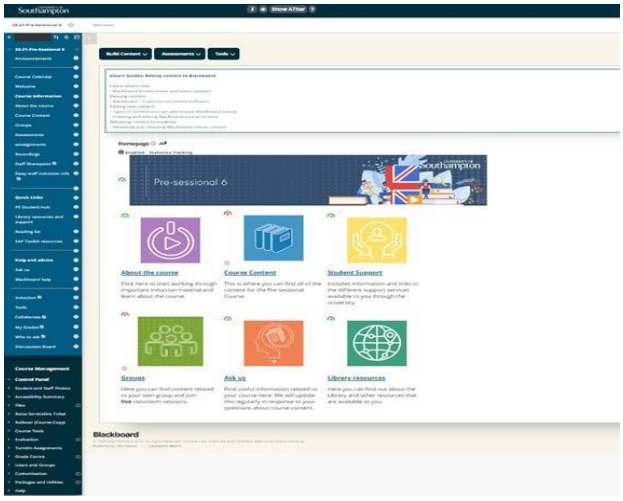


Image 1 Pre-sessional Blackboard Site

Image 2 Blackboard site design.

Images 3 and 4 below shows actual tasks from Listening & Speaking file and Reading & Writing file on Blackboard.

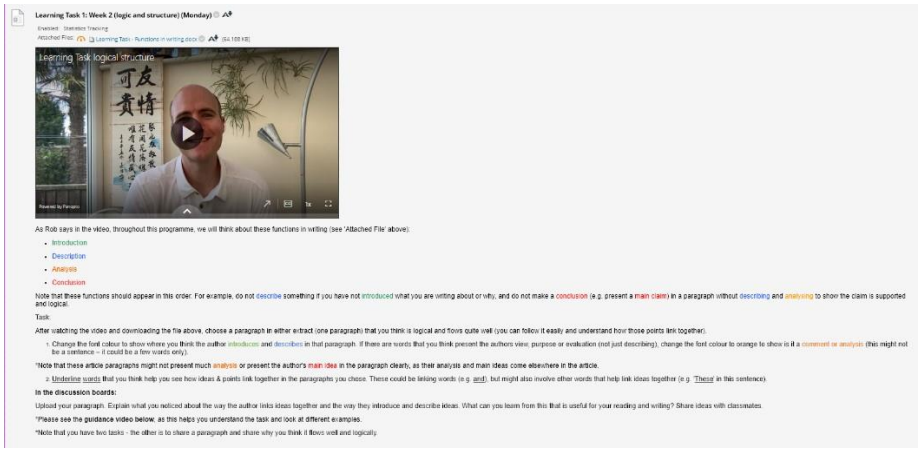


Image 3 Writing learning task on Blackboard.

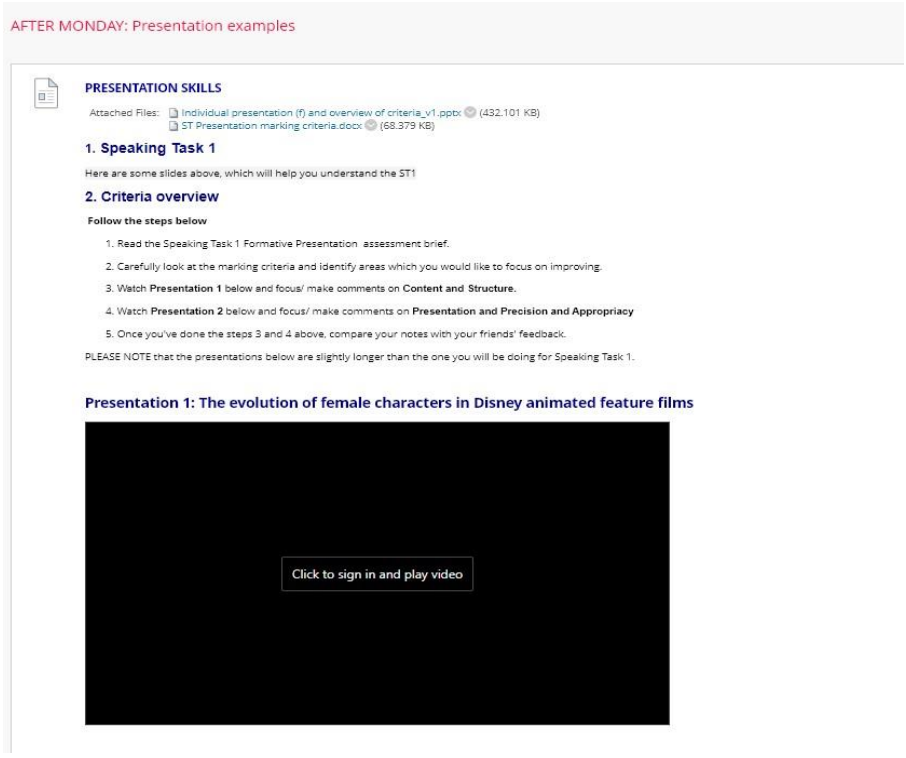


Image 4 Presentation skills task on Blackboard.

Appendix 8 includes the previous images with larger dimensions.

4.2.1 **Pre-sessional Programme platforms**

Pre-sessional students use various applications other than the Blackboard, which will be explained in this section. As mentioned above, MS Teams is one of the applications used in the programme, and this is where all the synchronous interaction occurs, such as live sessions, one-to-one tutorials, live

assessments, and weekly staff meetings. It is also where asynchronous chat groups are established and work, both independently and with guidance from the tutors (depending on the task and purpose).

Besides Blackboard and MS Teams, Microsoft SharePoint is a platform with integrated collection of server capabilities to offer extensive management and files sharing (Al-Jarf, 2010). SharePoint is used exclusively by pre-sessional tutors, on which they are provided with the syllabus, guidance, and programme materials by the coordinators and programme managers. It is also a space where tutors can upload their own original or adapted materials for others, allowing for bottom-up input into the curriculum. Unlike MS Teams, SharePoint was used on the PS programme before the pandemic shifted the programme online, so this will be familiar with returning tutors, but the content, purposes, and forms of communication present might shift with the move to the online curriculum. For example, online tasks were set for students via Blackboard, so, rather than SharePoint being a repository of different possible resources, that teachers can adapt, it became guidance for set tasks, with options for follow-ups. This was evident from the organisation of resources shifting from being focused on outcomes and aims, to being focused on task and week, although outcome-specific resources were still archived there).

As mentioned in the last chapter, a platform called e-Assignments is used to upload assessments and to facilitate the sending and receiving of marks and feedback forms, and Panopto is the platform used to record video interactions. Although Panopto can be used for presentations, parts of live classes, or discussions (Cho & Kuyath, 2010), it was predominantly used by pre-sessional students to record their presentations for formative and summative assessments. These are the main spaces for interaction with the pre-sessional programme for tutors and students, aside from data/literature search engines and basic word processing tools.

Through these platforms and tools, students and tutors develop their relationships, understand their roles, engage with learning objectives, and form their experiences on the programme. It is also through these tools that identity work takes place, alongside the cultural and ideological negotiations involved in developing and showcasing the language and communication skills that act as a gatekeeper for UK higher education. The tools that facilitate this online programme can be understood, in similar ways as indicated from research on company websites (Al-Jarf, 2009; Mcleod & Child, 2010; Rajasekaran et al, 2019), as useful ways of providing input and opportunities, but, in this case, for tutor-, individual-, and peer-based learning. As with any educational context, the trajectories, skills, expectations, and intentions of those entering this space will influence what actually happens, and how it happens, as will wider factors, such as the languages and cultures that are present, or policies and mechanisms that influence the treatment of culture and language. In such a transitional environment, where tutors and students are also transitioning to new digital ways of working inside and outside this university

context, there is a need to understand these emerging educational spaces, and the people who engage with them. To conclude, the online platforms are provided by the university in PS programme are Blackboard, MS Teams, Outlook, Panopto, e-Assignments, and SharePoint, and these are used to facilitate the programme content, and associated interactions and processes, such as weekly materials, live sessions and tutorials, and assessment feedback.

4.2.2 **Pre-sessional assessments**

Students on the 11-week programme are evaluated through ten assessments, which divides as one formative and one summative assessment for each module except Writing, which has three formative assessments. As the first two Writing assessments are short, unscored, and facilitate forming and approving a research focus, my focus will be on the main, scored formative and summative tasks in each module. Therefore, during the first half of the programme, students undertake four main formative assessments, one for each module. The formative assessment is an opportunity for students to receive feedback for improving their performance, as well as to familiarize students with the structure of the assessment. The students receive feedback that includes evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses, and action points for their ongoing work and learning. Students and teachers need to review the marking criteria before each assessment for students to be aware of the assessment requirements, and the marking criteria features in the curriculum, through tasks designed to explore what terms mean, and what they look like in practice, both through examples and ongoing reflections from students. Additionally, each student has (at least) weekly tutorial sessions with their tutors to discuss their progress, ongoing work, and any issues experienced during the programme.

After they pass the middle of the course, students start responding to feedback in order to prepare for the summative assessments. Formative assessments are an opportunity for student to meet academic integrity issues, or issues with the project they designed, and to learn from overcoming those via feedback and guidance. Some of the assessments are intended to be continuous, and a vehicle for teaching and learning, but are therefore unfamiliar to all students (e.g., who might not have discussed listening tasks before, or reflected on why and how they use a source in writing). Documentation explains that the formative tasks are as close as possible to the summative format, so students can become familiar with the task and criteria, and the role of the teacher and tasks is to help students develop their ongoing work and understanding.

The summative assessments aim to assess the outcomes and students' quality of learning, are assigned to student's records, and students who arrive on a conditional degree offer must meet their conditional language entry requirements for the purpose of qualifying their main degree programmes. For each assessment, students are provided with marking criteria, as mentioned, and

respond to feedback on their formative assessment in relation to that document, both for themselves, and sometimes in collaborative Blackboard tasks. Students should use the e-Assignments website to submit their work before the assessment deadline, including links to presentations. Teachers grade the assessments based on the University of Southampton Presessional Assessment Banding for each module (see table 6 below), and the results are mapped to CEFR, with equivalence to IELTS (e.g., 60 on pre-sessional equates to IELTS 6.5). The PS programme therefore replaces the need to take a further language test for entry to the university. Table 6 Pre-sessional programme scores vs IELTS scores

IELTS BAND	PRE-SESSIONAL ASSESSMENT BAND
7.5+	80 - 100%
7.0	70 - 79%
6.5	60 - 69%
6.0	50 - 59%
5.5	40 - 49%
5.0-	0 - 39%

The students were assessed through researched reading, writing, and speaking tasks, which are linked to the same personal research project that students undertake individually in their discipline area, and listening discussion tasks, which relate to videos of interviews with staff and students, providing insights into different areas of studying at the University of Southampton. The listening assessment aims to evaluate students' ability to listen thoughtfully to understand in detail the content of the material, and to be able to take notes and respond appropriately in discussions with other students. The listening assessment consisted of one video which was accessible for 24 hours on Blackboard, during which time students had to watch it and to take notes. They had to understand the topic and the content to be able to express their views during the seminar or debate which it took place after two days of the video release. The seminar took place online via MS Teams where students were divided into groups of three or four to discuss three questions related to the topic of the video. The teacher recorded the seminars to be able to access the students on the marking sheet. Students uploaded their own submission forms and marking sheets (see appendix 9) into the e-Assignments website, which were downloaded by the teacher for evaluation.

The speaking assessment aims to prepare students for public speaking and apply the presentation skills learned through the course. They had to research and prepare a structured presentation, where they had to present specific points from their researched project, supported by reliable evidence. Students had to create PPT slides that demonstrating clear and well visual communication that aligns with the presentation they give. As mentioned above, the presentations were recorded via Panopto, where the

link of the presentation was posted on the speaking submission form and marking criteria sheet (see appendix 9.2), which should be uploaded to e-Assignments with the same process as the listening assessments. The presentations had to be around 6 minutes for the formative and 10 minutes for the summative assessment.

In the reading assessment, students were evaluated by their explanations regarding the how and why they used sources in their writing. Specifically, they were assessed on their ability to explain the relevance of sources used in their writing, the reliability of the source selected to discuss, the appropriateness of their citation of the source, and effectiveness of the source use in their writing. On the proforma students submitted, there was a Source Log requiring students to show what they were reading directly from the source, and show how they used it in their writing, and a Reading Log, where students had to explain the relevance, reliability, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the source and its use in the context of their writing.

In the writing assessments, students chose a topic related to their major at the university, and their interests within that. They were required to plan, structure, and research an essay relating to their topic, with weekly tasks and tutorials to help them evaluate and consider their choices. Students had four assessments (three formative & one summative), but with only one written draft that was scored before the final summative. In the first two formative tasks, students had to understand the expectations around their assignments, and show how they were developing their writing plan and some initial paragraph writing in relation to their reading. The questions on the form concerns essays questions, content, structure, and research sources. A feature of these assessment tasks was academic integrity, as students were required to demonstrate their understanding of the importance of honesty and integrity in their work, and their acknowledgment of good academic practice. In the third formative task, students had to write a 1200-word draft of their final writing. In the summative writing task, students had to redraft Writing Task 3 based on feedback and updates from collaborative tasks. They also submitted an appendix that explained changes to one paragraph, in which students showed how they had improved their work from Writing Task 3 (formative draft) to Writing Task 4 (summative). All the previous assessments had forms (see appendix 9.4) where students uploaded on e-Assignment.

4.3 **PS documentation analysis**

The documentation analysis stage of the research primarily focused on content on Blackboard and SharePoint. The files of documentation included the the pre-sessional programme materials including core programme documents, such as assessment briefs, modules, and programme specifications, as well as analysis of what students encounter, such as instructions, signposting, materials, information,

and tasks. As noted in the previous chapter, the document analysis has been deprioritized in places, as the interviews and observations revealed limitations to some of the findings from the initial document analysis, leading me to conclude that it is more useful for this study to focus on what students and teachers actually did, negotiated, and perceived, and to cut out elements of the document analysis that do not align with that (e.g., where documents paint one picture, but practices do not engage with that picture for other reasons). Where of interest, these points are mentioned, as with field notes, where points are raised in the interview findings, as this is where most focus is given to the views and interpretations of participants in this setting, which includes what they perceived about the structures and documentation of the programme. In other words, the process of the documentation analysis gave me more insights and understanding into the programme that formed a basis for me to understand the classroom observations and interviews.

One of the main challenges that students might encounter during the PS programme is the culturally embedded aspects of the assignments. These might include engaging in peer discussions, achieving balance between describing and analyzing, and effectively adopting the right 'voice' for the tasks, all of which could be new ideas and practices to students from non-anglophone cultures. A common requirement in British universities, and in EAP, is the ability to demonstrate critical thinking skills, which are skills that are not as commonly emphasized, at least in the same way, in some other educational systems around the world. All the assessments of the PS modules emphasize the importance of applying critical thinking to a task.

Critical thinking could be defined as the thoughtful and reflective thinking which is focusing towards determining beliefs and actions (Ennis, 1985). It could also be defined as "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or conceptual considerations upon which that judgment is based" (Facione, 1990, p. 3). Related to this, the voice of the students in writing is one of the aspects that PS students might not be familiar with. The following images show the emphasize in the PS assessment marking criteria that emphasize the importance of students' interference, their critical analysis, and their voice in writing.

Content (20%)	
17–20	**All content** relevant, explained and appropriately supported. **Strong evidence** of argument critical analysis throughout.
14- 16	**Most content** relevant, explained and appropriately supported. **Evidence** of argument and critical analysis
10-13	**Content relevant,** explained and appropriately supported. **Some evidence of argument** and critical analysis but ideas may be more descriptive than analytical
6-9	**Content often not** relevant**,** insufficiently explained and not always supported. Little evidence of any argument and critical analysis.
0-5	**Content not relevant or** explained with little or no support. No real evidence of argument or critical analysis

Image 5 Pre-sessional presentation content marking criteria.

Listening to source material (live lecture or talk) 50%	
41-50	Demonstrates **a deep understanding of listening content** and has **no problem** drawing inferences from **all** aspects
36-40	Demonstrates **effective understanding of listening content** and **is able** to draw inferences from **most** aspects
31-35	Can demonstrate **understanding of listening content** and **is able** to draw **some** inferences
20-30	Can demonstrate **some understanding of listening content but with limited ability** to draw inferences.
0-19	Demonstrates **little or no understanding** of the listening content and **may not be able** to use this source for **any practical purpose**.

Image 6 Pre-sessional listening & discussion marking criteria.

Content (20%)	
16–20	An **appropriate** and **clear position** is taken, supported by **entirely relevant** detail and explanation **Clear evidence** of a **deep understanding** of the topic area as relevant to the task **All points** show justification, analysis and support

Image 7 Content of writing marking criteria.

The previous image shows the criteria set for the content in the written essay (image 7), in which students need to clearly state their voice and position. Moreover, they need to show their analysis in all the points mentioned in the essay. In the Reading marking criteria, students need to evaluate the relevance, reliability, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the sources used in the writing and speaking task (see image 8 below). The intended meaning of relevance and reliability are the appropriateness of the material from the source which are carefully selected to fit the purpose of writing. Students need to ensure they make suitable choices regarding, for example, whether to use a direct quote, rephrase, or indicate endorsement, and it also involves how the source will be illustrated in the writing. Finally, students need to ensure they choose an effective source that serves a useful function with the paragraph and essay, which can, for example, provide backing for an idea, or offer a definition for a key term before addressing it in detail. Regarding the listening

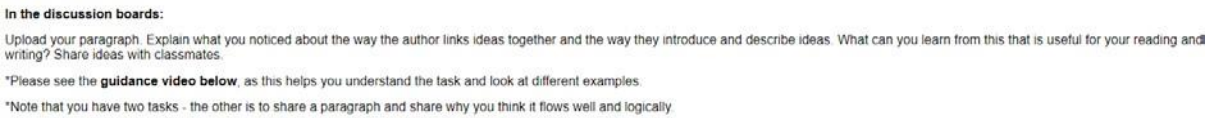
assessment, 50% of marking criteria focuses on students' ability to evaluate and state their position, in their voice, regarding the content of the video/audio (see image 6).

Finding relevant and reliable sources (50%)	
40 - 50	Explains relevance and reliability of the source used in an advanced and nuanced way
35 - 39	Explains relevance and reliability of the source used well
30 - 34	Explains the relevance and reliability of the source used adequately
25 - 29	Attempts to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
20 - 24	Struggles to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
0 - 19	Fails to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
Using sources appropriately and effectively (50%)	
40 - 50	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source in an advanced and nuanced way
35 - 39	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source well
30 - 34	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source adequately
25 - 29	Attempts to explain appropriate and effective use of the source
20 - 24	Struggles to explain appropriate and effective use of the source
0 - 19	Fails to explain appropriate and effective use of the source

Image 8 Pre-sessional reading portfolio criteria

As the programme is fully online, it was designed to encourage cooperation among students and tutors in the virtual environments. There were many activities designed to encourage students to cooperate through the discussion boards, which are found on Blackboard in class-specific group areas. As was mentioned, Blackboard included many forms of media, consisting of different materials related to pre- and post- weekly tasks. One of the aspects I noticed during the analysing process was that the activities encourage students to interact in order to create collaborative space, sometimes explaining the significance of this to students directly. Discussion activities were not isolated to the Listening & Speaking modules, but were also features of the Reading & Writing modules, where there are many tasks that promoted the involvement of discussions. An example from the first week's Reading and Writing task on Blackboard, presented below, aimed to request that students introduce themselves and create a cooperative group culture to form a collaborative space for them to learn together. See (image 9) below, which shows two examples of the discussion board tasks that were included in reading & writing folder.

For this task you should **introduce yourself** to your classmates and tutor in your class's **discussion board**. Watch the video above, and think about how to introduce yourself to others.
Tell us about yourself, and you can use a picture to show where you work or something that is meaningful to you, or post a link to show others where you are from and who you are.
When you are ready, go to your group's discussion board (see **video below**), and then reply to the discussion board thread.
Remember that this is a discussion forum, so please **reply to others** there, and look for people interacting with your replies.
Thank you.


In the discussion boards:

Upload your paragraph. Explain what you noticed about the way the author links ideas together and the way they introduce and describe ideas. What can you learn from this that is useful for your reading and writing? Share ideas with classmates.

*Please see the **guidance video below**, as this helps you understand the task and look at different examples.

*Note that you have two tasks - the other is to share a paragraph and share why you think it flows well and logically.

Image 9 Discussion board activities in Reading & Writing folder.

Another point noticeable from the documentation analysis process is that teaching grammar, set vocabulary, or specific language forms was not a component of the curriculum in any area of the programme. Grammar is present as an element in the writing marking criteria, alongside punctuation and vocabulary, but is part it forms only a third of the Clarity and Accuracy band, which is a fifth of the overall score (20%) (see image 10 below). These elements focus on communicating ideas rather than being accurate or able to use complex language forms. Therefore, language was part of the programme, but was contextualised in a small area of the criteria, and was focused on expression of meaning and communication quality.

Clarity and Accuracy (20%)	
16–20	Language **communicates** ideas with precision and accuracy **throughout** Language **communicates exact relationships** between ideas **throughout** **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary are sufficient** to express intended meaning

Image 10 Clarity and accuracy band in the writing task marking criteria.

Therefore, the teaching of grammar and language (vocabulary and style) has very little top-down attention, and is left to the tutors and students to identify and address issues in relation to tasks they are doing. This is expected to be a challenge for tutors and students, as both are likely to be used to having a more formal role for language form on programmes, whether they are teaching or learning those forms. This anticipation of an issue arises from the recognition that grammar, and its connection to effective communication, might be perceived differently from teachers who have had different professional roles, and have different ideas of language teaching, and students, who will be heavily influenced by their previous language education when operating in English and discussing communication through English. During my work as a pre-sessional Listening & Speaking tutor, many of my students have asked me for strategies and resources to improve their grammar accuracy, suggesting this is a point of concern for them.

Another point emphasized in the programme documentation is consistent and active promotion of independent study among learners. A significant part of the instructional materials and advice centers on independent learning and student-centered activities, such as independent research, discussion board engagement, and group task. Student- and staff- facing documents also take into the account possible challenges that might be raised by this emphasis. The programme consistently offers support and motivation to students, acknowledging that they might encounter difficulties in comprehending how independent study tasks work, and that they may feel uncomfortable being

evaluated on tasks with that ethos. Based on my experience as a tutor, preparing students to be independent learners, and improving their independent learning skills, might be a challenge to students for two reasons. The first issue is that not all international students are familiar with the being independent learners. Independent learning involves a learning approach in which learners take ownership and control over their own learning. They acquire knowledge through their personal management, evaluation, and guidance (Livingston, 2012). Students need to be prepared to control their own learning, to meet the educational requirements, to make their decisions, to carry on their own learning, observe their progress, and to evaluate their learning outcomes. Most of the students in this programme are Chinese and Saudis, and they often state that they are not familiar with processes of independent learning. The second is that the fully online environment is has potential to be an unfamiliar space for PS students. Accordingly, PS learners are actively dealing with two primary unfamiliar circumstances, and, therefore, there is more pressure on the online environment to clarify, support, and engage learners in this area, while a corresponding issue with digital learning can be isolation of learners and a lack of feeling of connectivity, as presented in Chapter 2.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section and in the previous chapter, my original research design was to analyse student- and staff- facing documentation on the PS programme in order to develop an understanding of terms and structures around the participants of this study. What transpired in the research process, as I hope will be clear below, is that many findings in this context were unpredictable, related to small elements of communication with large implications, and the formal document analysis did not form a coherent link with the wider study in the way themes emerged. In this section, I have identified examples of areas where the programme frames and treats elements of language and tasks in ways that need to be negotiated and contextualised (in the PS tasks and class-based interactions) by tutors and students. Other areas where formal elements of the course documents or the PS programme's platforms or requirements affect participants' perceptions or practices are highlighted below, where those themes are revealed, explained, and discussed. During the process of analyzing the documents of the PS programme, I started observing number of live sessions and conduct interviews with the volunteered students and tutors. The process of document analysis expanded my knowledge regarding the possible processes needed to reframe and conduct the observation and interviews. Before reviewing the data collected from the interviews, the following section will provide an overview of the data collected from the classroom observation.

4.3.1 **Observation Field Notes**

Classroom observations allowed me to gain a wider image of the online programme environment, as well as developing insights into how students' and teachers' behavior during the live sessions aligned

with the programme structure (in the document analysis) and participants' perceptions of that behavior (in the interview data). The following section presents the most important notes collected from the classroom observations regarding student and teachers' interaction. I observed each group twice, one session at the beginning of the programme and the second session towards the end. Groups observed were those of the teachers who participated in the interviews. The observed groups were a mix of the four modules: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. Again, below is the observation timetable.

As mentioned above, the reason for observing each group twice is to compare between students' and teachers' behavior at the beginning and end of the programme as well as discover the differences in students' progress at different points in the programme. This observation section will be divided into three sections. The first concerns the observed interaction between students and teachers, and the second section concerns students' interaction during the main lesson and activities in the breakout rooms, and the third section concerns the use of camera.

4.3.2 **Teacher-student interaction**

Based on the classroom observation, the first noticed behaviour is the interaction between students and teachers during the lesson. Specifically, the observer noticed a low level of interaction between students and teachers. Several times, teachers were attempting to encourage students to increase their talk time during the live sessions. In one of the examples noticed, at the beginning of the live session, while the tutor was waiting for the rest of the students to join, they were attempting to have conversation with their students. Students in most of the live sessions, especially at the beginning of the programme, were quiet, and the tutors repeated some of their questions many times to get answers. The following conversation is illustrating the tutor encouragement to students to be involved in a conversation at the beginning of the session in attempt to create a relationship his students.

Group 3: *Class R1*

T: Hello, how are you all?

Silence.

T: Hello? Can you hear me?

Few seconds later

S1: yes.

T: How are you guys? Silence

T: How is everybody?

Few seconds later

S2: we are good. S3:

Good

The teacher obviously waiting for any of the students to ask him, how is he? but no one asked.

T: how was your day so far?

Silence again

T: can you hear me guys?

Ss: yes, we can hear you?

T asking again: how was your day so far? Can anyone tell me about his/her day?

Silence again

S2: it was good not bad.

A similar process was repeated with other groups, but not all tutors emphasized the question in the same way. In groups 1, 2 & 4 tutors, they did not emphasize the question, they stayed silent. I believe the teachers are trying to create an atmosphere similar to the one in the face-to-face environment when they have a conversation at the beginning of the class. This part of live session might not be perceived the same way by the students, as there could be misunderstanding regarding the aim of asking the "how are you?" question or any similar ones as an attempt to communicate and break the silence, as these, for teachers, might be a way to follow the same procedure in the face-to-face environment, whereas students might not be aware of the aim of such questions when they are transferred to new environment. Without a valid reason to be asked, students might not engage, and the option to not engage is easier in an online setting with silenced microphones and cameras that can be turned on and off, as will be discussed below. For example, in some cultures, the question "how are you?" is not a commonly asked question, but it becomes relevant when there is a purpose. The reason for noticing this came in group 3, in which students were quiet at the beginning of the session; however, during the lesson, when the teacher asked questions, few students volunteer to answer the questions and share their thoughts. This could have implications for group dynamics, also mentioned in interview analysis below, where expectations and norms can be formed, particularly in new settings, which could make a teacher's attempts to initiate interactions increasingly difficult if introducing silence as a normal and acceptable response in the setting.

Regarding the rest of the groups, in the second observed sessions at the end the of the programme, there was a noticeable change in the interaction between students and teachers at the beginning of the live sessions. Both teachers and students were interacting more comfortably. In all the four groups, there was a change in the chatting time between students and teachers in the first five minutes of the live sessions. For example, the following conversation exemplifies the change in the interaction from

group 3. Students were interacting with tutor's questions, and they were volunteering to share details of their day. The conversation was between the tutor and the students at the beginning of the session:

Group 3: *Class R1*

T: good morning, guys!

S1: good morning,

S2: Good morning, miss.

T: how is everyone?

S2: Good, how are you?

T: good, good, how was your day so far?

S3: stressed, we have a submission, and I am nervous.

S4: yeah! I am really anxious about the submission.

T: what module?

S3: writing of course Lol.

T: do not worry, you will do well!

S1: I didn't sleep since last night.

S4: same…

After the observation of the second session of all groups, I have noticed that many students feel more comfortable about interacting with each other and with the teacher, despite the fact that most of the teachers emphasize that many students are shy to interact online. This session showed that many students who were shy in the first session became more outgoing and they were encouraged to be involved in the conversation.

Teachers did not only have challenges in chatting with students, but they also had to push students to participate in the lessons. In terms of participation, during the first observed sessions, the majority of the students were shy and had to be pushed to volunteer and participate in the lesson when the teachers asked them. For example, the tutors from groups 1 & 2 were facing challenges in motivating students to engage in discussions and the teachers' questions during the lesson. In groups 3 & 4, there were a few students who were ready to participate even when the answer was wrong. In the first observed session from group 1 & 2, most of the tutors were constantly motivating students to participate by asking questions to them to elicit their answers. Most of the time, the tutors were asking for volunteers and when there were no responses, tutors chose a name. However, in group 3 & 4, from the 1st observed session, there were few students who volunteered to share their ideas regarding the lesson (the number of volunteered students in group 4 was higher than the number of students in

group 3). In the second observation session, groups 1 & 2 had few students who volunteered when the tutors asked questions (volunteers were from two to four students). On the other hand, there were no changes in groups 3 & 4 comparing to the first observed sessions.

One of the possible reasons for the low level of participation is that in the majority of the sessions observed, the teachers asked the students to keep their microphones off. This could be a valid reason that students were misunderstanding, or overgeneralizing, the instructions in the live sessions, and that caused them to be confused regarding the behavior expected from them, although insights that follow in the data analysis below show complexity in expectations and meanings that students and teachers perceived in live sessions and beyond.

4.3.3 **Student-student interaction**

Throughout the observation process, I noticed that the main interaction occurring between the students during the live sessions was in the practices and activities in the breakout rooms. The students in each group usually had to be sent to the breakout rooms (or Teams channels, in Reading and Writing) from 4 to 5 times per session, depending on the materials and focus. I joined the students in a number of sessions in the breakout rooms during observations, where I was able to observe far more interaction between students than in the main meeting room of the class with the whole group. In the following table, I will highlight the differences between the students' behavior in Class A1. The comparison in the table is between first and second observed sessions.

Table 8 *Summary of the breakout rooms activities in group 1*

Group 1: *class A1*	
1st session	2nd session
For the activity, students were sent in groups to breakout rooms. ***Activity 1***: I joined the 5 groups	For the activity, students were sent in groups to breakout rooms. ***Activity 1***: I joined 4 groups
Group 1 and 2 were talking Chinese when I joined*	All the groups were discussing in English and were trying to answer the questions, the discussion was going smoothly in all groups.

Group 3 were trying to answer the questions.	***Activity 2***: I joined 5 groups. Group 1, 2, 3 & 4 were discussing the task. Students were taking turns to express their perspective.
Group 4: one student was trying to encourage the rest of the group to discuss and trying to ask them the questions	Group 5 were struggling to understand the question to be able to answer.
Group 5: they were discussing that they don't understand the questions, and they were waiting for the tutor to join them.	***Activity 3***: I joined 3 groups. Group 1 was quiet. Group 2 were discussing the task in Chinese. Group 3 was actively discussing the possible answers of the questions.

**When the tutor joined both groups, she only requested that students speak English, but she did not ask for clarification about what were they discussing in Chinese. As an observer, I cannot interrupt or ask.*

In the breakout rooms, I have noticed that in the first session in most of the groups, the students were quiet during the activities. There were groups where students were interacting through their 1st language (especially Chinese students, being the majority). However, in the second observed sessions, there was a change in students' behaviour, as the interaction in their 1st language noticeably decreased.

During the observation, tutors Mila, Sarah and Adam encouraged students to use only English in their discussion to improve their language. For example, in one of the observed sessions with Mila, she joined one of the sessions where students were discussing in their 1st language, and she emphasized that they need to only discuss in English as it is the space for them to improve their language. This was one of the aspects discussed in the interviews by number of teachers. Sarah & Adam during the interviews stated that they were constant in encouraging their students to speak only English to improve their English proficiency. Moreover, students were interacting more and discussing more during the activities, with less silence than at the beginning of the course. This shows that teachers

perceived that student using their first language was a negative point during task activities. They made effort to guide students from their perspective to change their behaviour in the breakout rooms and during the activities. This situation could also indicate that students changed behviour regarding their collaboration both with each other and with the tutors. During the interviews, they expressed a preference for increased online communication. Therefore, claiming that their increased communication over time is solely the result of the teacher's efforts is problematic. Likewise, I had an impression that the use of English was part of a positive shift in the group dynamic, but this could also reflect changes that were not in the best interests of every participant or to the achievements and benefits of every task. Diversity in such insights became more apparent through discussions with participants.

4.3.4 **The use of cameras**

Besides teachers' comments regarding turning their microphones off, there were constant comments from all the tutors, especially in the observed sessions at the beginning of the programme, which involved teachers asking students to keep their cameras on. Most of the tutors of the four groups mentioned this comment, to different extents, during the first observed sessions. I believe the reason for this the fact that the virtual lessons are new environments for both students and teachers, and teachers need to comprehend this unfamiliar environment through by applying their previous knowledge and experience to generate instructions and control of the online class environment. Despite these requests, many students were turning off their cameras during the live sessions. Most of the teachers were constantly asking their students to keep the cameras on, despite the fact that when they share their screen, they would not be able to see their students. As a tutor, the idea of asking students to keep the camera on is to be able to see their facial expressions. This is the reason that the feature of MS Teams to hide other attendees from the person sharing their screen is not comfortable, as I believe it made it harder to be able to communicate with the students, in this instance. In the face-to-face setting, teachers have the advantages of observing students' facial expressions, which significantly helps in understanding if the students are experienced any confusion about any topic.

During the interviews, more points from the previous section such as students-teachers' interactions and the use of cameras were discussed, as the most in depth and interesting data emerged from what students and teachers had to say about what they did or did not to, why they did or did not do it, what they perceived in their experiences, and how they felt about that.

4.4 Unstructured and semi-structured interviews

This section will focus on the third and what turned out to be the most important research instrument of data collection which was the interviews (unstructured and semi-structured interviews) with PS students and teachers. As a reminder, the interviews were conducted within one month, with 17 students and tutors: 12 students (five Chinese, five Saudis, two Thai), and five tutors (two British, two Libyans and one Iraqi). One crucial point that needs to be emphasized in this study is that the participants expressed their opinions in relation to their previous learning and studying experience. Based on the interviews data, this section was divided into three sub-sections which are (1) learners' perspective towards synchronous and asynchronous communication; (2) teachers' perspective towards synchronous and asynchronous communication; and (3) interaction with technology. These themes intersected with other areas of enquiry, and involve documents, structures of the programme, and observed themes in classes that formed the focus of discussions. In this context, the observations and document analysis opened a lot of questions in my mind that the interviews were able to link together and answer.

4.4.1 Learners' perspective towards synchronous and Asynchronous Communication

This section focuses on students' perspectives towards the change in the synchronous and asynchronous interaction within the online pre-sessional programme. One of the most common points mentioned by the students was the impact of the shift to online learning on communication with their peers and with their teachers. These points were noteworthy both in terms of people's experiences on and perceptions of the programme, but also because specific elements of the online curriculum, and platforms and tasks involved in that, made distinctions between synchronous and asynchronous communication more prominent in participants' accounts. Accordingly, this section will be divided into two areas (1) student-student interaction, (2) student-tutor interaction. The following section will concern students' perspective towards interacting and forming a relationship with their classmates in virtual environment.

4.4.1.1 Student-student interaction via web-based learning platforms

During the interviews, when the students were asked about their perspective towards the online pre-sessional programme, more than half of them declared that it is not straightforward to interact and to form relationships with their classmates in the online class comparing to what they perceive in the face-to-face environment. Reference to 'face-to-face' environment by a number of students highlights that the meaning of 'face', for them, in online learning is perceived as different from the 'face' in in-person interaction. The vast majority of students explained that it was not easy to create satisfactory

relationships with their classmates as they would expect to on campus, whether (as they categorized) academic or social interaction, because of (as they described) the limited communication in the online environment. Several participants emphasized the possibility to interact with their peers, but not as satisfactorily as the face-to-face interaction, details of which are highlighted below.

Students were asked to explain their perspective, including the main reasons for their views. The first mentioned reason emphasized the importance of the physical presence of their classmates during the activities and discussions. Eight of the participants clarified that body language and eye contact during the academic interaction in the physical settings are very helpful. In other words, they affirmed that the virtual space did not provide them with enough opportunities to interact with their peers the same way they interact in a physical classroom. For example, Maria explained that the physical classroom is more convenient environment to see her classmates' body language and facial expressions. She expressed her opinion in the following statement:

"I missed the physical presence of my classmates; I didn't like the interaction with them online. I don't know how to explain, but I believe the body language and facial expressions of my classmates are important."

Maria was missing the physical classroom as she did not prefer the online interaction. She said, *"I don't know how to explain"* as she realizes the fact that she can see them through the camera, but she prefers the physical classroom. She emphasized the importance of being in the same physical environment with her classmates. Kevin also provided additional explanation for the missing academic environment which is the feelings of being less motivated, because of "*the little academic environment*" where his friends cause him to lose focus. Kevin stated his opinion in the following statement:

"Maybe for me I think our study sometimes will be distracted and maybe I have not got too much motive power because my friends always call me to go out and play, so I think to some extant online study has a little academic environment and have less motivation for me."

Kevin had a different reason from Maria which as he called it the "*motive power*". He expressed that the physical presence in the academic environment increases his motivation as it keeps him focused and not easily distracted by the external environment which was described as *"his friends".* The previous reasons mentioned by Kevin was an external impact from the learning environment, while Maria's reason related to the same learning environment. Another student, Maya, expressed the same reason, which is missing the face-to-face classroom (as she described), which was the form of interaction with her classmates. In the following statement, she expressed her opinion:

"In the f2f classroom, it's better to have a relationship with classmates, because during online classes we can't see sometimes our classmates' body language and we can't see their face expressions. I think if we can communicate f2f we can have some developed physical attachment so it can improve our relationship."

Maya was asked for more explanations regarding body language and facial expressions. She justified that during the live sessions, some of her classmates switched their cameras off. She believes that the available body language and facial expression still creates a barrier to her interaction with her classmates. More students expressed their preference to interact face-to-face rather than using virtual space. Nova is one of the students who expressed her opinion regarding the preference to interact in-person in the following statement:

"I would choose to interact with people offline. Yes, there is a camera, and we can communicate with the microphone, but not as the physical interaction with my classmates in the actual classroom."

Another student, Aura, unexpectedly only emphasized the written form of communication as it causes a lack of communication despite the other forms of communication and the features provided via MS Teams that facilitated audioconferencing and videoconferencing which might increase the level of communication among each other. She focused on the "typing" communication as it is the most used form in the live sessions. Aura, added:

"We try to work during the activities in the breakout rooms, but most of the time we don't communicate pretty well, I believe that we don't use to have activities online and through an application, it is not like offline classroom where I feel it is easier to discuss an activity or answer the questions."

Aura described the interaction with her classmates in the physical classroom as *'easier'*. She based her perception to the online communication on the outcomes of the activities with her classmates in the breakout rooms. She connected building relationships with her classmates to completing tasks and activities. Ella, another student who stated that she cannot communicate with all her classmates in the virtual space. She explained her feelings in the following statement:

"I think in the online course, I can't have conversation with every classmate, I feel like there is a barrier with my classmates, usually I am just typing and get help from some students and maybe for other students we don't really have discussions, but in the face-to-face we can have a talk with each other in the classroom and have activities and discussions."

The statements regarding not able to communicate with "all classmates" might be connected to the way space is perceived. In the actual classroom, each student might not be allowed to sit next to everybody; however, there is a feeling of less interaction in the live sessions, or this might relate to communication around the formal class, which was explicitly said in the previous extracts.

What is interesting about the previous statements is that, even though the applications used, such as MS Teams, already provide affordances for displaying some body language and facial expressions, arguably in greater focus, these were perceived to be absent online. Despite the availability of the

different functions on MS Teams application, such as the breakout rooms, chat, camera, and sound functions, and despite the various factors that facilitate communication, such as having more time and space to prepare what you want to say, being supported in understanding others, and utilizing different communication modes, eight student participants (more than the half of students) still believed that is not sufficient and there was limited interaction or lack in communication with their classmates comparing to the communication in a face-to-face environment.

It is also noteworthy that the majority of applications used have various interactional tools, for instance, quick responses, emojis, GIFs, file sharing, and text can be used in chats, and were used in observed sessions, but interview findings show some students do not see these as nearly as important as cues in physical environments, and may not see the significance of these factors when evaluating their communication experiences online. It is interesting that some students are aware of the importance of visual aids and the variety of nonverbal signals occurring during the process of human communication that we usually do not notice. Moreover, it is worth noting that they were asked to work together on many occasions, and the curriculum placed sharing and group work as central to the programme. In the focus on independent study highlighted in the documentation analysis section, students were encouraged to communicate with each other as part of the programme, e.g., through discussion boards in Reading and Writing or live session activities for Listening and Speaking. From the previous quotes, despite the various activities that encourage discussions and debates during the live sessions, where students are often sent to the breakout rooms or channels for group discussions, some accounts emphasized the importance of body language and facial expressions, and the lack of these features in their experiences of academic communication on the programme. The results seem to suggest that the majority of the students in this study do not see this space as a conducive to forming deep relationships with others, and that might affect their engagement with the environment, particularly considering how it was designed around engagement with others.

Also, it was not only the academic student-student interaction that was seen to be missing, but students also raised another crucial distinction between online learning experience and physical learning environments, which is related to the social student-student interaction on-campus between and after classes. Participants asserted number of times that social interaction is crucial in developing an effective learning atmosphere, and some related the missing social interaction to their language development. As three of the participants expressed, social interaction could assist in creating bonds with other students, especially from different cultural and academic backgrounds, as they would be in a shared and familiar learning environment. The following statements display Ella's & Kevin's perspectives towards social interaction within the online environment:

"We don't really have good relationship, but in the f2f we can have a talk with everyone after classes."

"Most part of communication with classmates is about academic study and not about something about life."

Ella declared that *"We don't really have good relationship"* among the majority of her classmates in the virtual environment, as she would on-campus. In the second quote, Kevin explained that most of the communication in the online live sessions is just an environment for academic interaction and '*not something about life',* as, like Ella, he sees a lack of social interaction and ability to form social relationships with peers compared to traditional classrooms. Maria is another student who mentioned the absence of social interaction in the online Pre-sessional programme. She stated that this is a missing part in the online learning environment. She stated her opinion in the following statement:

"Plus, socializing with them on-campus. Socializing is the most missed part from online learning and this I believe has influenced most of student's mental wellbeing including me. I realized how much socializing is important."

Maria emphasized the importance of socializing in the traditional learning environment. She connected its importance to wellbeing and mental health. In the previous quotes, it is notable that several students were feeling there is a barrier to communicate with their classmates in the online environment to the same extent they can in the face-to-face one. Accordingly, the summary regarding this point is the missing academic atmosphere where the body language and facial expressions are crucial components of the learning process. Moreover, the social relationship that they create with their classmates is highly valued by some participants, but is lacking in their online experiences. Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that students want to interact and form relationships with others like them, and, despite all the technological capability around sight, sound, and ritual, it seems that simple acts of, e.g., having a coffee or meal with their peers is more essential to forming close relationships in their views, and this is an important part of the learning experience for them.

From a different angle, four of the student participants expressed their opinions relating to different contexts, which were based on the way they have received the programme. Even though the programme was explicitly outlined in the objectives as pre-sessional programme that is designed to familiarize students with skills, thinking, and communicative abilities that they will need for academic study through English in the UK, they received the programme as a language learning programme, and themselves as language learners. The next quotes revealed that number of the participants assume that the primary objective of their presence is language development (See section 4.2 for an overview of stated objectives of the programme that featured on Blackboard and during the live sessions). These students labelled the physical classroom atmosphere with their classmates as a useful space to practice the language, especially as their classmates are from different cultural and academic backgrounds. They explained that the traditional classroom in multinational environment is a suitable

space to practice and improve their language. Rowen, Maria, Nova & Aura explained about this point through the following comments:

"As a language learner, I found that the offline classroom could help me to practice my language."

"We need the f2f interaction to practice our language and make relationships with our classmates."

"As you know I am international student so it might be a little bit different from what I am studying with my language. So, the first one, I need to concentrate with the language. Maybe pronunciation as we came from a different country. I am the one who does not know about vocabulary much, so I need to improve myself with some words that I'm not familiar with."

"I believe the biggest challenge is the fact that I was excited to practice the language in the university environment, but it becomes just limited to the couple of hours that we have the live sessions where I can possibly use and practice the language, which is a very limited time."

Based on the previous quotes, they are labeling themselves as language learners. They preferred the face-to-face environment to interact with their classmates as it provides them with more options to practice their language and a space where it is unchallenging to form academic and social relationship with their classmates. Nova, for example, at first mentioned that "*the first one, I need to concentrate with the language"*, and then she mentioned about her knowledge in terms of vocabulary is weak as the primary goals from her experience is to level up her language performance. These students stated a preference to communicate with 'language' in physical settings, as they believe it facilitates better practical and emotional interactions.

Participants Aura & Hannah had different opinions regarding the virtual interactions with their classmates. They said that they did not make an effort to create relationships with their classmates as they believe it is not necessary to communicate with them in the online classes, as it is not a suitable space to interact properly. Moreover, they believe that the course length is short for putting effort into interacting with peers. They explained their opinions in the following statements:

"Actually, it was the first time to meet new people remotely, I didn't feel the need to know them or interact with them as we can't meet outside my class as the actual one."

"I don't need to get know them in a short course I don't need to know them or try to know them very well I think it's fine in WeChat."

Aura mentioned that *"It was the first time to meet new people remotely"*. This sentence could show that some students might be struggling to reach the level of interaction they used to have in the traditional environment due to the fact that it is a new environment and students need time to familiarize themselves with the new setting to be able to adopt it.

Correspondingly, Clare & Yasir stated that the ability to communicate with their classmates has been definitely affected by the change in the learning environment; however, they are satisfied with the

level of interaction available with their classmates in the programme. They shared that they could not notice major differences between how they develop connections through the face-to-face classmates and online communication, as an online chat group was created on the external application, WeChat. They declared that it was enough to offer suitable environment to communicate and to seek help from each other whenever it is needed. They described the use of group chat in the following statements:

"I know them through the WeChat application. I was able to chat with them on this application. I think it wasn't very difficult to know them. Every student is friendly, and we were able to help each other, so I think online or offline it doesn't matter about our relationship."

"I think we are pretty close, we have a WeChat group, so a lot of times, we can chat on that. I think it's fine in the WeChat."

Most features of WeChat are available on MS Teams, but students chose applications where they can create an informal and familiar environment, perhaps because they want to make up for the absence a familiar social environment. The use of external applications to boost communication was a point that came up in interviews, and this provided insights into the student-student interactions that were not always visible to the teachers or the wider programme. Based on the conversations with other participants, several students mentioned the way of communication with each other through such applications. Four of Chinese students and one Thai student reported that they were using WeChat to create group chats, through which they were able to communicate with their classmates, while few Arab students mentioned the use of WhatsApp for the same type of communication. Both applications can facilitate similar chat features to Teams, but also link to profiles and social media use beyond the institution and the programme, providing a closer connection to how they communicate and identify themselves in their daily lives.

The demographics divisions have both experiential dimensions (as social media habits are clearly formed prior to the Pre-sessional programme), but also cultural and language dimensions, as students chose to participate in interpersonal interactions on social media among their own L1 and culturally familiar groups, whereas Teams establishes communication where interactions are more intercultural and multilingual, but the primary driver of communication is seen to be learning tasks, creating a group culture that lacks an interpersonal dimension which many saw as important. This links to the points made about social connections between actors online. The tools that were used were not seen by users as being as effective to them as face-to-face interaction, but still there were alternative ways to create channels of communication in distance learning to develop connections with others, although these connections were still limited for some, as seen below. Examples from the students, Aria & Rowen reveal how they used WeChat and WhatsApp as communication tools with their classmates:

"Most of the time we were texting, we have created a group on WhatsApp to be able to communicate about the course and for any inquiries. It was not that comfy to communicate with them the same way you can communicate face-to-face but at least it was possible to communicate".

"We used to communicate through WeChat application if we have to ask or discuss about something."

Rowen in the second quote described the used social networking applications as used more to communicate with their classmates rather than using the applications provided by the institution. From the previous quotes, WeChat and WhatsApp were described as a space for contacting and forming strong bonds. Moreover, as mentioned above, Hannah believes that the communication in online environment needs effort to occur, emphasizing that communication through WeChat is enough as the duration of the programme does not encourage a higher level of communication, and she will only know her classmates for a short period of time. This raises a question of whether students who see that they do not need to put effort to create a relationship with their classmates would change their perspective if joining a longer pre-sessional programme.

In summary, the interaction between students through the web-based learning resources is possible. However, most students prefer to communicate with their classmates in the traditional learning environment for several reasons. They stated the importance of body language and facial expressions during the academic activities. The majority of the participants believe that the face-to-face interaction with classmates during the in-person activities and discussions is more effective. Social interaction was mentioned as essential aspect that they miss from the traditional classroom, but that helps them to improve their relationship with their classmates as well as being an opportunity to improve their language. Other reasons were stated by students regarding their interactions with their classmates, namely the perception that the online environment was not suitable to practice and improve their level in the language in the ways they wanted to, as they considered the pre-sessional programme as a language course more than an academic preparation programme. Moreover, a few students stated that they do not need to put effort to create closer relationship with their classmates due to the short duration of the programme, which meant this was not a great concern to them. They see the value of connections and interactions with classmates, but do not see this programme as a site where this is particularly relevant or desirable, as I believe they see online interactions as needing more time and effort to create rapport with classmates.

During the virtual programme, participants did not just discuss student-student interaction, but also student-tutor interaction. During the interviews, students expressed their perspective towards the impact of online learning on their communication with their tutors. The following section will focus on the data collected regarding students' views on their interaction with their teachers on the programme.

4.4.1.2 **Students-teacher interaction via web-based learning platforms**

This section concerns students' perspectives towards the interaction and communication with teachers in the virtual and unfamiliar environment. Based on the results of the interviews with students and teachers, in relation to the programme, materials, and observations, an obvious and far-reaching theme in the data emphasizes the impact of pandemic-related changes in education systems on communication, as seen above on students' interaction with classmates, but also on interactions between teachers and students, also on the general expectations they bring to their interactions in this context. All of the participants agreed that online courses affect communication with their tutors. Based on students' comments, the majority of them prefer to interact with their tutors in the traditional classroom; yet, from the perspective of some students, the changes that come with online communication with tutors are sometimes positive.

The main two reasons for their preference to interact with their tutors in the face-to-face environment are missing the learning environment and the physical presence of the tutors in the classroom, and the body language and facial expressions of the teachers. Most of the students confirmed the importance of body language and facial expressions when interacting with their teachers. Two of the students, Maria and Aura, stated the importance of tutors' physical presence in the learning environment. They expressed their opinions in the following statements:

"I missed the physical presence for the tutor and interacting with them face-to-face was much better."

"We don't have the accessibility to deal with the teacher like the f2f... the interaction with teacher in the physical environment was missed and it was really difficult to ask about few details like the f2f ones, as I don't know why it felt more difficult."

From *"I don't know why it felt more difficult"*, and from other extracts mentioned in the previous section and in the data analysed, body language is often subconscious, and people might not explicitly realize what they missed or why they missed it, but many of these students are aware that something does not feel right online, and they identify body language as an identifiable factor in that. Few points from the analysis above sound certain, but the point that they do not all know why is interesting, as teachers and designers need to be aware that students cannot always articulate issues they experience or preferences they have, but that does not mean they do not experience them. Repeated interviews, closer relationships with students, and observations were important in me accessing many of these views, which might not have been noticed with research that did not hold a focus on the communication and relationships in the context.

The second reason for missing the physical classroom environment was the belief that such settings are suitable space to interrupt tutors for queries, and develop more natural dialogue. They believe that it is more comfortable to ask questions and have discussions with their tutors when they are physically face-to-face. Almost half of the students declared the necessity to ask questions in the face-to-face classroom, and that this was difficult to achieve in live MS Teams meetings. A mix of Chinese and Saudi students expressed their opinions through the following comments. Firstly, Aura here emphasized that it was challenging to use devices to interact with their tutors during the live sessions:

"It was really difficult to ask about few details like the f2f one, as I don't know why it felt more difficult. Like I feel like I should wait for the lecture to finish to be able to ask questions, not like the f2f where I believe it's easy to interrupt the tutor to ask questions, I believe this was huge obstacle for me."

Aura mentioned above that "*it was really difficult*" and "*it's easy*" without mentioning any clear reasons for having this obstacle. Besides, during the live session observations, I noticed three teachers who were attempting to ask the students repeatedly if they have any questions or queries regarding the lesson content. Accordingly, as I have mentioned above, responses were cautious, as many students approached the online classroom as an unfamiliar environment that needed more time to understand and adapt if they were to change their views and behaviours. Maria also declared not feeling comfortable to interrupt during the live sessions, which might be related to the use of new technology as new tool of learning:

"In the face-to-face classroom, it is very convenient to have a conversation with the teacher, I can interrupt if I want to ask a question or if I have inquiry about any point in the lesson. In the live session, it felt not easy to interrupt, even though if there is a rise hand function on Microsoft Teams, but it wasn't comfortable to interrupt."

From her quote, Maria mentioned that "*it felt not easy to interrupt*" but she did not mention about not being able to do so. She knew the mechanism to politely ask a question in this environment, and seemed to see benefits of asking questions, but still felt it was difficult for her to engage in this way. This could be as a result of the unfamiliar use of technology in a fully online course for the first time, causing anxiety around new practices, as these changes happened suddenly and in a short time during the pandemic. From observations, I think that emerging group culture is likely a factor too, as few students raised hands in classes, meaning that even those who wish to ask a question, and would do so in a physical classroom, feel more pressure and difficulty being the only student using that function. Related to documentation, I noted that little guidance is provided for students on how to behave in live sessions, and tutor guidance is mostly on what Teams can do, but not how to instruct students to behave in that space. This might have made it easy for a group culture to emerge where students are quiet and anxious about spontaneously speaking, as tasks do not encourage them to interrupt or raise their hands explicitly. Yasir, additionally, agreed regarding the interruptions on Teams:

"It was challenging to interrupt my teacher on Microsoft Teams. Maybe I feel shy online to ask question, but face-to-face classroom is easier for me to interact with my teacher in the face-to-face classroom".

Students here are clearly aware of the potential to ask questions (via the raised hand tool on MS Teams) but did not feel comfortable doing this. They also see this as a barrier, and even a "huge obstacle", to their learning, and operate with the belief that they would interject and ask about tasks they did not understand if they were in a physical classroom. It seems that, in an online space, they perceive the discourse conventions as unfamiliar and uncomfortable, and the role of speaking or drawing attention to oneself at the wrong moment to have negative consequences. One student speaks about being shy, but she feels she would interact more in face-to-face communication, which suggests that the online classroom increased her anxiety around speaking and drawing attention to herself, which could be related to what is visible (with attention drawn to one speaker at a time, and close-up images of people's faces being in frame), and how the classroom discourse works, discussed below.

The way student participants frame the online classroom, and its discourses is revealing, either about what they experienced on the programme, or about how they perceive this learning space. One participant cited above refers to the online classroom as a "lecture", and, in all three example extracts (but more in the analysed data), the asking of questions is seen as an interruption in this space, whereas it would be seen as an expected part of the physical classroom. It is interesting that students recognise the barrier this poses to their learning and development, but that they cannot find a solution in their ways of working together online. Questions of whether this is something that comes with the structure of MSTeams, or with the way learning and expectations are managed, or something between the two, is explored below.

Participants believe that the physical face-to-face interaction will help them to be more recognised by their tutors rather than online. On MS Teams, teachers will not be able to identify all the students. MS Teams did not show all students' cameras while tutors are sharing their screens, and participants believed that could be a reason for difficulties building proper communication in the group. Accordingly, many of the students emphasized the importance of keeping the camera on to be well-recognised by their tutors. The respondents Aura, Maria & Clare mentioned their opinion in the following statements:

"F2f was able to speak to the tutor directly and know who you are, through teams you might not recognise you because you might be turning off the camera, they might not remember you and might only remember your name only, sometimes, f2f helps to make better connection like to interact with someone and see the facial expression..."

"My relationship with my tutors was good. I was afraid that they won't recognise me, or it would be difficult to be recognised by them, but it was fine. Still, the I prefer the f2f interaction where I believe it feels more comfortable to interact."

"F2f was able to speak to the tutor directly and know who you are, through teams you might not recognise you because you might be turning off the camera, they might not remember you and might only remember your name only, sometimes, f2f helps to make better connection".

Here, the students acknowledge that they do not always turn on their cameras, and, if they do, they are aware that not all can be seen, and certainly not in the same way as they would be visible as people in a classroom. It is clearly important for students to be known by the tutor, and creates a "connection", as two participants state above, that facilitates more "comfortable" communication and a better relationship. Taking an online programme was not seen as a way for individuals to learn didactically from online tools and lectures, as students saw relationship building, open communication, and human connection with tutors and classmates as an important part of their experiences on the programme. The online space did fulfil this role for some participants, but was a barrier for others. Whatever the outcome, the fear of not being recognised, and not having the tutor know students beyond their names, is a common theme among participants' accounts in this study.

However, Aura, who is a female Muslim student, declared that she prefers to turn off her camera during the course because she wears hijab, and switching the camera on is disturbing to her. She explained her view in the following statements:

"Because I am a hijabi, so it would be more comfortable for me not to wear hijab. So, not having to turn on the camera as we weren't forced to, so this helped me to be comfortable in my house."

What is important to observe here is that operating online does not affect all cultures or genders in the same way, and intersections between these elements can influence participants' engagement and preferences. Here, Aura is at home, and so she feels more comfortable not having to wear her hijab while working with others online, whereas she would wear it if in a physical classroom. Despite potential issues of not being recognized fully, or not establishing the same relationship with her classmates or teachers as if they could see her, she would prefer to be comfortable and work with her camera off. Others also stated a preference for working with their cameras off at times, but their reasons varied, and this example shows that the "online space" is actually not a physical location, and therefore can place meaningful elements of both the institution and the home in juxtaposition. Here, the meaning of working at home for Aura supersedes the idea of MS Teams as a more public, classroom space, which is based on her culture, beliefs, and relationships in the home. It is therefore important to recognize that the online learning environment is not just about what exists online, but our understanding of what happens in this space must also incorporate awareness of what lies in the physical and cultural surroundings of interactants.

The perspective of many participants showed that the lack of face-to-face communication influenced their ability to interrupt and ask questions during the face-to-face lessons/lectures. They explained that during the online live sessions, they need to follow a long process to interrupt the tutor, because they need to use certain functions of MS Teams such as raising hands and turning on/off microphones. Accordingly, they believe that the communication with their tutors became less, and that negatively impacted on the quality of learning, compared to their perceptions of how face-to-face classrooms facilitate appropriate communication with tutors, as Aura, Hannah & Aria explained in the following statements:

"As much as you believe that you can ask the tutor questions and interact with classmates, it is really hard to actually do it, muting, raising hand, concentrating or not on Teams is not like f2f environment."

"Well, sometimes we can get real time response (immediate response) maybe it's really confusing, it's not convenient to communicate with others. But it is not like the face-to-face interaction with them."

"Offline teachers I believe will help me more than the online courses because it will be easier to teach us directly, and maybe ask them the questions and not just waiting for online teachers to trying to figure out what problem exactly have."

Here, two sub-themes emerge: the tools that characterize how and when people communicate in the online classroom, and the perception of lower quality communication online. The MS Teams tools and functions are cited regularly in this chapter as influential on communication, and here we see that features such as having to mute and unmute, turn cameras off and on, and the need to raise a hand and wait, are seen to have a negative impact on students' opportunities and motivation to communicate online, particularly compared to a physical classroom, where they see body language and general visibility as aiding communication.

Linked to the tools of the online classroom is the perception of communication having a lower quality than in a physical classroom. Here, Hannah shows that she is aware of the benefits of open communication with classmates and asking tutors questions, but she finds that it is too challenging to work effectively for her online. Aria states that she believes it is much harder for tutors to understand exactly what students are struggling with when communicating online. Time is a factor here, with many students referring to "having to wait", either for opportunities to talk or ask questions, or for the tutor to "figure out" what issues students are facing.

Linking many of the themes in this section is a sense of passivity among students and a sense that the online space is not dialogical. In terms of passivity, students predominantly mentioned needing to "ask questions" and wanting to be recognized by tutors, when many of the tasks they were working on were intended to be productive, whereby they share their ideas, work in progress, and take more of a lead in their active learning. Perhaps the online environment, and their experiences online during the

pandemic, has had an effect of making them approach communication around learning in a more passive way, despite many of them recognizing the importance of communication and valuing social elements of learning, as is evident in many of the extracts above.

The point that the MS Teams classroom was not seen as dialogical is connected to this sense of passivity and is evident through repeated statements of needing to "interrupt the teacher" to ask questions. It seems there was a common perception across groups that the space was teacher led, and not a space for dialogue. Some might see this as a pedagogical issue to be managed by more effective classroom management, but there are clear issues participants experience with tools and wider factors that influence their engagement, so this is a complex area in which all participants seem to want something similar (open communication and greater dialogue), but many struggle to achieve that in this space.

Contrasting with the common perceptions among student participants reported above, Nova, who is a Thai student, declared that it is not important for her whether to communicate with her tutors face-to-face or online. Nova explained that the most important option to her is the ability to communicate with them whenever she needs. When I asked her, which option is more appropriate to communicate with her tutors, she said:

"It's both ok because I am a person who talks a lot and have many questions. I can ask directly whenever I have a question. I am not shy. So, I think it's the same in online and because it isn't that different for me…"

This initially seems as though confidence and comfort could be a factor here, as this participant identifies as somebody who is talkative and can communicate effectively, without being "shy" (cited as a barrier to other participants above), whether online or in person. This simple dichotomy was questioned, however, when compared with other participants' perceptions of online communication. On the other hand, two students believe that operating online is beneficial to them, as they believe interacting with their tutors online is more comfortable, and even allows them to overcome their shyness. They declared that they are too shy to interact with their tutors face-to-face and saw the Web-based Learning Environment as helping them to solve this problem, as they are not obligated to interact with the teachers face-to-face. Ella & Rowen clarified their point in the following comments:

"I think maybe online course is better for me to have a good relationship with my tutors because we just see each other through the computer, so I am not afraid. But if I meet them f2f I will feel nervous and embarrassed and maybe I even can't see them as much as now online. I'm not very outgoing, so if I have to interact with my tutors' face to face is not going to be easy but online interaction allowed me to text my tutor and I think that is better to me."

"The communication between teachers and classmates are much more convenient and you don't have to stress for the communication, it will not make you nervous."

These interview extracts demonstrate the way that changes in learning environments can have contrasting implications for different people. In contrast to participants stating that their shyness was exacerbated online, these students see the online space as less stressful than physical interactions. They see the online barriers to full physical interaction, which were seen as harming communication for others, as beneficial for them, as this facilitates their engagement, making this safer space less intimidating than in-person communication with tutors. Kevin, would use emails instead to interact with his tutors even when the face-to-face interaction is available, as this is more comfortable for him, and this gives him the chance to organize his words before contacting them:

"I think when I am in campus, I think I will often use emails to communicate with teachers which is better for me because I can organize my words before sending the emails, so I prefer to send email".

Time is a factor again here, with the immediacy of communication on MS Teams or in a physical classroom being a source of anxiety for this student. With ongoing work and questions for tutors being key to Kevin's perception of essential communication during the programme, he sees email as the most comfortable and effective medium, whereby he can formulate his language and ideas before communicating. It is important to note that this is something he perceives as most important whatever the medium of the programme, and it shows a contrast in how students see the role and act of communication, as some feel frustration at not being able to ask questions immediately during a class, and others seeing the act of asking questions as involving more thought and attention to detail. This links to how the pedagogy of this online programme involves work inside and outside the class (with tasks that transcend the class and require peer- and-tutor engagement, both in MS Teams meetings and via other media, whether text chats, short online meetings, emails, or discussion boards). Perceptions of communication that takes place beyond the class clearly influences how student participants perceive the role of classroom communication, and their role within that.

To conclude, most of the students prefer to interact with the teachers in physical f2f scenarios to be able to discuss and interrupt. At the same time, some of the participants classified themselves as shy students who prefer to communicate with their tutors online (taking advantage of written and less direct, personal, or visible interactions), whereas others who self-identified as shy students saw the online space as an added barrier to communication, due to feeling unable to interject in the classroom discourse. As the students gave explanations about their preference regarding interaction with their teachers, teachers also explained their perspective regarding their relationship and interaction with their students, their relationship with their colleagues, as well as stating their perspective towards student-student interaction. The following section states the teachers' views towards interaction within WBLE.

4.4.2 Section 2: Teachers' perspective towards synchronous and asynchronous communication

This section will focus on educators' perspective towards the synchronous and Asynchronous Communication with their learners and colleagues. This section will be divided into two subsections (1) teachers' perspective towards the relationship with their students (2) teachers' perspective towards student-student interaction (3) teachers' perspective towards the relationship with their colleagues.

4.4.2.1 Teachers perspective towards their communication with students

The teacher participants' perspectives towards the interaction with their students in the online learning environment was essentially aligned with the students' perspectives. The five participating tutors believe that the interaction with their students was impacted by the change in the learning environment. Four out of five teachers showed their disappointment with the lack of communication accompanying live online delivery. They stated that they were not able to have the same quality of communication with their students as they used to have in the face-to-face environment. It is worth noting that not all of the four teachers experienced teaching as the same as face-to-face proramme, so the context in which they experience occurred is different.

The most common points mentioned by the teachers was the lack of interaction. Rana is one of the teachers who expressed her opinion about interaction with students as *"I have lost a huge part of communication"* compared to her perception of her on-campus experiences. Rana affirmed what she considered the necessity of daily interaction with her students, as she saw the programme as a language programme, and therefore proper academic and social communication are an essential part of the pedagogy. She expressed her view in the following statement:

> *"Communication in online learning is not easy. In language classroom, you teach language by language (the mean and way are the same), student in language classroom, is not mathematics, history, or geography, they don't study the content, it's language which students learn through your teaching, you are teaching language through vocabularies."*

Despite her previous quote that the Pre-sessional programme concerns academic skills, it is interesting that Rana in this quote sees that the purpose of the role as teaching language through language, and this is a barrier when faced with academic discourses on the programme. Despite the large amount of independent study tasks, collaborative work, and discipline-specific intentions of the programme, Rana sees the students as not operating within their disciplines yet, and rather attending in order to develop language, and primarily vocabulary, through the programme, and this is challenging on an online programme.

This shows that, when education systems go through sudden transitions, educators will bring their own assumptions and orientations to content, learning, and interactions with students that influence their perceptions of who they are, who their students are, and what the purpose of their interactions are. It also emphasizes the 'between' status of transitional programmes. Participants have different ideas about where their students are in this transition to their main degree programmes, with the PS programme trying to align content and learning with what students will experience beyond the programme, and this tutor clearly sees the programme more as a language bridge to further study, whereby students develop vocabulary and English ability before enrolling on their main programmes, which should presumably focus more on content and study skills. These data, juxtaposed with the programme documentation, show that perceptions of purpose and the role of 'transition' have deep implications for practices, and interview data show how different actors might engage with terms in tasks or criteria (e.g., whether seen from a language-teaching or content-focused view), even if the terms in the criteria seem straightforward. The focus on independent learning and critical thinking across modules was highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, but still some students and teachers seem far more focused on developing language accuracy and range. It is worth noting that these extracts did not emerge from specific questions about language, but were normally prioritized in discussions of the programme, and their successes and challenges, which shows the centrality of language that they bring to the programme. This might have been hidden in the on-campus programme, where they might deviate from the formal curriculum to focus on general language proficiency, but it becomes apparent when discussing this shift to the online space.

As mentioned from students' perspectives above, a few teachers highlighted the absence of social interaction with the students in the classroom between/after classes, with Kareem expressing his opinion by emphasizing that the social interaction could create rapport, as it helps getting to know his students more closely. He explained in the following statements:

"I really couldn't get to know the students … because it was difficult to have that face-to-face interaction that we could have on daily basis. I mean a couple of years ago, I did it in Southampton… in face-to-face you could have a coffee, you could have tutorials, but this around everything can be difficult to be honest. It was never as the real-life experience."

"I think it is kind of good as a backup, students wanted the experience of being in the university, experiencing the culture, the environment and so on."

Moreover, Adam declared that:

"I would I think generally opt for the f2f. I think it's just because the interaction with the students is nicer, you find it more rewarding, you feel maybe a closer bond with your students but the online I think does have some benefits as well, things feel more immediate, you know, when you ask students show me this or share your screen with me, things are quite."

It is interesting to note that Kareem refers to “face-to-face interaction” as “real-life experience”, emphasising that there is a barrier to online communication that makes it less “real” as well as less rewarding. This is removing elements of social communication to the point that it becomes inauthentic to some of the participants. This links to previously visited themes among student participants of time (referring to the immediacy, efficiency, and quickness of successful face-to-face communication) and interpersonal relationships (referring to establishing bonds and a feeling that communication should be rewarding). Kareem’s perspective is also connected to language learning, as the students might not live a full experience on the online programme, as they are prevented from practicing the language with their classmates and tutors outside their set classes.

Again, it is interesting that he refers to “real life” here, with online communication seeming somehow falling outside more authentic experiences. Analysing these accounts, it is also noteworthy that they see the physical programme, which could be seen to contain its own barriers to “real life”, as a space characterized by authenticity in many student and teacher participants’ accounts. As can be seen from the extracts thus far, there is a trend for participants to juxtapose online communication on the programme, often negatively, against an idealized on-campus classroom, despite only a few of the teacher participants having experienced such a class in this context. A feature of sudden change might be to favour and idealise what was more familiar before the change, which does not undermine the data, but could explain such positive views of open communication, collaboration, and relationship building in physical classrooms, and yet such barriers engaging with such practices online.

For Kareem, the in-person programme offers more value, and authenticity, to student experiences by offering the experience of being in the physical university space and engaging with the culture and environment in a way that is limited online. A lot of university activities, from student societies to virtual events, were happening online during the programme (via Blackboard on the Student Hub), but these were not seen as offering the same sense of cultural and environmental engagement as if students were attending the campus. Another aspect that concerns teacher participants was mentioned by Rana, and it relates to her ability to show evaluation and appraisal to her students. She explained that she usually uses her body language to communicate this to her students; however, in the online live sessions, this was seen as an obstacle in the teaching process.
She expressed her opinion by saying:

“Appraisal was different, because I clap, I use my body language a lot inside the classroom, I approach the students, I appraise them by approaching to them, by smiling at them closely, I’ve lost all of that in online learning.”

It is noteworthy here that most of these functions exist on MS Teams, but they clearly have a different meaning, implication, or level of effectiveness when in the online environment. “Approaching” is not

necessary in a live online space, as all are in close proximity (that was noted as creating anxiety among some participants, as they are always in focus when their camera is on, and they are talking). The clap and smile are possible online, but this participant clearly feels their function in appraisal is less than in person, showing that actions and features of communication become recontextualised in new environments, which changes their meaning. This recontextualization can be expected, but the extent of her expression is powerful when she states, "I've lost all that in online learning", meaning it is not only less effective, but not present for her.

Mila drew particular attention to the role of the camera in online communication, and how, despite her repeatedly asking students to switch cameras on, several students ignored this rule in the live sessions. She expressed her point in the following statement:

"The camera is the only way I can interact with my students. Sometimes, they keep the camera off even when I asked them many times to keep it on, and I can't see if they are listening, if they are there with me if they are doing something else."

This reveals important dimensions of communication and purpose in the classroom for her. The opening point, stating that seeing the students via the camera is *"the only way I can interact with my students"* contrasts with what follows, which relates more to control and checking when she states, "*I can't see if they are listening, if they are there with me, or if they are doing something else"*. Visually paying attention does have an impact on communication, but the equivalence suggested between interaction and observation shows that communication is not neutral in this space, and involves expectations of behaviour, roles, and power dynamics (e.g., students did not state that they needed somebody to acknowledge they were listening in the live meetings), which are all part of the environment, and are all open to recontextualisation through the shift online. It is also important to note that this study uncovers emerging aspects of online education during this transitional period, but it also uncovers perceptions, preferences, and viewpoints related to roles, communication, and purposes in the in-person programme that could remain hidden without these changes taking place. This is because asking about online communication uncovers more deep routed ideas of what should happen and why in what is referred to as the "real-life" experiences on the face-to-face programme.

The physical classroom is where tutors might ask just as many questions, but be more comfortable with strategies to elicit responses. Tutor participants often referred to experiencing silence from students regularly online, and that is the reason for having to encourage them to speak, which was a major feature of discussions of online delivery and their experiences of it. Adam & Mila explained more about this issue in the following statements:

"I would usually try ask questions and leave it open for people to speak, but quite often I got silence, and you really need sort of encourage people to speak."

"Students are shyer during the online sessions, they don't normally participate, I keep pushing them to do so. I ask for someone to volunteer then I ask someone specifically to answer."

Here, silence from students is seen as a barrier, and the way past that is seen as teacher intervention, by encouraging or asking directly for specific students to speak. The data shows many examples of a particular type of interaction that tutors seem to struggle with, i.e., where they ask a question and await a response, but pedagogical responses were not discussed at length, with discussions in interviews going towards management of this issue. The act of asking a question is a way of the question asker controlling the dialogue, and the act of directly eliciting answers is another response that has implications for power dynamics in the group. It seems that students sought more interaction and communication, and some focused on particular forms of communication on the programme that allowed for more time in formulating questions and points, but it seems that ways of adapting communication were under-explored by teacher participants, when themes in the data are compared between students and tutors. An element contributing to this could be the grouping, whereby "students" are seen as a group with particular preferences and characteristics, whereas data show that the students had different motivations, preferences, and accounts of their online engagement. Rana explained the possible reason for students not engaging enough in the virtual classes in relation to the process that students had to go through before responding via the meeting tools, such as raising their hands and unmuting themselves, which was also discussed by students in the previous section. Rana gave the explanation in the following statement:

"Students participate more in the f2f classroom. In the f2f classroom, they don't feel like spotlighted as the online classroom. In the online, they don't participate, and the microphones are off, we ask the students to turn off their microphones when someone is talking, and when you want to talk, please raise your hand, that means in the online learning there are stages before they talk. However, in the f2f classroom, students can talk without the necessity to raise his/her hand. In the online, you can't do that because you won't be able to hear anything, and it will be such a mess, it's really difficult to control it but in f2f they interact more freely."

Again, the element of control and classroom discourse arises here. The account here shows that the teacher enforces rules around engagement in MS Teams classes, which might inform some of the perceptions of students above. The group did not find a way to communicate in this context, but were told to turn off their microphones when not speaking, to only put the microphone on when they are about to speak, and to raise their hand if they wish to speak, which, as Rana suggests, creates stages before they speak, which could increase anxiety and reduce authenticity of some forms of interaction, but they also exert a form of control over students' communication. This could partly explain

perceptions of student participation "interrupting" the teacher, and the clear sense that the norm is for the teacher to control the discourse in the virtual space. As in many previous themes, intentions and ideals are often competing, and, here, the teacher sees the value of students not having to raise their hands in a physical classroom, but enforces a rule that students should do that before they speak in the virtual classroom, despite encountering unnatural and difficult communication in that space. Here, order and efficiency of communication seem to be prioritized over learning to engage as a group through experience, and, as above, the problem and solution seems to be focused on the students and a simple account of getting them to speak, rather than ideas that the medium of the classroom might require changes to how interaction happens, i.e., through changes to pedagogy and interaction styles. Recontextualisation is useful to draw on here in understanding how similar acts operate in an adapted ecology. The act of speaking and eliciting responses could be seen as equivalent on a similar programme (pre- and during COVID), but what can be seen is that additional processes, identity implications, and meanings are added to "speaking" in the MS Teams class space, making the act of speaking change into something that feels less natural and more pressured than in more familiar settings. Students and teachers do not mention identity or power very directly, but many responses relate to emotions within the online environment, and relational behaviours that they desire and/or perceive as not as accessible online.

Two of the participant teachers explained strategies they used to encourage learners to participate during the live sessions. Adam, for example, mentioned that he usually asks for a volunteer to answer, if there is no reply then he will pick a student randomly. He explained his strategy in the following statement:

"I would usually try ask questions and leave it open for people to speak, but quite often I got silence and you really need sort of encourage people to speak and one technique that I do use it sounds a bit scary but I will just call out a name and slightly pick someone and if they have no answer or they say I'm sorry I don't know then I say don't worry and then maybe ask somebody else."

Adam added that it is essential strategy for him to keep students comfortable regarding participation as they can make mistakes as the most important thing is to take part in the lesson. Adam explained his view in the following statement:

"Make them feel comfortable about their speaking, that's my main target to begin with, to sort of make everyone feels comfortable, I will sort of appreciate their effort for having a go at saying something rather then, you know, dismissing somebody for saying the wrong thing, I think my whole objective certainly in the first couple of weeks was just to get people comfortable with the idea that you have to speak in class and it's ok to do that and it's ok to say the wrong thing and very quickly usually that everyone starts feeling a bit more comfortable with the structure"

Adam mentioned that few of his students expressed their feelings towards participation during the live sessions. He reported students coming to him to talk about cultural changes in how they are asked to interact on the PS programme. Again, time is perceived to be a factor that alters behaviours and perceptions, as seen in the following statement:

> *"The students told me after class or during tutorial that they are a bit scared speaking because of the cultural change, it might inhibit them to speak but after two to three weeks, everyone feels a lot more confident with the idea that they might get asked to speak, but really emphasizing that it doesn't matter if you don't know the answer or it doesn't matter if you say the wrong thing."*

Mila emphasized this point regarding encouraging students to participate during the live sessions. She explained that the online environment might be an environment where students feel shy to talk on the camera. She stated her opinion in the following statement:

> *"I'm aware this environment is new to them particularly during a pandemic, it's totally new environment, I tried as much as I can to encourage them to speak even to give wrong answers as I always tell them we learn from the mistakes, and they should try."*

Based on Adam's and Mila's views, students feel uncomfortable to participate specifically at the beginning of the programme because of the new educational system and the unfamiliar learning setting. I believe this mix could lead to confusion in students' side to be able to adopt the new learning strategies. When this is added to a shift online, and comparisons with an idealized physical classroom where communication would be more natural, this could create negative perceptions among participants on the online programme.

All five participant teachers mentioned that student participation, at certain times, relates to their nationalities. The majority of teachers perceived that Chinese students were shier to participate or ask questions, while Saudi students were seen as more relaxed and open to ask questions, participate, and enter discussions. This is made evident by the three teachers, Adam, Mila & Rana. Adam expressed his opinion in the following statements:

> *"Asian students feel much more inhibited about speaking and talking in class but that is quite typical in the classroom environment, Chinese students particularly are a lot more inhibited; it takes more time to break down barriers and get them talking whereas typically my experience with Arab students, they are more willing just to put up their hand and volunteer answers and have to manage that a little bit carefully, because you are always get an answer from one or two students in the group"*

Mila agreed in the following statement:

> *"I have noticed that Chinese students are shyer rather than other nationalities, I need to do more effort to push them to talk and interact. Arabs most of the time volunteer to participate and they don't feel afraid to speak."*

Rana added in the following statements:

"Asian students like from Thailand, Japan, they interact, they ask questions, it's nice how they interact. However, Chinese student's still have a problem with interaction. As much as you tell them that they can talk, ask questions, I keep reminding them that they can ask and interpret me, no it's difficult with them. While Arabs are asking and interacting a lot. I noticed; Arabs are not likely to be independent learners. They even ask questions about things are not related to lessons and relate to other subjects for example."

"Arabs, Spanish and some nationalities who are normally social and interact, so the online classes weren't very bad with them, mostly the Asian students who had problems as they shy, and I believe they don't like to speak."

"Arab students they really like talk and express their opinion all the time, but you will be shocked about their writing. Plus, most of them are very descriptive, they can't really be analytical. Somehow, I understand, as they are not used to critical thinking in their education system."

The labels used to characterize groups of students are noteworthy here, with "Chinese" students being seen as the least likely to interact and engage openly in an online (and offline) environment, and "Saudis" being seen as more vocal and engaged. A feature of this perception that is obvious but not to be overlooked is that Chinese (sometimes "Asian") students' quietness is seen as a deficit, and a problem to solve, with tutors talking about making them talk. It is also revealing that these stereotypes are very strong, with little hedging or caution in statements about such large groups of people. Data from students note individual differences in motivations and feelings about communication, but here the tutor participants make statements about nationalities and ethnicities in a way that would be seen as essentialist in daily conversation (e.g., talking about what groups of people are like). It seems that these teachers are comfortable characterizing students in this way, which might inform their expectations of what they will encounter, but it could also influence their perceptions of reasons for silence or engagement. For example, many link being "quiet", which they can observe, with being "shy", which is something far more difficult to see online. Consequently, this might influence how they manage interactions with these students, and, alongside their perceptions of the role of the programme, my observations and discussions suggest that these identity indexes and relational positions do have an influence on how teachers perceive and manage interactions in the online space. Again, it is noteworthy that pedagogical responses, beyond telling particular students to answer questions, were barely discussed by teachers in interviews, while characterising students, technology, and deficits of online learning were a regular focus.

As mentioned above, it seems tutors frame problems in online interactions, and their solutions, in a similar way to how they manage in-person classroom interactions, where they ask questions in the class, and then get students to answer them immediately. The question of how students might engage more effectively online through altering the task management or interaction patterns or tools seems to be areas the teacher participants see as less central to this conversation than performing their more traditional classroom role in the online space.

However, as teachers mentioned, the national/ethnic characteristics they see as influential do not just apply in the online environment, but the issues associated with them increase in the online environment. A deficit perception of students' backgrounds was notable in teacher participants' accounts, and an observation here is that some felt somewhat insecure about teaching online, and this might influence the view that student silence linked to deficit perceptions they brought to the online environment but emphasized more. This linked to fears over non-engagement of students, and classes that are not interactive being seen as not being able to meet their aims, especially when trying to develop students' communication. Looking at student accounts, however, it is worth also considering what students were feeling, learning, and doing while not engaging as expected, as tutor anxieties and frustrations over a lack of student interaction were prioritized in communication over other areas of students' online work (e.g., how they engaged in chats, breakout rooms, group tasks, written work, or asynchronous correspondence).

Another challenge for teachers was the ability to monitor their students at the same time and in the same ways as the face-to-face environment. A few teachers explained that in the physical classroom, they can see all the students in the same room; they can observe their behaviour, body language, and facial expressions to identify whether they are engaging in the lesson, paying attention, or if the students are struggling with the materials. Moreover, during the students' activities, teachers can listen to students' conversations and provide immediate feedback, observing them during their activities, e.g., by listening while walking around the class. However, in the virtual environment, the teachers could monitor only one breakout group or channel at a time, as students were sent into groups to have a discussion or work on an activity through the breakout rooms. Mila made this point that in physical classrooms, she can see students' behaviour and their reactions; however, the online live space prevents her from monitoring all the students' attitudes and responses at the same time, and she saw the shift to the online environment as having a negative impact on her relationship with her students:

"The interaction with my students was good, but not as good as the face-to-face interaction, in the face-toface environment I can see behaviour towards me, towards the lesson, while I am explaining, and their behaviour towards their classmates."

Here, despite the rather negative account of online teaching from others thus far, she describes her online interaction with students as good. It is only in comparison to in-person teaching that it compares negatively. It is again important to note that, when looking at details of teachers accounts of classroom communication in the data, it is possible to identify aspects of their perceived roles and the classroom discourse. Here, the tutor emphasises the importance of monitoring in classroom

communication, and being able to observe reactions and behaviour while she is “explaining”. Again, the perception here is related to a structured communication that is not simply about facilitating participation and interaction, but about facilitating interaction that aligns with particular expectations around roles, practices, and purposes. The ecological lens is valuable to this area, as we see perceptions of actors and communication being deeply embedded within roles (e.g., teacher-student, and initiator-responder), and constructs (e.g., nationality/ethnicity, and ‘quietness’ equating to ‘shyness’).

Rana also emphasized the importance of monitoring students and observing their reactions and facial expressions. She explained that the students’ reactions and facial expressions are very important to her when communicating with them. Based on this, she stated that one of the negative features of MS Teams was that tutors cannot see the students’ faces when they share their screens (unless they have a second monitor). This made the interaction even harder to teachers and created more distance between them.

“For me as a teacher, students’ facial expressions are very important to see if they are listening, understanding, or confused. Also, there is a negative thing about Microsoft Teams that when I share the screen, I can’t see the students and this makes me uncomfortable as I mentioned before, their facial expressions are very important, and seeing them during the lesson is very important to me.”

These data show that teachers value monitoring students’ behaviour during individual and group activities, and this is even a valued dimension of communication when the teacher is presenting something, and that is seen as missing for some tutors in the online environment. Returning to accounts of breakout activities on MS Teams, teacher participants reacted to the loss of ability to monitor students’ attitude during the lesson negatively. Kareem & Mila expressed her opinion regarding observing students in the following statement:

“In online learning, you only can monitor students to a limited extent, but I don’t know what they were doing. I could not monitor them. I could not look at like we’re doing, so it’s kind of a bit problematic.”

“In the face-to-face classroom I can see how they interact with their classmates when they are in the same room how they interact with me how they interact with the lessons I can monitor them while they are doing the lesson activities, I can observe them, I can have a chat with them face to face, but in online session in the online classroom it wasn’t that easy to for me to monitor them and to understand my students and to understand their issues what they are struggling”

Relating to the previous quotes, teachers have expressed the fact that when they join the breakout rooms, they noticed that students speak their first languages, especially Chinese students, instead of English. Teachers who raised this saw the use of L1 as problematic in instances they discussed, as their perceptions of the course was as a language course over being a course that develops awareness about academic communication and study skills, despite regular tasks, criteria, and guidance reminding

students of contradicting ideas. They also mentioned that functions of MS Teams prevent them from monitoring all the students at the same time. They described this as a barrier that involved effort to overcome. Rana expressed their opinion in the following statements:

"I have noticed many times that they speak Chinese together, the use of L1 was a huge issue in the breakout rooms, you can't join all rooms at the same time, I keep reminding them to only speak English, and they still speak Chinese sometimes, in the f2f classroom, they won't do this and they will speak only English, even when they are in groups in the f2f classroom, you still have access to all of them at the same time and you would know if they speak Chinese. Some of them, when they are in the breakout room they won't talk, and they would say that a particular student didn't talk."

From the statement, "*I would say the name and say could you switch on the camera please"* it shows the power the tutor imposed over the students to keep the camera on without knowing or asking about the reasons that made students turn off the camera. Here, the tutor is using her power to be in charge and apply her rules in the classroom. The students are in different locations and different time zones where there is a possibility that they might be in different circumstances. For example, the hijabi students who declared that she prefers to turn off the camera as she is in an environment where not wearing hijab is more comfortable. She might not be comfortable being called out as her perspective is the space is different and she sees that she can engage without the camera. Using this power might affect negatively on students who might need to declare their reasons. The majority of them described the change occurred with their relationship with their students as they are missing few elements of the face-to-face classroom. The teachers main focus during the interviews focused on their relationship with the students around the live sessions. Only one of the teachers, Sarah, who is having her first experience teaching in the online Pre-sessional programme, believes that her relationship with her students was very good. She sees that there is a change, but she cannot see that this influenced her interaction or relationship with her students. She clarified her opinion in the following statement:

"In terms of interaction, the camera helps, if they don't have their cameras on that would be a barrier. But since they have their camera, we can see each other that helps a lot. I think in face-to-face you can approach students individually during the class and I think that would be more comfortable for them to ask me questions instead of in from of whole class. Some students found it hard to unmute themselves and speak. Especially they didn't actually meet each other. I think in terms of relationship between the tutor and students I think it wouldn't be a lot different but in terms of the relationship between themselves it would be different."

Sarah also stated that she did not struggle with her students switching off their cameras. she explained her view in the following statement:

"Most of them keep it on because I made it clear from the beginning that it's a must to keep the camera on, and they actually they were fine, and I didn't have this problem a lot so if someone doesn't have their camera on or switched off, I would say the name and say could you switch on the camera please because I

can't see you. Only couple of times someone saying like I am at work, but it didn't happen a lot, because they are in a different country."

Again, it is important to note that, although some guidance for teachers on SharePoint and in tutor induction stated that students did not need to speak English only, and they should not be asked to have their cameras on at all times, this did not appear in key student-facing documents stating how they should behave in synchronous or asynchronous activities. Therefore, this became open to tutor interpretation in the new context, and their views did not align with the wider programme's stated ethos. As above, these teachers have interpreted what should happen for themselves, probably based on past experiences and assumptions generated in a different, physical classroom context, and are therefore applying their own logic in prioritizing some programme goals while ignoring others. This relates back to recontextualisation, whereby the change in context results in an emphasis on some elements of the programme (mostly focused on language and control), and less emphasis on other areas (knowledge, dialogue, and adaptation).

The accounts above also indicate that tutors had different relationships with their students, and formed different dynamics in their groups. Observation notes reveal some parallels to this, as there were commonalities between groups (generally more communicative over time, and often struggling with spontaneous communication in the main room), but differences too, in how teachers behaved, followed up, and instructed students in that space. There were also different feelings in the groups, whereby the dynamic seemed different for some compared to others, which indicates, with the themes presented above, that there were commonalities and differences within the experiences of participants, which emphasize that, despite reports of the online environment lacking natural communication opportunities, the relational nature of identities in the group still plays a role in shaping expectations and experiences.

During the interviews, teachers expressed their opinion about the noticed behavior of students in terms of communicating among each other in the virtual classes.

4.4.2.2 **Tutors' perspective towards student-student interaction**

From the teachers' perspective, Adam stated that the interaction on campus, whether inside or out of the classroom, offers students the chance to meet between/after classes which could help them to interact and form closer relationship between them. The point here is that friends usually work more effectively than classmates who lack friendly connections, as students' role is not limited to work, and they can contribute to each other's learning as individuals. Some might characterise the cultural space as individualistic if stereotyping differences between cultures, but everybody seems to think working

together as a natural group is beneficial and natural. Adam explained his view in the following statement:

"if you are in person, you sort of gravitated towards different people and get to know them, sort of you know you might be putting a group together during your class but because you see each other outside of class and socially, there's a lot more of opportunity for them to interact with different people in the class and get to know those people, you might find people pairing off into groups forming friendships like that, whereas I think in online that doesn't happen so freely"

The last quote stated that there are less opportunities for students to make friendships with their classmates in the online learning environment. As Aura mentioned above, as soon as the live session is over, they just log out and turn off the computer, and communication rarely occurs afterwards. This could mean that online learning in this context impacted on students' interaction and relationships in the learning environment. More than half of the participant teachers believe that the absence of social relationships between students on campus could cause less interaction during the pre-sessional course. They believe that meeting between/after classes for coffee or lunch as well as attending social events could create deeper relationships between the group. These relationships could remove barriers between students and might help them to easily interact and cooperate with each other during the activities in the classroom. Regarding their interaction in the virtual environment, Rana noticed there is no real relationship between students comparing to the traditional learning environment. She explained the noticed relationship between students virtually and face-to-ace in the following statements:

"I believe during the live session the interaction between them is rare not like face-to-face one. I have seen my students going to a café to have coffee during the break as a group, so they can practice the language, while the online learning they just have the break alone inside their houses without having the chance to have the break, how can they make a relationship and know each other? We don't have a relationship class in the online pre-sessional course, we do activities to share ideas but still with the teacher, it's difficult to make bond together."

Rana agreed with the students that the virtual learning environment does not allow for the amount of interaction offered in the traditional classroom. Mila, who is an international tutor, did not have prior experience of teaching at the University of Southampton. However, she has four years' experience as an English teacher in the non-UK institutions. She emphasized the importance of social interaction between students in the university environment, where they can communicate. She mentioned that students should have a social community within the educational environment. She stated her opinion in the following statement:

"They don't have the social interaction that they will have in campus after face-to-face classroom they normally might have a discussion after the classroom they might have coffee or lunch after the face-to-face classroom they might all or as a group go for an event and the weekends. All these things I believe they are not living anymore and I believe it's very important to have a social community within the educational institution".

Mila stated that students in the virtual environment "*are not living anymore*", and that social and academic interaction that could be available through on-campus studies far more easily. She agreed with few students who already mentioned the absence of activities and events that used to occur within the physical boundaries of the learning institution. Kareem, an international tutor who taught in the offline Pre-sessional programme at the University of Southampton before, stated that he noticed the lack of communication between his students, describing the online environment as an unsuitable space. He explained his view in the following statement:

"…this was major factor as well. They don't just miss the teacher they also missing their peers as well. There is no chemistry and time difference as well. I don't know as I was about to teach, they were, it was time for the dinner and it was just not working, there is no chemistry in and in that age in that environment you would have thought students would have much more interactions."

In the previous quote, Kareem mentioned that students do not only miss the interaction with their classmates, but they also *'miss the teacher'* on a programme. Teachers usually meet students twice a week during the live sessions, and during observations, interactions generally involved communication around tasks. Students also have tutorials with tutors at least once a week. Therefore, teachers do not typically meet students vert often, so that is something that seems specific to online teaching on intensive, short pre-sessional programmes.

Rana, one of the tutors, emphasized the fact that the pre-sessional programme is not a language programme, it is a programme all about the academic skills; however, she feels that students enroll on it to improve their language as well as future degree preparation. She explained her point in the following statement:

"Let's be frank, language won't be learnt from the classrooms, it will be learnt through communicating with classmates and friends. Having international friends will help you practice the language, even if you have chance in the classroom to talk it won't be the main reason for you that help you to practice, you learn vocabulary, structure, grammar, pre-sessional course is all about academic skills, it's not about language, you helped them how to make academic presentation, how to write essay, how attend seminar group, but not helping them to improve the language, and the reason for them paying money is to improve their language. They want to improve the language beside the degree, and the online learning doesn't help."

From her perspective, students pay to improve their academic skills and for the environment which have different cultural and academic background students. This is a possible contributing reason to that number of student participants who were concerned about the missing environment where they can interact more. Teachers also expressed their views about the behaviour of students as they see it in terms of communicating among each other in the virtual classes. Teachers did not only notice changes in their relationship with their students, but they also expressed the change caused by the shift of the education system on their relationship with their colleagues. The following section will focus on the teachers' perceptions towards their relationship with their colleagues.

4.4.2.3 **Teacher-Teacher interaction**

The final sub-topic of this section is teacher-teacher online interaction. One of the challenges that teachers expressed during the interviews was their relationship with their colleagues during the online pre-sessional programme, and, specifically, the lack of interaction they reported. Teachers explained that in the physical face-to-face environment, they used to spend more time interacting with their colleagues in the staff room before and after the classes, as they usually had the chance to discuss and share ideas about the syllabus and the content of the course. However, they explained that during the online programme, it was challenging to interact even with colleagues they knew, and to build relationships with the new colleagues as they had done before. As mentioned above, two of the five teacher participants were experiencing their first online or in-person pre-sessional course at the University of Southampton, while the other three already had experience teaching the same course face-to-face at the University of Southampton.

During the online EAP programme, tutors mentioned that they only had the chance to meet with their colleagues was during the weekly meetings fall within a time frame of 45 minutes to one hour, which certainly contrasted with experiences of those who had worked on the in-person programme before, who would see wider colleagues far more regularly. The teachers who already had experience teaching in the face-to-face pre-sessional programme described the online teaching environment as less collaborative, and as a result, they felt somewhat isolated. They added that when they had the chance, they only communicated with the colleagues whom they already knew from the previous years. They declared that it was an obstacle to interact with the new tutors who joined the online course. Adam explained the impact of online work on his relationship with his colleagues in the following statement:

"In terms of sharing ideas with a group of my colleagues in teams, feels a lot more isolating, so you've got something in the syllabus that you're going to do next week maybe something you've never done before or starting from scratch, normally the first thing I do in staff room is chat with one of my colleagues, what you do? Would share some good ideas for this".

Tutors expressed that interacting with their colleagues in the staff room and having coffee or lunch together provided them with the chance to generate and enhance relationships in academia, and to reflect on their practice and the experiences and views of others. They believed physical spaces are where they can build stronger relationships for sharing knowledge and experience. It is interesting that majority of the teachers mentioned that they felt isolated and were struggling to interact with their colleagues even though they were able to communicate through the available platforms, as they do not usually work after 1pm. They also did not seem to collaborate as readily through social media platforms as some student did, perhaps linking to generational distinctions between digital natives

and those experiencing digital communication as less integrated into their lives. Also, these teachers have connected their relationships with the colleagues with objects such as coffee, cake, and lunch, which link their ability to communicate with their other teachers in the physical world with social conventions that would make creating relationships is easier. It is the results of the transition online where the human interaction is seen to be lost, and tutors struggle to find an effective alternative. Adam, Rana, Mila, and Kareem stated their feelings regarding rapport-building behaviour and team performance in the following statements:

"Unfortunately, this was one of the negatives of the online learning, you don't have a social relationship with your colleagues where you have coffee and share your thoughts about the curriculum and classroom control. I felt so isolated, working solely and whenever I need new ideas, I just google or speak with former colleagues from my hometown, because this is the first time I teach in the University of Southampton."

"Online is never the same as the social side of it getting to know each other a little bit more. We kept to academic to be honest. In real life we would have much more interaction. This is difficult about teaching online, not meeting up to discuss things over coffee."

"…the only thing that helps you make a good relationship with your colleague is to have breaks and sit in informal environment where you chat with each other. We only have a relationship with the people that we already know before the pre-sessional course…For me it's one of the biggest changes, definitely feel a little more isolated, bit less supported."

"…we didn't have the chance to know each other, the only time we were able to meet was the team meeting where only the team leader talks and ask if we have any issues, which is for half an hour or an hour, my colleagues are around 9-10 members, if each one of us talked for 10 minutes, is it enough to make friends with people you've met for the first time? No, of course not, online learning destroyed the relationship with colleagues…In face-to-face learning, we meet over a coffee during the break time, even the induction week during the f2f learning, we were all working together and helping each other, the old staff is helping the new ones it was really nice, and there were coffee breaks where we meet for a coffee and cake."

Here, teachers stated the importance of the lunch and coffee breaks as an essential component of their professional routine. These moments serve as valuable opportunities to recharge, exchange ideas, and collaborate as Adam declared that *"I felt so isolated, working solely…".* Based on tutors' quotes, the informal interaction occurring outside of the classroom provide them with the chance to feel supported within the professional community. The formal interactional environment between teachers might offer a structured platforms for discussing curriculum development, teaching strategies, and addressing shared challenges, but teachers emphasized the importance of moments like breaks and the in-person meetings as they believe they contribute to their professional growth and, in some cases, job satisfaction.

Regarding the new colleagues, more than the half of the tutors stated that they need to put more effort into building relationships with their new co-workers in the online environment. Mila, who declared that this is her first experience teaching online EAP programme at the University of Southampton, stated that she could not build effective working relationships with her colleagues

except her module coordinators, as she frequently contacted them for academic questions or inquiries. Mila explained her opinion in the following statements:

"I didn't have an interaction with them at all. I only meet with them during the weekly meetings with the coordinators. The environment didn't help me to get to know them, even when I need some advice about anything I speak with friends or one of my former colleagues. This is one of the negatives of online teaching I believe that we can't create a relationship with our colleagues as easy as the f2f environment."

She added that:

"Unfortunately, there was no relationship with any colleagues, we only have weekly meetings for approximately an hour, where the coordinators discuss the weekly plan, but we have connection at all. When I need help, I email the coordinator to ask for help."

"I believe in the face-to-face environment we can approach to our colleagues we can have a chat with them but in the online learning we need like a certain environment which is not available I believe because with my experience I wasn't able to have a relationship or get to know any of my colleagues specially that this is the first time that I teach in the University of Southampton so other than the coordinators I didn't know anyone"

What is interesting about this is that some of the participants declared positive views towards the pre-sessional face-to-face environment even though they have not experienced it. This links to my previous perspective that some individuals position face-to-face interactions, and their roles within them, in an idealised way. Mila declared earlier that it is her first experience teaching pre-sessional programme whether face-to-face or online. In her previous quote, she mentions that she believes the face-to-face environment is easier to create relationship with colleagues, thus, like students, giving a positive opinion of an environment that she has never experienced, used in comparison with an environment she is experiencing.

However, Sarah was the only tutor who stated that interaction with her teammates was not an issue to her. She explained that her team created a group chat on MS Teams, where they had virtual gatherings every Thursday. In addition, the group was constantly active as they regularly answered each other's' questions, shared ideas about the weekly lesson plans, and gave suggestions of activities. Sarah expressed her point in the following statement:

"We had this Thursday thing, hang out, we were always active in the chat, asking questions and giving suggestions. In the chat, we were sharing ideas and experience and when someone had a problem with a student; either the coordinators give their opinion, or one of us do. We were helping each other; the coordinators were also responsive."

To summarize, teachers believe that the interaction with their fellow workers on-campus is more effective to build working relationships with them. They believe the daily interaction with their

colleagues could provide them with the chance to share knowledge, experiences, and suggestions regarding the lesson plans and classroom activities. In this section, teacher participants stated that they see interaction as a crucial part of their role as teachers. From the data, four of the teachers compared online interaction with their colleagues with the interaction with the face-to-face environment, even though a couple of them have never taught in the face-to-face pre-sessional programme before. All the responses declared their need for increased interaction in the online environment for various reasons; however, it seems that they struggle to accomplish the interaction they want. One out of five tutors declared that she did not struggle to communicate with her colleagues due to the group chat was created by them on MS Teams. Most of the tutors complained about the lack of students' interaction as they showed expectation that students should be able to communicate. At the same time, the data shows that even teachers struggle to create a rapport with other teachers. One unifying point here is that all the tutors sought relationships with their colleagues, and valued this highly as part of their professional identity. The wider team of teachers seemed to be a missing in-group for some, and lacking contact with people like them who should be accompanying them on their journey, particularly at a time of anxiety and struggle during the transition online. The value of this seems to be undervalued on the programme, or assumptions were made that teachers would find ways of connecting, but this was not the case for the majority. Just as most, but not all, students wished for greater connectivity with classmates going through the same experiences as them, so, too, did the teachers. Clearly the shift online damaged valued networks between the people on this programme, and few of these participants found ways to adapt to that. Despite all the affordances of platforms designed for communication and constant connectivity, physical presence was sorely missed in the social relationships of most tutors and students on the programme.

4.4.3 **Interaction with technology**

In the online pre-sessional programmes, the environment of learning does not only include students and teachers interacting live, but also wider tools and Web-based Learning Resources. Students and teachers were obligated to engage in an online course because of the pandemic. During the online course, they had to interact using devices such as laptops, tablets, and smart phones. As previously mentioned, students used specific websites and platforms in the PS Programme which included the programme content, the spaces for synchronous and asynchronous communication and assignments submissions platform. As mentioned in the PS Programme overview (see 4.2 section), the platforms and applications used in the programme were Blackboard, e-Assignment, MS Teams, and Outlook. The third area in this study, based on the collected data, is students' and teachers' perspectives towards interacting with the PS Programme platforms as the only tools for learning and teaching. This section will be divided into two sections: (1) students-technology relationship; and (2) teachers-technology

relationship. Firstly, the following section will focus on students' interaction with the technology used in the programme.

4.4.3.1 **Students-technology relationship**

With the transition of the physical learning institutions, technology became the bridge connecting students to their learning experiences. The virtual classes were empowered by audioconferencing and videoconferencing platforms, online collaboration tools, and digital learning resources, which enabled pre-sessional students to access the programme material from their homes. Students demonstrated their perspective towards using these platforms. Students experienced diverse emotions and views in response on programme transformation and utilizing technology as the only learning tool. During the interviews, students discussed about both the positive and negative aspects of online platforms.

4.4.3.1.1 Positives of the new medium of learning

During the conversation with the participants, most of the participants expressed the perceived positives in the new medium of learning. Many students agreed that the most important advantage of studying through the technology was saving time. Most of students explained that technology has emerged a remarkable solution to reduce the time-consuming nature of commuting. Individuals were presented through videoconferencing platforms such as MS Teams with the opportunity to cut down on the hours spent travelling to and from physical learning place. E-learning platforms offer education at eliminating the necessity of daily trips to campus. In addition, during the pandemic, the students were able to save on travel expenses and they did not have to travel to the UK to join the programme. Number of students, who are Aura, Nova, Hannah & Maya, explained about saving time from commuting as one of the positives of online learning, they believe online learning offered them extra time for their learning. They expressed their views in the following comments:

"Time and location are the best, save time of transportation, save money buying notebooks."

"Maybe another advantage is we have more time to learn, because in offline learning we spend a lot of time to get to the classroom. But in online learning you stay at home, its time saving."

"It can be saving time or transportation and travelling. Actually, we can study everyone, just have a phone or tablet. I think it's about connecting with different countries, can meet other people from different places."

"I think it is really convenient for me because that is I don't need to go to another city or another country, I just can have the class when I stay home. It can break the time and space limitation. No matter we come from or how big the time difference is, as long as we have the internet, we can attend the same class at the same time."

Moreover, the benefits of the convenience of the features present in the applications and websites utilized within the Pre-sessional Programme was one of the positives of the use of technology based on the data collected. Number of students stated that the flexibility offers them access to programme

material and resources from the comfort of their pace despite the geographical limitations which allow them to learn at their own pace and convenience. In addition, the availability of the programme content ensures learners to revisit materials whenever they need for revision or clarification reasons. The convenience of online learning empowers learners to take charge and enable them to acquire valuable skills and knowledge. Number of students, such as Kevin, Yasir & Aura, stated their views regarding the convenience of online learning in the following statements:

"The positives that I had everything on my laptop, I mean the course content is there, I don't have to organise papers and all that, and some sessions are recorded so I can check whenever I need."

"It doesn't matter if you are near or far away from the school, you have the ability to have a tutor, this is the first one."

"One of the advantages is the possibility to study anywhere…the studying remotely gives you the opportunity to be in your comfort zone, so I believe these are the advantages we had from the online learning."

Several students cited functionality as an advantage of online learning. They described that the range of capabilities and features that a device, system, or software offered to learners to facilitate effective and efficient learning experience. Clare, for example, mentioned that the features of rewatching the materials assisted her comprehend the content of the live sessions when she encountered any difficulties. She explained her view in the following statement:

"The idea to watch the material repeatedly was good to me, because sometimes I can't understand totally then I can watch them again and again. I think this is really helpful to me. If I missed something during the class because they are not recorded"

Yasir agreed that the functionality of the websites and applications provided in the programme is one of the positives of the platforms. Yasir stated his opinion in the following statement:

"I can watch videos and use the function of slowing and doubling the video, find efficiency ways to include to my study."

Another example of the functionality of Pre-sessional platforms is the subtitle function available on MS Teams was specifically mentioned by students as it offers a range of valuable affordances that enhance communication within the live sessions. The function of subtitles can definitely offer an advantage of understanding the content of the live session in the educational settings where language variation or audio quality might cause challenges. One of the students, Kat explained how she depends on subtitles when she does not understand what the teacher is explaining. She explained in the following statement that:

"Maybe I think when I have some problem and I can't understand what the teacher is talking bout I will feel nervous or think what the teacher is talking about and ignore what teacher are talking about, so, I will miss important things and another point is sometimes I depend too much on subtitles so I can't catch the teachers'

meaning quickly, when the teacher says some words, I just think about the other words teachers just talked about."

However, this advantage might introduce difficulties for students when it comes to maintaining focus during the live sessions. As much as subtitles might help students to comprehend the content of the lesson, it might take their attention away from the teachers' spoken content, which might lead students to end up engaging with the past (the subtitle text) rather than the present (the ongoing lesson). Therefore, students would be reading what is already being said instead of listening to what is being said at that moment. The cognitive effort required both listening and reading simultaneously could disrupt students' ability to fully engage with the lesson content. Accordingly, while subtitles provide a useful support mechanism, careful consideration is needed to strike a balance between comprehension and the potential distraction they might introduce to the learning process.

Another positive aspect was highlighted by the students is their ability to manage their time in the online learning environment. Two students who are Aura and Hannah believe that the switched online Pre-sessional Programme helped them in managing their time throughout their academic journey. They explained their opinion in the following statements:

"One of the advantages is the possibility to study anywhere, I believe this is something very important, even you can wake up 5 minutes before the lecture, or to attend the live session in the park for example, the studying remotely give you the opportunity to be in your comfort zone, so I believe these are the advantages we had from the online learning. The other thing, the advantage to have the space to study anywhere or at your base at any time."

"But it's more like free to learn online because we don't need to go the place like having a lecture, we just stay at home and use the computer to learn."

What is interesting about Aura's opinion that the concept of '*comfort zone'* in online environments demonstrates a connection in both physical space and time. She had found comfort in specific settings, like a nearby park or location close to her bedroom, which seemingly enhances their sense of ease and focus while engaged in virtual activities. Moreover, the element of time also plays a crucial role in establishing this comfort. For instance, students find it convenient to participate in online meetings immediately after waking up, a practice that is likely not associated with the park setting. These observations suggest that the idea of 'comfort zone' is not solely restricted to the digital realm; rather, it is linked with real-world environments and daily routines, underscoring the intricate relationship between physical surroundings and effective online engagement. It appears that the physical surroundings during the online space play unexpectedly influential role on shaping individual's experiences. Although the online realm is naturally digital, the environment that could impact students' engagement, focus, and overall satisfaction. The option of turning off the camera is one of the main reasons could be a reason that influence students' decision regarding the physical surrounding. As one of the educators described the extent of distractions that students encounter

during the live sessions. She mentioned that her students were attending the classes while they were in a café with friends or carry out another activity, even riding a horse. Aura, emphasized in the following statement that:

"Sometimes, yes, you get distracted, especially if you're not turning your camera on and you know you are not being watched, as if you are in class, you have like something is being made or a noise, you can actually get distracted, hold your phone, check your text, it isn't the same as like class, and having the feeling in face-to-face that you have to respect the lecturer because he's there and watching me and need to focus, maybe online, the probability to be distracted is way higher than the actual face-to-face. Actually, once I was very tired and slept late at night and I have a lecture at 9am, I logged in and went back to sleep as the camera is off and I was really tired."

In terms of the physical spaces, students might arrange their study spaces to minimize distraction such as being alone in their own space. Maya explained in the following statement:

"When I studies online, I think I can pay more attention to study because I will be alone in the room. I will close my phone and mute it. I get distracted more in face-to-face."

"Yes, like when the lesson is too long maybe in the maybe feel really tired, I may distract and use my phone, because I think the teacher won't see that because in the face-to-face courses I think when I use it, I think it doesn't show to respect but in online I think the teacher can't see so I can just use it."

Time here is another factor in the online environment as Maya in the previous quote explained that when the class/session duration is too long she uses her phone as the online environment offers a comfortable environment where the teacher cannot monitor her behavior as she believes that she cannot do such attitude in the face-to-face classroom when the teacher does not have the ability to closely monitor. This shows the possible differences about students' perception towards classes or meeting times online vs. in person. The environment could influence their attitude.

The suitability of one's environment for online study is essential factor that significantly shapes the effectiveness of virtual education. Higher education institutions are well-equipped to provide an environment solely focused on education, ensuring minimal distractions and optimal resources. However, when students are learning from home, there will be a different dynamic become active. While the main focus remains on education, the human factor becomes crucial. Home environments often require a balance between academic pursuits and the awareness of family members existence. Clear communication is important to make family understand the study schedule, online class timing, and the importance of maintaining a quiet and respectful atmosphere during those times. Aria described the physical environment in her house and how being with the family might be distractive. She explained her view in the following statement:

"Courses online will definitely distract me more, because I live with my family and sometimes just knock at my door and ask me what I want to eat because sometimes they don't know what I am really doing. Because sometimes in reading in writing we still can talk to our family but for the speaking courses we won't be able to do that. They will not be able to understand when they can talk with us."

4.4.3.1.2 Negatives of the interaction with Pre-sessional platforms

Even though students declared the positives of interacting with technology during the online pre-sessional programme, the affordances of the Virtual Learning environment can be compromised in situations where various challenges can arise during the online communication. The sudden transition to the virtual education can significantly impact students' emotions to the utilization of technology as the only learning tool. One of the students, kat, experienced the feelings of anxiety regarding the use of technology as the new medium of learning. She expressed her emotions in the following statement:

"I used to use internet and computer however, I was a bit nervous to use technology to study."

The online courses and programmes were familiar at certain cases and sometimes being chosen by the student. The situation presented a compulsory and unfamiliar environment (the fully online programme) could be a reason for feeling a sense of worry and concerns due to the new setting. Maria, in the followed sentence, expressed her emotions towards the fully online learning environment before the programme begins:

"Having all these platforms at the same time was not challenging but I was alert and worried that I won't be able to get used to them quickly for my course. It didn't take me long to understand the system but in the first week I was a bit nervous about it to adopt everything and be able to use the platforms correctly in my study."

A number of students expressed some specific issues they encountered when they first interacted with MS Teams. Ella explained the issue, she encountered using MS Teams which is the ability to locate the class. She expressed her opinion in the following statement:

"…when I first use it, I felt confused, I don't know where the meeting is. And I don't know how to join the class. It took me around few hours to learn how to use the application."

Encountering the challenge of not locating the meeting within MS Teams highlights a notable distinction from the traditional face-to-face classroom setting. Student might have a challenge trying to find the online live session which could be due to the lack of communication, or unfamiliarity with the online tools. In a physical classroom environment, prospect of being unable to find the classroom is not usually possible, as one can simply locate the designed room. However, within the digital interactions, the possibility of not locating the live session on applications is a reminder of the complexities that can arise in virtual communication. This difference emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and adaptability as we navigate the modern landscape of remote interactions.

Another challenge of most of the students was the technical issues, which included the loss of internet connection or the technical errors in the electronic devices, for instance laptops and smart phones; furthermore, the lack of the IT support during the pandemic is an added concern. Students explained

that their whole studies were depending on the internet and their electronic devices. At times, the main challenge was when the internet cuts off, especially during the live sessions or assessments submission. Yasir, for example, stated the internet issue in the following sentence:

"I think the most important one is network signal. When the signal is bad is really a problem or the network is bad."

The potential disruption by the internet connectivity issues in the physical classroom will not be a challenge. Unlike the virtual environments where students might face the possibility of being unexpectedly disconnected from the live sessions due to internet cuts, face-to-face classrooms operate independently of online connectively. The absence of reliance on technology help students to learn without the concern of sudden disconnections. Despite an integral part of technical devices in the education field, these devices are not immune to errors which can arise from a multitude of sources. The technical errors could include hardware and software malfunctions, such as defective components or overheating, which can lead to unexpected crashes, system failures, glitches, application freeze, and data loss, including blank screen or laptop shuts down or freezes. Maria, also, expressed the challenge with the internet and the technical issues. She stated her opinion in the following sentence:

"I remember one of the obstacles, I had a problem with my laptop and Teams specifically as I couldn't turn on the camera, you could face some technical difficulties and not all of us can have a suitable laptop, sometimes there will be a problem with the internet connection and you can't join live sessions, internet cuts off and discounting during the class that it causes difficulty to understand the lesson or miss information. So, it's a difficulty to get used to technology itself, and sudden technical difficulties, through the connection or devices we had,"

The lockdown has presented a unique challenge for learners which is the absence of IT support which could potentially increase existing issues. As learners and tutors heavily rely on the digital platforms for remote learning, any technical problems and errors can significantly disrupt the teaching and learning process. In the face-to-face classroom, students could be provided with immediate IT support on-campus. As a former Pre-sessional programme few years ago, we had access to IT support services on-campus. During the pandemic, number of students encountered technical issues, primarily because it was difficult to have IT support services even in computer stores. The closure or limited work of computer stores and IT support was due to safety measures and restrictions resulted from the pandemic. Aura expressed her view in the following statements:

"However, the main challenges that I had with technology is sometimes the internet cuts off during the live session or submission, or my device stop working and I do not have an IT support and it takes time to find someone help you with the laptop."

Two students described the solutions they attempted to find in terms of dealing with the challenges regarding the technical issues especially during the live sessions. Aria and Aura stated the issues in the following statement:

"Maybe the internet is not strong enough, I need to find somewhere I have the classes."

"I had technical issue with my laptop, and I tried to overcome it, so I took my sister's laptop and once I had to login with my phone with it wasn't convenient to see the slides clearly."

Kevin declared that he missed one of the live sessions, during the pandemic, because of technical error and the lack of IT support. He explained his challenge in the following statement:

"This was my main issue, during the lockdown there was no place I can go to be able to fix my laptop, once the windows in my laptop was locked and I had no idea how to unlock it and I had to call IT system and my friends to solve the problem and had to miss one session to be able to solve my problem."

As the University of Southampton recognised the importance of technical issues that students might encounter during the Pre-sessional programme, they established an online service line aimed to resolve the issues that possible to be solved online. The limited service was designed to offer assistance, such as troubleshooting software glitches or providing guidance on connectivity issues. However, due to the complexity of some issues, there were challenges when students needed self-reliance in solving them. Secondly, while some functions within the MS Teams were categorized as useful for students, the microphone feature in MS Teams which holds an important role in facilitating effective communication and collaboration within virtual environments was classified as a challenge to number of students within the online learning environment. For example, Aria explained her issue in the following sentence:

"Maybe at first, I didn't know how to turn on my microphone. I don't really have that many challenges."

Here, utilizing the microphone function on MS Teams presents its own set of challenges that can impact the effective communication. The act of using the microphone introduces another complexity that is not always present in face-to-face interaction. Aria expressed encountering difficulties in adjusting and interacting with microphone such as unintended muting or excessive noise. One of the common challenges related to microphone is having poor microphone or in a noisy environment. Microphone could also be frustrating as sometimes student might experience issues with them such as not working or being unmuted unintentionally that cause noise or disturb others.

Another challenge pre-sessional students encountered was the necessity to use Southampton Virtual Environment or the Virtual Private Network (VPN) to access university library resources. VPN is defined as a software that provides the users with a secure access between the device and the internet (Migliano, 2022). VPN establishes a secure and encrypted connection between a user's device and the

internet. Moreover, it allows students to avoid geographical restriction. There are many websites used in the Pre-sessional programme such as YouTube and Google Search are blocked in China. Accordingly, pre-sessional students were obligated to use VPN to be able to access the university resources and specific websites or applications. The University of Southampton Virtual Environment or SVE provides students with secure access to the university library resources as well as access to their university personal desktop from any location of the world. While VPN often employed to enhance online security and privacy, it can introduce a range of barriers that are accompanied by a feeling of discomfort, frustration, and a distinct sense of being restricted as well as has the potential to result in a decrease in internet speed due to the encryption and rerouting of data traffic. The additional layer of security, while protecting privacy, may lead to a slight delay in data transmission and retrieval (Migliano, 2022). Number of students made evident in the following statements:

"Actually, I have faced few problems in the online learning like we need to download some applications like teams but some of the applications it can't be downloaded in China. Like in my computer I can't open the teams successfully, I can only open it through the website so maybe it's a little bit difficult for me."

"The biggest challenge for me is teams and VPN both of them I can't use in my computer. I even bought new computer from apple. Because I can't use those applications successfully, I can't even download. So, I had to buy new computer to be to join the class."

"I think in general they are easily to use but for the library resources I had to use VPN somehow its inconvenient for us because we all need remember to use that function and sometimes it will be discounted and need to reconnect again. But for the others they are easily to use."

"I had to contact someone to help me set my VPN, it was disturbing to me, and my laptop get slower."

"Using the VPN was complicated. I have to set it up and sometimes my device is very slow, also my laptop froze many times and I had to restart the device".

The introduction of a VPN has the potential to negatively impact students' engagement within the virtual settings. The idea of functioning without a VPN is considered a normal case where students use the Web and different applications much more freely; however, the addition of VPN creates a distinct barrier, either in the form of new hardware or the need to remember to log in. The challenge also extends to the potential of slowness of their devices caused by VPN usage, which could increase the troubles accompanied with the digital engagement. In the social context, the virtual interactions such as videoconferencing and online discussions, the challenges caused by VPN can lead to communication delays and disruptions, which could influence the quality and dynamics of the social interactions within the online space. Conversations might lack the fluidity of natural dialogue due to the audio and video lags, potentially imped effective communication (the impact could be compared to speaking more slowly or struggling to hear clearly in the face-to-face interactions). The frustration resulted from these technical limitations might also influence students' attitudes and emotions. Students could feel isolated and disconnected when their interactions are affected by delays and disruptions, potentially

impacting the development of meaningful relationships and connections that are integral to these social aspects of learning.

Another obstacle was encountered which is students' ability to manage their time during distance education. The flexible nature of online learning can initially seem liberating, but it sometimes requires a higher degree of self-discipline and organisation. Number of students expressed their struggle with managing their time as they are in a different time zone. They have expressed their struggle in the following statements: Nova, Clare, and Hannah declared as that time-management is their biggest challenge due to the time-zone. They explained in the following sentence:

"First of all, the biggest challenge for me is time, because we live in different time zone so it's quite hard for me to adopt and using the time."

"Time zone also was an issue, as like some students are attending classes in a time, they didn't use to attend classes in like some students have to attend classes during the night, for me I was not having this issue as my time zone wasn't very different from UK time zone, but I have noticed a number of my classmates who are struggling with this problem."

"We need to arrange our time, because we are in a different time zone, so we need to arrange our time. another one we got some internet issues, sometimes we can't hear the teachers voice or check the screen. Maybe it's a little bit difficult to learn online."

The significance time differences between these two regions can disrupt the student's daily routines and study schedules. Students who are located in different time zones may need to plan their schedules, both based on commitments and the demands of their UK-based education. Maya, is another student who described her struggle with being in different region and the impact of being sleepy that might influence student's performance. She explained her opinion in the following statement:

"Sometimes, we have our writing and reading classes at 1pm in our Chinese time, but during this time I feel really sleepy. I get sometimes distracted with my phone."

Despite the fact that 1pm is a normal time to have a class in UK settings, Maya believes that 1pm is the time for her nap and for a break. As it was mentioned above, number of students in this study believe that the fully online programme assisted them to manage their time. Few students such as Nova and Maria explained their struggle to manage their time. They stated their opinion in the following statements:

"The last challenge is I think it's about managing my time and to do independent learning and do assignments on time, things like this and balance my time well."

"It's really difficult to manage my own time because being in the same place all day, it didn't help. Sometimes I waste time and I realize that I didn't do my work. In face-to-face learning, you have a schedule, you finish classes you have lunch then you sit to study in a studying space which encourage seeing other students studying as well, it's easier to manage my time I believe not like staying home for days. It was a challenge for me."

Maria, for example in the second quote, affirmed that the reason for time-management struggle could be the lack of motivation due to the constant presence within the same environment of study. Based on her opinion, the impact of the physical environment has the potential to significantly shape student's perceptions of the online space. For instance, individuals prefer engaging in focused study within a designated physical setting might find it challenged to replicate the same level of concentration in an online environment. The absence of familiar cues, such as the physical presence of peers, can alter the way students perceive their online learning space. She stated that her inability to effectively manage her time influenced her motivation.

One of the concerns that students declared was the influence of technology on their focus during the live sessions. Distraction is one of the aspects that it could be an issue to students whether in face-to-face or online environment. However, this study aims to understand the level of distraction that students might encounter in the online learning environment comparing to the face-to-face classroom. Majority of respondents declared that studying online increases the level of distraction as students could be more distracted with social media. Participants justified that students had the chance to turn off the camera when the teachers cannot observe them. In the classroom setting, students are usually monitored by their tutors. The use of the smart phones in the face-to-face classroom is probably less common compared to virtual environment. Kevin explained his opinion regarding the distraction in the online classroom in the following statements:

"To be honest yes, I actually use a separate monitor with my laptop, so sometimes I get distracted by social media websites such as twitter and Facebook. Sometimes I turn the camera for few minutes to check my phone to see a message. To be honest, I believe this is a real problem in online learning. I always try not to get distracted, but I just end up holding my phone or checking my twitter on the monitor without realizing this".

What is interesting about the previous quote, Kevin described that he adopted a behavior that he realized that it should be avoided, yet he proceeded to do so. His statement, especially *"…without realizing this…"*, reflects both intentionality and habitual aspects. He also showed that he aimed to alter his habit, but still cannot. This action was similar to the narrative relating teachers, where they might aspire to foster open communication and inclusivity in the classroom, yet there are instances when they exert authority and limit interaction due to the lack of effective communication. This parallel between student and teacher dynamics highlights the complex interplay between intentions, actions and external factors that can influence behavior within educational contexts. Aura, emphasized the point of turning off the camera that would lead to distraction during the live sessions, as the quote mentioned above, she stated that:

"Sometimes, yes, you get distracted, especially if you're not turning your camera on and you know you are not being watched, as if you are in class, you have like something is being made or a noise, you can actually get distracted, hold your phone, check your text, it isn't the same as like class".

Another student, Rowen, agreed that turning off the camera could distract them as they know that the teacher is not observing. They declared that they could use their phones and even sleep when the camera is off. Rowen explained her opinion in the following statements:

"Third point, when you do the online learning, the students may not concentrate during the classes because students could have a chat... the teacher is not looking at you, could play with the computer or have a chat with someone else. The face-to-face teaching help students to understand courses better and focus on study."

"Yes actually, even if the camera is on, I can check my phone and text back. Yes, it is very distracting, I also can use other websites with my laptop. In online learning, it is very easy to be distracted as the teacher can't see what you are doing or can't see if you are texting or writing a pion they are explaining."

Rowen in the previous quote adopted a slightly different view, the online space is essentially many spaces, each which its own dynamics and potential for interaction. In this digital landscape, students possess the ability to integrate various interfaces that connect them with different individuals and context, extending beyond the traditional boundaries of the classroom. This environment enables students to bring external influences and perspectives into their learning environment. From the previous quote, the concept of remaining unobserved plays a crucial role in controlling behavior in multitude of activities, ranging from the fundamental act of sleeping to engaging in virtual conversation with classmates. It is interesting that students openly express that the absence of surveillance creates comfortable environment where they feel less compelled to be attentive. This paradox highlights the complex interplay between personal autonomy and external oversight within educational settings. It suggests that while surveillance has its merits in maintaining discipline and security, it may also inadvertently influence students to be more mindful of their actions and responsibilities when they believe they are being observed. Foucault (1977) demonstrated that surveillance is not just about observing but is a fundamental mechanism by which institutions exercise control and shape the behaviour and identities of individuals. Foucault argues that surveillance is an essential component of disciplinary power, which is a common form of power that operates through mechanisms of observation and examination. In the context of schools and institutions, surveillance used to monitor and control individuals, shaping their behaviour and identity. From number of students views, their behaviour could be influenced by the presence or absence of surveillance, which a concept that is usually discussed in the context of educational institutions. When there is no surveillance, students might perceive a greater sense of freedom and autonomy as they feel less inhibited and more comfortable expressing themselves which lead to more relaxed interactions among students.

Most of the views stated the teachers' inability to observe their screen is a potential source of distraction. It is interesting that students labelled the word distracting as a negative word who they continue adopting while blaming the environment. This unique viewpoint reveals the intricate ways

individuals perceive and interact with online learning environments, underscoring the intricate interplay between external factors and personal agency. Based on the discussion with the students regarding their perspective towards the online and face-to-face learning environment, most of them (despite identifying positive aspects relating to the online learning) prefer the physical traditional classroom. The main reason for their preference is being able to live the university face-to-face learning experience. They believe that the face-to-face interaction with tutors and classmates is very essential in the learning process. In addition, they emphasized the effectiveness of the integration of technology and online learning platforms as a supplementary tool to enhance their learning, but not as the main setting for their learning. Maria, Yasir and Nova, for example, are the students who declared this view in the following statement:

"I mean I prefer the face-to-face learning environment and could have platforms that could be used as a support to my study not 100% online learning."

"Face to face. But I like the way that I can watch the recordings and videos."

"I chose face-to-face because I can concentrate in the study environment, and it is like I have to pay attention to teacher and to what I have learnt."

Yasir added that if he had to choose, he would choose face-to-face learning environment as he is interested to be involved in on-campus learning experience. Yasir stated his view in the following statement:

"I think we can combine the two ways. But if I have to choose, I will prefer to choose face-to-face, be in the UK. Because I can experience Southampton study life better."

What is interesting about Yasir's perspective is the connection he made between the physical classroom and the culture study of a place, a bond that tends to be less in the virtual environment. The physical classroom serves as a crucial link to the broader culture of the study place. Beyond its functional as a space for instruction, the classroom represent the values, traditions, identity, and the overall atmosphere of the institution it belongs to.

"Maybe we just can have more interaction with my classmates. I prefer face-to-face because I think online course, I still feel I study by myself, maybe alone I just do every assessment and task by myself but in face-to-face we can chance to communicate we can seek more help and we can have better relationship."

The physical classroom does not only offer a hub where students engage with the programme material, but it also provides the atmosphere and characteristics of the educational institution and the surrounding society. The physical classroom could extend the interactions between students and their tutors beyond the formal lessons. Moreover, Ella perceives the online environment as *"working by myself"* space, emphasizing as a space for individual effort and self-directed study as they feel isolated, and an environment lacks the immediate connections and interactions. In the contrary, the physical

classroom fosters stronger relationships, where there is a sense of community to interact with peers and educators spontaneously. The ecology theory highlights that it can indeed facilitate robust interactions between students and teachers within a digital ecosystem. Just as in a natural environment, where organisms and their surroundings influence each other in intricate ways, the online educational landscape provides a platform for dynamic engagement. Through various virtual tools and platforms, students and teachers can engage in discussions, share resources, and collaborate on projects. Aria expressed regarding the communicating with teachers in the following statement:

"I would choose face-to-face because I can have the answers immediately and save more time. For online tutors, we can't contact them easily because we might have different things to do and that might wait for tutors to have a time to answer my questions or have a chat. Maybe the relationship with classmates would be more."

In the contrary, for certain students, the online environment offers a space where they can cultivate a heightened sense of confidence. In this digital realm, where interactions can be less intimidating, these students find themselves empowered to engage more actively with course materials and discussions. The virtual environment could minimize the pressure of in-person interaction. Kevin was one of the students who expressed his preference in previous sections where he can be involved in an online learning environment. He explained his opinion in the following statement:

"I prefer online learning for the same mentioned reasons because it's very convenient and I will be more confident and I think I will save some time, less time on traffic."

Two out of 12 students prefer to study online in the future as they believe that studying remotely is more flexible where they can choose the environment where they feel comfortable. One of the participants believes this is the future of learning and the system must be changed with the global changing. Hannah and Aura expressed their views in the following statements:

"If I want to speak about the feelings, I guess it has both sides, you look at as all of sudden the whole experience changed, from face-to-face to online, and I believe there are a lot of things will be definitely missed from the face-to-face and it can't have them within the online learning."

"Studying remotely would reflect on work sometimes, like sometimes, some field like IT or anything could require a laptop, it helps to manage the work without even being in office, sometimes. Online also boosted the technology more for work, like for example in my home country, if corona didn't happen it would still the same, it made people jump 5 years to the future in a way. It accelerated the technology change."

In the last quote, Aura mentioned that remote learning can have an impact on one's work and industry, particularly in fields like IT. She suggests that online learning has also driven technological advancements in the professional sphere. She used her home country, where the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online technologies. Without the pandemic, the necessity of remote work and learning forced a rapid transformation, almost as if society jumped ahead in technological progress by several years. The pandemic acted as a catalyst for change, pushing industries and

individuals to embrace digital tools and methodologies more swiftly than they might have otherwise. What is interesting here, the interconnection between industry, work and broader societal shift presents a compelling framework through which to understand the potential evolution of education. Education has long been recognised as a cornerstone of social progress, and its adoptability is closely interwind with changes in industry and the workforce. By responding to the dynamic interplay between industry developments and the demands of the workforce, education can proactively prepare individuals for the challenges and opportunities presented by wider social change. This symbiotic relationship emphasizes the need for an education system that is both forward-looking and responsive, ensuring that the journey from classroom to career is connected to the transformations in the world. As teachers are essential actors on the EAP programme, their opinion towards students' attitudes towards the programme and the used technology offers a valuable wider image of the learning environment to have wider image regarding student-technology relationship. The following section aims to state teachers' perspectives towards students' behaviour in the online environment.

4.4.3.1.4 Teachers' perspectives towards student-technology relationship

Teachers expressed what they have noticed about the behaviour of students and their interactions with technology on the programme. One of the main issues that teachers noticed was students' distraction during the live sessions. Adam, who is one of the teachers who declared that there is a problem with the use of technology during the live sessions, explained that in the face-to-face classroom, few students are distracted by social media during a lesson. While, in the virtual classroom, students found more space to use the social media during class time, as they can switch off their cameras, or can use other devices out of the sight of others. He added that when he can see distracted student, assuming they are using their phones. He expressed his opinion in the following statement:

"*You do sometimes see someone sort of laughing and I'm sure they have a group online chat, they might be typing while you are teaching, messaging each other, so that could obviously quite distracting and because they are online there's not very much you can do about".*

This relates again to what have been explained above, teachers sometimes make assumptions that students are distracted when they turn off their cameras during the live sessions. Students might be facing connectivity issues that make it difficult to maintain a stable video feed, or they might be in an environment with privacy concerns or distractions that they prefer not to share. Some students may have reasonable reasons for needing to keep their camera off. Effective communication and understanding between teachers and students can help bridge this gap and create a more effective virtual classroom. Moreover, Rana added that she feels uneasy about screen sharing, and is unable to view her students' faces on their cameras.

Regarding students' interaction with technology, based on the conversation with the tutor participants, they agreed that few students encountered many challenges with certain platforms used in the programme. Adam and Mila declared that few students encountered challenges using certain applications such as e-Assignment. Adam explained that he repeatedly needed to explain the functions of certain application, still a few students made mistakes during the submission. Additionally, Mila explained to number of students many times how to upload their assignments on the website. They explained their points in the following statements:

"It's quite often when they're introduced to a new piece of software or new process and my experience was that there is some of the students were more likely to make mistakes with that, for example number of students who submitted the wrong assignment to the wrong submission, when I went to open their presentation for example, I'd find an essay in there and I had that in two or three occasions"

"One of their struggles that I have noticed with them is using e-Assignment and following the structure or following the guidelines of the assessments and the use of e-Assignments".

Another issue was stated by number of tutors relating to students' interaction with online platforms was students struggle with creating presentation by Panopto. Some students encountered difficulties when using Panopto, a video platform which commonly used for recording and sharing their presentations. The main challenge was following the steps to record, upload and organise presentations videos. Teacher Rana explained students struggle with Panopto in the following statement:

"What it really takes time is the way to record the presentations and how to use Panopto. They don't know how to use it, and when they use it, they use wrongly, they don't check voice, they don't check if their voice is clear or not. They must do maximize to the screen, and they don't know how to use it. Also, some of them might sit in a café and they record the presentation and it's so difficult to hear them and I only have this chance to assess them, so if you going to have to repeat it how many of them will you repeat as they are a lot of students."

"My students mostly struggled with creating presentation via Panopto, they told me that it's a complicated website to use. I guided them, and I received repeated questions about Panopto but still few students submitted their presentation with errors like low voice volume and sometimes the slides are not clear".

Students did not only struggle with Panopto, but also with certain functions on MS Teams. In the negatives section where several students declared their issue with the use of MS Teams microphone. There were teachers who agreed with the students that there was a struggle with use of MS Teams, for example Mila & Rana declared that students struggled with few functions of MS Teams. The first issue was switching on/off the microphone and the camera as they explained in the following statement:

"There were a lot of problems, some students don't even know how to turn off the microphone, there was echoes, they don't know how to turn it off when you ask them, open the camera, he doesn't know how to turn it on."

"Even students actually struggling, they are the new generation, the majority of them are good but a lot of them were struggling, first one/two weeks."

For the first quote, it is noteworthy that teachers have the capability to manage and control over microphones during the virtual meetings and online classes. This control allows them to effectively moderate the audio environment by muting learners' microphones as the situation demands. Teachers can employ it to minimize background noise. While it is mentioned that today's students are often characterized as a digital native's generation, this label could be overly simplistic. The assumption that students' university possess a high degree of comfort with technology overlooks the diversity of experiences and abilities within this generation. It is a reminder that within any demographic group, there exists a wide range of skills, experience, and identities. In a broader context, this adds depth to the study of identity, highlighting the complexity and multifaced nature of individuals' relationships with technology that deserve exploration beyond the surface level of stereotypes. Mila and Rana added that their students encountered issues with MS Teams features such as raising hands, muting microphones, and uploading/finding files within their Teams area.

"I have seen my students few times were distracted. They were obviously using their phones, sometimes I saw their eyes down like they are writing but sometimes I doubt that they might be typing. I believe we can see that they are distracted but we cannot assume for sure if they were using their phones or not."

"At the beginning they struggled with the use a couple of features of MS Teams like rising their hands, turning off the speaker and camera, I had to show them many times how to do it"

In the second quote, Rana explained how number of students struggled with features on MS Teams that Rana had to guide them multiple times on how to be used. The teacher asserted that she demonstrated what students need to be done, while she did not state anymore details regarding the causes of this issues which might be deeper than just instructions to be explained multiple times. The approach used by the teacher here is dealing with what was described as an issue with a deeper understanding to the root of the challenge.

The last tutor, Sarah, noticed that her students only struggled with using locating files and tasks on Blackboard. She clarified in the following statements:

"They supposed to know where the weekly assignments are but I had multiple questions about them so I had to explain more than once how and where can find the materials on BB,"

"The problem I had, one of my students submitted her presentation but was no voice, she had to do it again. One of them, she said she couldn't do it by the time I don't know there was a problem

with the platform, so she had to submitted after the deadline. A lot of them were asking questions about it before, a lot of them had questions about the assessment, what does include? Tor explained students struggle with virtual presentation and the use of Panopto."

It is noting that characterising students as a generation inherently comfortable with technology is a common stereotype; however, this is not always aligned with the reality. In the previous quotes, it was shown the complexities of student identity within the context of technological proficiency as not all students fit into the presumed concept of digital natives. The previous quotes shows that this generation can indeed face challenges while the use of technology.

On the other hand, Kareem expressed students' technological competence from his perspective, which contrasted with views of some other tutors. He stated that none of his students struggled with any of the websites or applications. He emphasized that he was the one who was struggling. He explained his opinion in the following statement:

"They used technology pretty well; I was the one who is suffering with internet connection and using the provided platforms".

In the context of educators and students' interaction with technology in education programme, the scenario where tutor complain about students' ability to use technology on the programme, presents an interesting dynamic. Tutors who express frustration over students' technological competence may possess a high level of proficiency themselves, overlooking the fact that technology proficiency varies widely among individuals. Students come from diverse backgrounds and may have varying levels of exposure to technology. Some students might have grown up with digital devices, while others may be less familiar with them. In the following section, data shows teachers' perspectives towards the interaction with the technology used in the Pre-sessional programme.

4.4.3.2 Teacher-technology relationship

This section concerns overviewing teachers' perspectives towards the online teaching environment and the use of technology as the only teaching tool during the pandemic. It is necessary to understand their reaction to the sudden change in the education system that they were forced to deal with in a short time. The majority of the teacher participants declared appropriate knowledge in using technology. Three out of five tutors stated that they did not encounter major issues with technology during the pre-sessional course. The three declared that it took them few days to discover the features of the applications provided by the university. They clarified that they were nervous at the beginning of the course as technology is a new medium of teaching. Adam and Mila stated their opinion in the following statements:

"I did feel quite nervous about it; I don't think I found it very difficult, it went quite well considering I was quite nervous about doing it. I don't think I had any particular challenges, but everything went quite well."

"I was a little bit nervous because it was my first experience, and I was trying to expect the process in the classroom. Like how the interaction with students through computer is instead of interacting with them face-to-face going to be. I was also nervous about the use of technology and the Internet and the possible technical issues that I might encounter during the class. I believe the first week of the course was kind of is the most one that I was nervous because I was still discovering, and you think that I haven't get used to it how to deal with the students. how to explain how to use technology how always having a Plan B during the online course how to react to the unexpected issues during the course or the life sessions, but eventually it went well."

Adam, Mila and Sarah added that the use of the university applications is similar to any other applications; they just need few days to discover the functions of each application. They expressed the interaction with technology in the following statements:

"I didn't have any problems with the applications and the platforms used in the course".

"It just took me a couple of days to understand how to use MS Teams. How to create an event or live sessions, how can I use the breakout rooms, how to share the screen. As this is a new experience for me as I'm using the MS Teams or technology or the Internet or the online platforms for the first time as a teaching tool"

"It wasn't hard for me; because I am a student, so I'm used to these platforms. Sharepoint was easy to access. Teams, as well"

Nevertheless, two out of five teachers declared the difficulty to interact with technology. Kareem, for example, expressed his struggle with the technology as it took him long time to be able to use technology. It frustrated him as he believes that teaching should only be face-to-face.

"It took me a while to get used to technology as the only teaching tool."

The word "only" holds a significant weight when considering the challenges of integrating technology on education. The struggle often is not solely about grasping the complexity of learning technology as some tutors might believe. The shift to technology as the sole medium compels educators to reshape their teaching methods to fit with the digital platforms. Rana, additionally, described that she encountered issues with technology specifically with the frequent application updates, as she described herself as "not a technology person". She described in the following statement:

"*At the beginning, technology I didn't know how to use it, I didn't know how to use the breakout rooms, there is always updated version, there is always a new update, and my main problem is update, I can't keep it up with the updates."*

"At the beginning, it was very difficult because I am not a technology person, even when I have to update my phone, I hate it and I leave it till one of my kids do the update for me. When I first start the online course, MS Teams, BB, Panopto, etc. I didn't like at all, because it's all about technology, and I don't like technology at all, and I feel isolated."

Identity labels in the context of the technology generation, such as being a *"technology person"* or a student assumed to be proficient in using communicate technology, can show significant influence on how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. These labels, while convenient for categorization, can also be limiting and potentially misrepresentative. The notion of *"technology*

person" often oversimplifies the complex relationship individuals have with technology, ignoring the diverse skills and preferences that exist within in generation. Similarly, assuming all students to be adept with communicative technology overlooks the variability in their digital literacy levels. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of technology engagement and digital skills within this generation is crucial, allowing individuals to embrace their unique strengthens and challenges without feeling confined by overly simplistic labels. As Rana stated that she is not a technology person as she encountered many issues with technology starting with MS Teams. She explained the issue in the following statement:

"I am kind of person who even struggles with using smart phones, so basically it was a big challenge for me, and I didn't know how to deal with technology, I have done do many mistakes at the beginning, once I have done an assessment recording and I mistakenly keep it with the students, who heard the whole record and knew about all the assessment, because we are not well trained."

Interestingly, Rana stated at first that she struggles with the basic technology, she also described that tutor received minimal training. Some educators may have hoped for comprehensive training and exhaustive resources to navigate the challenges of this unfamiliar environment. Others might choose to adopt approaches relying on their existing skills while seeking targeted support for specific aspects. She also described her struggle in the following statements:

"I didn't know how to do the breakout rooms, Panopto until this moment I struggle with it, I don't know how to record my classes and send it to the students, until this moment, I did it but it's really embarrassing and you ask students to do it and you don't know how to do it yourself, I just follow instructions and tell them, MS Teams , BB, they know how to use it, I didn't find Panopto as useful at all when I had to record some classes"

Rana, here, described that the struggle led to embarrassment and the erosion of authority. When educators encounter challenges or difficulties in front of their students, it can create a sense of vulnerability that contrasts with the traditional role of an authoritative figure. Sarah added to describe her experience by stating that she was not confident about the first online teaching experience at the University of Southampton. She stated her feelings in the following statement:

"Because it was the first time, I didn't feel 100% confident, I thought might not be good enough, what if I couldn't, I wasn't sure if I am going to this or not. Because it's my first time, and its new field, I haven't done this before."

The transition to online teaching had introduced a challenge for educators, and many teachers might find themselves struggling with a lack of confidence in this new virtual environment. The traditional classroom setting, with its familiar face-to-face interactions and established teaching methods, offers a sense of comfort and control that is often disrupted in the online environment. Regarding the use of technology, as she mentioned above, she stated that:

"It wasn't hard for me; because I am a student, so I'm used to these platforms."

From the previous quote, Sarah showed intersection between gaining confidence as a teacher during the pandemic and drawing insights from personal experiences as a student is interesting. She reflected on her own growth as learners enabled educators to adopt and experiment with teaching methods, ultimately bolstering their confidence in creatively addressing the evolving needs of their students. This struggle interplay between being a teacher and drawing from student experiences highlights the cyclical nature of education and the valuable insights that can be gained from both sides of the classroom.

Another drawback was noticed by couple of teachers was the structure of online assessments. They declared that the online assessments might not assess the real skills of learners. Adam noticed that students sometimes were able to transcribe the listening assessment when they received it. He believes that the students are not fairly assessed about their listening skills as the structure of the assessment allows them time to transcribe the content of the video/recording. He explained his point in the following statement:

"They are giving the listening content for 24 hours and I, my suspension is many of them will turn that to a transcript because is easy to do that and even I haven't mentioned and I don't know if it's relating back to some of your earlier questions, students will often got captions ups on teams, so what's normally listening it becomes listening and reading or just reading, I don't really know but I'm suspecting that instead of taking notes of they are hearing, they somehow turning that listening content as quickly as they can to a transcript and they start highlighting and reading in the same that you would look an essay or doing some research from a book, so it's very difficult, you can say you referred to that really well from the listening content and you have made a good point there, but did you read it or did you listen to it."

Rana emphasized the transcription process during the virtual presentation where students were posting transcription behind the screen to read from instead of the natural performance. She said:

"One of the drawbacks of the online presentation is students had the chance to transcribe the presentation as it was obvious that they were reading from the screen. In the face-to-face classroom, the students don't have another screen and they cannot have transcription as the tutor can easily see this."

The perspective that Rana stated, suggesting that students should not read during online presentations, is one that raises interesting questions about the nature of learning in a digital environment. While some tutors might argue against reading directly from a screen, it is important to recognise that this is not universally applicable nor inherently essential. Learning styles and preferences vary among students, and for some, reading along during online presentations could enhance their comprehension and retention skills. Accepting the diverse range of approaches to online learning acknowledges the multifaceted nature of education and respects the individualized needs of

students, rather than emphasizing a certain right act or way of interacting with online content, a more inclusive perspective acknowledges that reading can serve a useful tool for some students within the realm of virtual presentations. Sarah mentioned as well that her students were transcribing the presentation as they were reading instead of performing. She explained her point in the following statement:

"In terms of the assessment itself, I think almost all of them were reading from the script, I could see them just reading, you can tell when someone is reading, the majority of them were reading, so I tried to reduce this, because you can tell the difference in their levels when you compare their presentation with the speaking exam or when they are speaking to you"

More issues were mentioned relating to the online presentations which were described as negatively affected the students' performance. Rana clarified her perspective that during the online presentations' students lost the ability to show their body language. She believes that in the face-to-face presentation, students can earn more marks for their body language and eye contact. As a result, according to her, students lost this privilege to show their non-verbal cues. She explained her point in the following point:

"So, when they were transferred to the online learning, it's being worse for them as they need body language which is completely disappeared in the online learning in the presentations I mean."

This perspective, held by some tutors, highlights an interesting aspect of online education where body language takes on an obvious role, although it might not be immediately clear. While traditional in-person interactions rely heavily on facial expressions, gesture, and body movements to convey and interpret information, the shift to virtual environments presents new challenges in managing and accessing these cues. Interestingly, even educators sometimes struggle understanding how to effectively utilize or evaluate non-verbal communication online. Despite the undeniable emphasis on visual elements like faces and hands in video calls, there seems to be a lack of understanding on how to fully utilize these aspects. This viewpoint emphasized the evolving nature of remote instruction and the ongoing exploration of how best to capture and interpret nonverbal cues in a digital context. As a PS Listening & Speaking tutor, there are possible opportunity to incorporate elements of non-verbal communication, despite the virtual nature of the interaction, certain non-verbal cues still can be conveyed effectively. Engaging body language and gesture, even within limited frame of a video call, can add a layer of depth and emphasize to key points being discussed. Furthermore, the use of tone, pace and vocal nuances can contribute to convey emotions and interactions in a manner similar to in-person setting.

This relationship between identity, emotion, and experience in complicated and profound, as each element intricately influences and shapes the others. Identity, the core sense of self and belonging,

acts as a foundation upon which emotions and experiences are built. Our identity, including aspects such as culture, values, and personal history, influences the way we perceive and interpret the world around us, giving rise to specific emotional responses. Emotions, in turn, colour our experiences, infusing them with depth and meaning. Our identity shapes the range and intensity of emotions we feel in various situations. Simultaneously, the emotions we experience can reinforce or challenge our identity, leading to personal growth and self-discovery. Experiences, whether fleeting or transformative, further sculpt our identity by adding to our repertoire of emotions and informing our sense of self. The dynamic interplay of these three elements creates a continuous and colours our experiences, while those experiences and emotions, in turn, framework and refine our sense of identity.

Two of the teachers declared the impact of online teaching environment on classroom control. The teachers who explained the impact of educational change on their ability to control the classroom both have experience of teaching pre-sessional course students at the University of Southampton. The first one declared that classroom control became easier as students sometimes pair up and could make a noise and distract everyone, but in the online classroom could be distracted themselves without distracting the tutor or the rest of the class.

"Classroom control wasn't a problem where it has sometimes been a bit more of an issue in class. I found that more easily distracted. Or more easily distracted in class or in a group and specifically certain two people will sit together and somehow managed to slightly distract the whole classroom that wasn't really a problem online."

Another point was highlighted by one of the teachers is the classroom control. Rana stated that she believes that the classroom control is not the same as when face-to-face. She believes that because of the camera policy she cannot monitor all students and she cannot force them to turn on the camera. For her, this impacted her control to the classroom.

"They have the freedom to turn on/off the camera. One of the students actually was riding a horse while she is in the live session, and when I asked her to turn on the camera, she refused but when I insisted, she apologized as she has a riding class. Some of them are having their dinner in a restaurant and they turn off the camera and when I ask them to turn on the camera, they would say sorry we have a bad internet connection. It's actually easy to lie, of course, I know that they supposed to be mature enough but there are a lot of them, they might listen to the session while they are in the café with their friends. these things are impossible to control it in the online learning. And as a teacher, I really want them to pass, the university needs them."

Here, the notion of an "online programme" often carries connotations of significant flexibility for students, which might not have been entirely comprehended or adequately managed. This flexibility indeed contracts with the conventional connotations that staff associate with a "pre-sessional programme". The common nature of online learning differs from the traditional expectations tied to

a pre-sessional programme. The convenience of studying online from various locations can be perceived as both a benefit and a challenge. While students have the advantage of learning from diverse places, it can also pose logistical and connectivity issues. This situation can potentially be a challenge for both tutors, who must navigate these diverse learning environments, and students, who might struggle with consistent access and a conducive study environment.

Nevertheless, Adam believes that classroom control is more accurate on the live session. He explained that students cannot distract their classmates during the lesson. While in the traditional classroom, students' attitudes might distract the tutor and the rest of the classroom. He explained his point in the following statement:

"Sometimes classroom control could be a bit more difficult face-to-face, if you, my experience after few weeks when everybody starts feeling quite comfortable, you would find two or three people sitting together, pair up in group or pair and they will sort of distract each other as kind of like school kids and sometimes be quiet immature as well and that of course could have negative effect on the rest of the class and be distracting for me too teaching"

During the interviews, teachers were able to list the positives of using technology as a teaching tool. Most of the tutors agreed with the students that the most common advantage of online learning is saving time as they did not have to waste time in commuting to the university. Three teachers explained their opinion in the following statements:

"The positive of online course is saving time from commuting from your house to university".

"Of course, there are a lot of positives, you don't have to commute, it's more comfortable from this point for both students and teachers."

"Save a lot of time, it's easier, saves the travel time".

Regarding the online presentation. Rana believes that the online presentation is fairer in marking as the tutors can forward and backward the recorded presentation as many times as they need. As a result, the tutor will be fair in assessing students. She stated her opinion in the following statement:

"I believe the online presentation are fairer in assessment. Because you have the material, and you can go back. For me I don't see any challenges in the assessment, for me both options are ok in the assessment, but o believe recorded presentations are better for students."

Teachers' online scrutiny can be a source of anxiety for students as they speak directly to the camera. Moreover, students knowing that the teachers can review presentations repeatedly can be perceived as less fair, potentially including additional pressure.

Sarah, who is teaching the programme for the first time, mentioned that one of the positives she found in teaching online is the display of student's names during the live sessions on MS Teams. She stated

that this function helped her to remember her student names. In other words, she believes that the names readily visible besides each participant's video feed, the possibility of memorizing names became considerably more manageable. The displayed names provide a visual reference that aids in quickly identifying participants without having to rely solely on memory. On the other hand, Rana struggled with the names of her students. She declared that one of the negatives of the online course is the difficulty of pronouncing the Asian students' names. She clarified that in the traditional classroom, she can inquire about the names' pronunciation privately. While in the online live sessions, she had to ask the students in front of the whole class which embarrassed her and might embarrass the student. Here, it is interesting that she feels like this while she has a chance to communicate with or ask her students in tutorials. Teacher, Kareem, insisted that there is no advantage of technology that he can state for teaching or learning purposes. He only sees technology as a supplementary tool with face-to-face classroom.

Another negative point mentioned by the teachers was the internet connection and the technical issues during the live session. Rana mentioned the time wasted because of the technical problems or the internet quality. They described the struggle in the following statements:

"Second thing, there is struggle with the internet, it cuts off a lot, it sometimes takes time to download materials. You move from one material to another, as you don't have handouts. So, this is really difficult…When we started, everything was online and the internet was slow, so the students and I were spending half of the class asking students can you hear me? Are you in the line with me? Freezing screens"

As students mentioned, teachers as well struggled with the availability of IT support. On campus, teachers at the university were able to receive immediate IT help when they encountered a technical problem. However, in online learning environment, it was an obstacle to get an immediate help without wasting class time. Rana explained her opinion in the following statement:

"It took time, because there is pressure at that time, everyone needs help, there is no quick way. In campus, when IT support doesn't reply to the email, we go to their office, but online you have no way to go see them, and you need an immediate help like now, you can't ask the students to be off for 10 minutes and come back, because they have another class after, anyways it's a real mess."

Other issues that tutor stated as a struggle during the online teaching environment was the ability to monitor students at the same. Four out of five teachers stated that they did not feel comfortable about the live sessions as they cannot monitor all the students at the same time when they are sent for activities in the breakout rooms or channels., Sarah, for example, explained her perspective in the following statement:

"I cannot monitor all of them during the activities. When you drop in on the breakout rooms, they might be quiet, and you don't know what they are really doing. Even though I sometimes found them having a constructive discussion in the breakout rooms."

The interesting, expressed statements "*you don't know what they are really doing"* and *". Even though I sometimes found them having a constructive discussion*" that the tutor, despite the presented counter evidence on students work, she assumed that they are not on the task. Teaching on a student-centred programme, where the physical cues are limited, might lead instructors to doubt students' involvement, despite past evidence of their active participation. Moreover, Rana, stated her opinion regarding the ability to monitor her students during the live sessions. she stated her opinion in the following statement:

"I cannot monitor students. Sometimes, I enter, and they speak Chinese. I have noticed many times that they speak Chinese together, the use of L1 was a huge issue in the breakout rooms, you can't join all rooms at the same time, I keep reminding them to only speak English, and they still speak Chinese sometimes, in the face-to-face classroom, they won't do this and they will speak only
English, even when they are in groups in the face-to-face classroom, you still have access to all of them at the same time and you would know if they speak Chinese. Some of them, when they are in the breakout room they won't talk, and they would say that a particular student didn't talk."

In Rana's point "*I enter, and they speak Chinese. I have noticed many times that they speak Chinese together, the use of L1 was a huge issue in the breakout rooms."* stated that as a negative aspect. The notion of students conversing in their native language L1 is not problematic. While there might be concerns about L1 usage affecting the English language learning environment, research suggests more understanding. Contrary to the assumption that L1 restricts English proficiency, previous studies reveal that incorporating L1 can facilitate comprehension, clarify complex concepts, and boost confidence among learners. Additionally, allowing L1 interaction can foster a comfortable and inclusive atmosphere, enhancing collaborative learning experiences by examining the available data and insights. A more informed perspective emerges, challenging the traditional apprehension toward L1 usage and highlighting its potential benefits within the language learning journey. This phenomenon is characterized by both perceptual aspects and observable actions, presenting a multifaceted view. This action reflects students' perspective in the utilization of the opportunities provided by online communication platforms to engage in ways that resonate with them. Students could be using the possibility available on online interactions to adopt approaches that suits their own preferences. By recognizing this interplay between perception, action, and the unique affordances of online communication, we gain insights into the diverse ways students navigate their learning experiences, aligning their behavior with their own sense of comfort and efficiency. Maria had a similar opinion towards students' use of their L1 during the live sessions. in the following statement Maria expressed her view:

"In online learning I cannot see how they interact with their classmates when they are in the same room how they interact with me how they interact with the lessons I can monitor them I can observe them I can have a chat with them face to face. In addition, when I join them sometimes, they are speaking Chinese. This won't happen in the face-to-face classroom as I can monitor all of them at the same time".

However, she received it differently in from Rana. Regarding this, Rana stated that students speak Chinese during the virtual sessions despite her instructing them not to, while Maria asserts that students usually do not engage in such behavior (speaking their first language) during the face-to-face learning setting. In both cases, these positions stand out due to their perception that students behave differently in an online space than in a physical one, particularly in their first language use. It is important to emphasize that the PS programme does not discourage the use of L1 among students, whether online or on campus, yet this use of L1 was seen as important issue and negative impact, of the online environment. Not being able to monitor the students was a negative aspect to Kareem as well. He expressed his opinion in the following statement:

"In online learning, you only can monitor students to a limited extent, but I don't know what they were doing. I could not monitor them. I could not look at like we're doing, so it's kind of a bit problematic, you know sometimes the authenticity like being authentic side, whether they were actually, doing it themselves. I don't know whether they were using other sources or help from other people we couldn't know."

The situation could serve a platform for educators as a chance to guide students in encouraging a sense of accountability for their learning and conduct within a collective setting. By challenging students to take ownership of their actions and behaviours, educators have the chance to shape not only their academic growth, but also their broader development as responsible individuals. In addition, Kareem declared the difficulty of having a relationship with his students as it is not as good as the face-to-face classroom. He stated her opinion in the following statement:

"My relationship with students was challenging…It was never as the real-life experience. I think it is kind of good as a backup, I think students wanted the experience of being in the university, experiencing the culture, the environment, and so on."

There is a distinction between "real life" and the online realm that shows significant implications for the constructions of one's identity. Based on Mila, "real life" physical engagement, allowing for deeper connections that often feels more authentic, in contrast, the online space often lacking I the richness of physical cues. This divide has far-reaching consequences for identity work, as the online environment can offer anonymity, enabling individuals to experiment with facets of their identity that may differ from their offline persona.

4.4.4 **Role transition.**

This section sheds lights on the potential transformation of roles for both students and teachers within the context of pre-sessional programmes. The shift to an online learning environment as a response to COVID-19 introduces an element of empowerment where students and teachers must exercise greater self-discipline and initiative. The following section concerns the students and teachers views towards their role in the web-based learning environment, and is divided into two themes, namely students changing roles and teachers changing roles.

4.4.4.1 **Students' role transition.**

The change in the education system shifted the learning process where students are provided with more responsibilities as they have their own classroom. The PS students did not only encounter a change in the medium of learning, but also a change in the education system. The pandemic resulted the transition of the classroom to each student's home. Additionally, as it was mentioned in chapter 4, the students targeted in the PS Programme are international students who came from different academic and cultural backgrounds who are not familiar with the British HE system. Their shift to the UK system is basically emphasizing the change in their roles. As mentioned in the documentation analysis section, one of the PS Programme modules is Independent Learning which is one of programme requirements. The module provides students with sessions that guide them in this matter to prepare them for their future studies. The structure of the programme obligates students to complete weekly tasks prior to and post the live sessions. As the change caused by the pandemic was explained in detail in the previous sections, the following section will describe the change caused by the education system.

> High number of students are international students who came from different academic and cultural background. Many students stated that their education system depends more on spoon-feeding strategy where students have only to follow the instructions of the teachers. While the education system in the UK depends more on searching, projects, independent learning as well as critical thinking. In the UK higher education system, based on several students, the importance of critical thinking and independent learning is significant. However, the current scenario of the online learning during the pandemic arises interesting questions about the transition of these valued principles into practical implementation. The nature of critical thinking, which encourages deep analysis, intellectual autonomy, and informed decision-making, faces the challenge of being involved in a virtual setting. Similarly, the emphasize on independent learning, where students actively take charge of their

learning. The shift from the traditional classroom due to the pandemic to online platforms within a new education system prompts an exploration of how these aspects align with the realities of remote education. As educators adopt pedagogical approaches and students navigate new modes of engagement, it becomes essential to study how the fundamental of UK HE that can be effectively upheld within the context of online learning during the pandemic. Participants such as Kevin, Hannah, Maria & Aria described their perspectives towards the differences between the British system and their home system. Kevin, a Chinese student, stated that the system in his country is obligate to follow instructions, while the British system is different where they work more self-directed to their education. Kevin expressed his point in the following sentence:

"The system in my country is different as most of the time, we are forced to follow instructions and the lessons we are given. While the UK system is more about searching and having projects and own research. This is a big different between the systems and this is what I have noticed the most. In my hometown, we don't have to prepare for the lesson content before the actual class. This was a bit strange for me too."

Throughout the PS programme, Kevin experienced a system that heavily rely on projects and assignments as primary mode of assessments and learning. The transition occurs from the guided through structured and directive system to foster IL system. Hannah, another Chinese student, who expressed similar opinion. she explained that:

"Actually, in British teaching system, students spend more have to learn by themselves. In China we just follow the teachers. Listen carefully about the content of the course. In British system, we need to spend more time to search and read more articles. At the first time it was very challenging but then it's normal, I think I got used to it."

Maria also expressed her opinion towards the differences in the UK HE comparing to the systems in their hometowns. They explained their opinions in the following statements:

"In the UK depends more on projects, like when you study the module, they gave you project based evaluation that you don't depend only on exams, so in our country, they barely give you projects where you have to study and understand something, so when it's a project based, you usually, remember things more so it's mixed between practical and theoretical, in our country, they mostly focus on theoretical part. The other thing, I have really noticed how they really focus on the critical thinking, so it's not just heard the information, you accepted to actually criticised; however, back in our country it's literally spoon feeding, if we get for example a question out of the curriculum, everyone feels confused and keep going back to the lectures and how all that happened. These are the two main differences in the education system itself"

Several student participants were explained about the most uncommon aspects in the British Educational system. Besides the changes in the learning environment, independent learning and critical thinking were the main changes that were sort of a challenge. The following section aims to state students' perspective towards being an independent learner.

One of the programme requirements, which based on number of participants is not familiar to them. As part of the education system, PS Programme students were guided to study independently and have control and ownership to their own learning. It aimed to create an environment to prepare students for their future studies in the UK. The following statements review students' opinion regarding the independent learning in the pre-sessional programme. Maria, Aura & Hannah expressed their views in the following statements:

"It was something unfamiliar for me, I was a bit worried about this. It wasn't easy to get used to this, I had to spend few days to get used to the system to be able to manage what is required from me to before and after the live sessions."

"It wasn't a big problem for me, I used to prepare the lessons anyway because this is the way I study anyway."

"Most of the reasons are relating to the internet. I need to learn with myself. There are few answers that I need to search about online because few things are not clear in the assignments, which was stressful. So, it is a negative side. Yes, at the first time, I don't know how to search for an article, it's kind of challenging but now I can find it online."

A few students had to spend time of the programme to get themselves familiar with the independent learning as a feature on the curriculum and syllabi on the programme.

Not only IL was labelled as unfamiliar aspect of the programme, but also critical thinking was mentioned by number of students as new element of the PS programme. As it was defined before, the critical thinking is based on developing students' ability to process knowledge or being able to look at phenomena from different angles. Six out of 12 students of this study expressed that critical thinking is a new terminology was introduced to them in the pre-sessional as they need to practice it in their formative and summative assessments. Critical thinking was one of the reasons mentioned by students that caused change in the students learning habits. Kevin expressed his opinion in the following statement:

"Critical thinking aspect helped me to not be afraid of expressing my ideas and my opinion. The system in my home country do not use this term, as we just follow the syllables and what our tutors teach us only. When I started my course, I had no idea what critical thinking means, then I realised the importance of it, and I had to use it to be able to pass my course."

Kevin explained the use of critical thinking helped him to express his opinion freely which is not familiar in her hometown education system. Aura shared a similar opinion with Kevin, as she agreed their education system is more spoon-feeding than giving them the chance to express their opinion subjectively and based on evidence. Aura, justified her point in the following statement:

"The other thing, I have really noticed how they really focus on the critical thinking, so it's not just heard the information, you accepted to actually criticised; however, back in our country it's

literally spoon feeding, if we get for example a question out of the curriculum, everyone feels confused and keep going back to the lectures and how all that happened."

Additionally, Asian students who are particularly Chinese and Thai, as well as Saudi students expressed the unfamiliarity with the terminology of the critical thinking. Rowen, Ella & Yasir expressed her point in the following statements:

"Critical thinking is something that we don't have, and it was an issue for me to understand how I should do it…in this course I had to adopt few things that changed my learning habits which are critical thinking and studying independently."

"I think there were not big differences between the educational system, but maybe in the Asian system we always rely on teachers and always got knowledge from teachers we don't have critical and analytical ability. I have worked on my critical thinking but it's not very easy."

"I think in the UK, tutors more focus more on the interactive, in China we just listen to the teacher, maybe we don't have to say anything in the whole courses, but the UK the teacher would like our students to say more."

In the previous quotes, students stated the possible effort needed to familiarize themselves with critical thinking. In the contrary, Aria expressed that despite the critical thinking not being a familiar concept in China, she was willing to be critical in her studies. She stated her view in the following statement:

"In the UK focus on critical thinking more but for Asia education system in general they just want to the students to have correct answer for certain topic or questions but if some students have other voices they might be doubt or won't be willing to raise those questions because the other students don't have those questions and just keep in silence and just follow the whatever steps the teacher is asking, but for myself I raise the questions whenever I have. I don't really care what other classmates think but for what I have observed my classmates they mostly won't complain and not willing to raise any questions.

The transition of the education system did not only impact students' roles, it also influenced teachers' roles. The following section states the changes occurred in teachers' roles.

4.4.4.2 Teachers' role transition

As it was mentioned in the literature review, many previous studies stated that in online learning environment, teacher's role will be changed from a teacher to instructor and guider. The researcher got the chance to ask the participated teachers about their perspective in terms of their roles in the virtual learning environment. Adam declared that he did see a big difference in his role as a teacher in the online live session. He said that he mostly was nervous about his technological competence to keep up with the expected students' competence in technology that he had to double the effort to be able to cover all the aspects on the online. Adam explained his perspective in the following statement:

"Not major differences, I think perhaps made more of an effort to perhaps feel on a level with them as well. I have to develop my presentations in a way that hopefully makes sense, so using my experience to help them, I sort of found myself doing that a little."

However, Rana stated that she does not feel that she is a language teacher. She believes that she is more guiding students to understand the British education system and to pass the exams rather than teaching the language. Teacher Rana stated that the online PS Programme felt like guiding the students to pass the programme to be able to get the offer to pursue their studies. She believes that the lack of interaction decreases her role in as a tutor. She added that the traditional classroom is the space where tutors can be more creative in the activities. Rana expressed her view on the following statement:

"I feel more like guiding them how to pass the exams rather than teaching them the language… I enjoy the interaction with my students I enjoy the interaction with my colleagues, and I love this kind of environment I like the activities and the many options of activities I can have, or I can do to my students in the classroom".

Tutor Maria asserted that her role as tutor became more as a guide, as the structure of the course obligates students to complete a few tasks independently without the need to monitor them. She believes that this change effects teachers' role which reduce teachers' duties. At the same time, teachers need to guide students to use the websites and online platforms. She stated her perspective in the following statement.

"Yes there is a change but not that much change I believe the teacher in face-to-face classroom is guiding students about the activities about the lessons at the teacher is explaining preparing the Lesson plan preparing the lessons trying to make the lesson going, still doing that in the first in the story and the online classroom; however, the teacher will have to guide the students not only about the lessons and the curriculum and the Lesson plan, but also has to guide the students how to use technology how to use the app, what should they do after the classroom, so I think the teacher's role is getting more aspects, as the teacher has to guide the students about everything about the lesson, about how for example how to study after the live session how to use technology, how to move to the breakout rooms, what should they do during the breakout rooms to interact with each other, so I believe the teachers role is getting more things to worry about other than the face-to-face classroom. Also, I have noticed in the pre-sessional that I don't have to go through every file in the BB and they prepare themselves before the session and they have to do a lot more by themselves."

Sarah agreed with Mila that the teacher is facing more technical challenges that were created by the new online programme. Despite the guidance received regarding the digital skills needed in their role, she felt teachers had to increase their effort to be prepared for any issues that students might encounter during the course. She expressed her opinion in the following statement:

"Teachers have to prepare themselves with the new course and understand the online course and the technical skills they need for the course, also tutors have to be guide students to use the technology and the websites. For example, my students had issues with BB, despite the fact that I have the same issue, but I had to guide them."

In spite of that, Kareem believes that online learning did not affect his role as a teacher. He believes that he did not even need to guide his students because his students were able to familiarize themselves with the used technology even more than him. He stated his view in the following statement:

"I can't see that the online pre-sessional changed my role as a teacher, it just might stress as I am not a technology person, so it was stressful for me to be able to use technology…my students were very good, and they did not have big problems with technology."

Teachers believe that the major change in their role as tutors is the necessity to guide the students to use of technology and the structure of the programme.

This study aims to comprehend the context of the PS programme at the University of Southampton, exploring the social, cultural, and educational surroundings of teachers and learners. The results showed the intrinsic interrelationships among the various components within the online PS programme as well as the influence of web-based platforms on learners and teachers' engagement and trajectories. These characteristics offer a lens to explore the connection between elements in the environment and their affordances. Haugen's conceptualization of ecology includes three components: organisms, their environment and the interaction connecting them (Garner, 2005). In this context, this environment includes organisms (learners and teachers), their environment (the online PS programme), the interaction connecting them (the online platforms).

4.5 **Discussion**

The previous section detailed the results of this phenomenological study which aimed to understand students' and teachers' perspectives towards the transformation of the education system to a virtual space due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This study used three research instruments, which are documentation analysis, classroom observation, and interviews with students and teachers (semi-structured and unstructured). The examined data related to analyzing the materials and syllabus of the PS programme such as marking criteria. These became a useful background for me in interviews and observations, but key findings came from the other methods, as the environment showed that practices were seen as (not) valued, (not) useful, and (not) problematic based on situated interactions between different actors in the environment, and in relation to the histories, ideas and preferences that those actors brought with them. In observations of the virtual classes during the programme, eight live sessions were observed, four at the beginning and four at the end of the programme. The aim of observing the groups at the beginning and towards the end of the programme was to explore the possible changes and development of students and tutors' engagement and attitude during the

live sessions, and to make sure that interviews were informed by ongoing practices from beginning to end. More observations would have been too demanding and intrusive on such an intense programme, and without close enough relationships with the people involved. The final method involved interviews with 17 participants (12 students and five teachers), who presented a mixture of experiential, cultural, and academic backgrounds. The following sections aim to answer the three research questions mentioned in Chapter 1.

4.5.1 **Research question 1**

How do students and teachers perceive the shift to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic as impacting their roles, identity positioning, and engagement on the Pre-sessional Programme?

In narratives on pedagogy relevant to EAP and pre-sessional programmes, a typical dichotomy has been drawn between 'traditional', teacher-centred where the educator tends to transmit knowledge to students with limited input from students themselves (Harden & Crosby, 2000), and communicative and task-based approaches, where methods are more student-centred and communication focused. The digital shift in EAP, especially PS programmes during and since the pandemic, has brought into focus the transition to the virtual learning environment, which, many propose, should be even more focused on student-centred learning, where the teacher facilitates or manages students learning process and environment (Balluerka et al., 2008). Several previous studies stated that the education transition to online learning has the potential to redefine the roles of both learners and teachers in education. Goulão & Menedez (2015) stressed the importance of learners as being autonomous, independent, self-controlled, and self-motivated, which will decrease teacher role as an expert. Still, the proposed pure forms of digital learning were not what motivated or guided the immediate and necessary shift to online programmes during the COVID19 pandemic, and this left questions open about what students and teachers thought they were engaging with (an online programme, or a physical programme transferred online?), and how their experiences, preferences, and views influenced each other in this shared, collaborative space.

Based on the results of this study, a number of students and teachers still seem unaware of significant change in their roles caused by the sudden shift in the education system. In the online setting, students were given more responsibilities regarding their learning process, where they had to set their own learning space or classroom, and staff were given roles to perform that involved more support of student work than in pre-pandemic PS programmes, but how that translated into roles, perceptions, and framing was complex, and barriers to the teachers' or programme's plans seemed to be met with individual responses, based on their prior experience and educational preferences.

The first important finding to mention here was not fully expected in a study of online education, but it was important: physical spaces. Participants indicated that finding the right study spot, whether it is a park or café or even a space in the family home, and managing potential distractions, as well as connection issues, was a crucial part of students' learning process on this programme. Participants were not able to access the same kind of environment for their teaching or learning processes to take place, as in a physical university campus, but participants expressed their choices towards the choosing a suitable physical space during the online classes, as well as the serious issues that can come from lacking such environment that are well-suited to this programme's activities. More details will follow about the surrounding environment in research question 2.

Students were also responsible for managing their time in the virtual classroom as they became more independent. A number of students in this study expressed positive feeling towards the ability to manage their own time during distance learning. For example, certain students discovered a sense of comfort in their chosen time and physical environment, where the comfortable environment was connected not just to the virtual space where they learn, but also to the surrounding physical environment while learning. On the other hand, other students expressed their struggle with their time management online, as they had to operate more independently in the online curriculum than they were used to doing, and were doing so in a different time zone. For instance, Chinese and Thai students, due to different time zones, found that attending some synchronous activities required them to stay up late or waking up in early hours of the morning. Moreover, in the absence of IT services from the university, and even from technicians due to COVID restrictions in their own countries, students found themselves dealing with challenges from technical issues independently. As number of students explained that they encountered a range of technical issues, which were far from the capabilities of the IT service department to resolve, such as internet connectivity and laptop glitches, which led to the distribution of the learning process. Approximately 90% of Nambiar's (2020) participants expressed that technical issues impact the smooth progression and speed of online classes, and these experiences were shared among teachers and students on this programme. This also had implications for identity positions, as teachers with poor connections, or issues with IT, struggled to build rapport with their group in this environment, as was the case with students experiencing issues, but having to participate in live communicative tasks, especially in break-out rooms or channels on MS Teams.

Even though progressive pedagogies emphasise student-centred approaches are useful, especially on PS programmes that emphasise the development of study skills, communication skills, and critical thinking, in the virtual classroom, many studies (Bulluerka et al., 2008; Crawford et al, 2020; Dhawan, 2020;), and this Pre-sessional Programme in some documents and tutor induction sessions, emphasise

that teachers should engage in activities that are facilitating student engagement (e.g., encouraging, reminding, feeding back, and highlighting what is being learnt), and not delivering content (lecturing, telling, or introducing). This places the tutor as a content expert, learning facilitator, and even technology supporter on the programme.

Based on the findings of the classroom observation and interviews, and despite goals and directives of programme documentation and inductions, many educators relied heavily on the traditional teaching approaches and methods, where they applied rules and protocols during live sessions that drew directly from their preferences and experiences in physical classes. For example, some teachers directed students towards steps to follow before talking/participating within the lesson on MS Teams , such as using the “raise hand” button, and guidance that dictated when they unmute/mute their microphones. Despite this, teachers regularly raised concerns over students’ lack of spontaneous communication, while many sought to solve that through more directives around participation, such as nominating students to speak. It seems that most teachers, and students, reported directives (e.g., rules and instructions) being used more than attempts at different kinds of encouragement or pedagogical responses (e.g., students working on documents to report, or doing work in stages such as pair>small group>whole group). This is not just a response based on physical classroom practices, but appears to be based on some more traditional classroom management practices, whereas more communicative, student-centred methods seem to have been attempted and prioritised less in this transition online.

In a similar way, a number of teachers from this study stated that they mandated camera-on policy during the live sessions, as they categorized not being able to see the students as one of their challenges in the online learning environment. Again, this suggests that a key concern of teachers was a loss of control, as they reported their constant desire to monitor students in this virtual space. When students switched off their cameras, even if teachers could not see students on their screen (e.g., in presenter mode), concerns over their inability to monitor students during the lessons was a source of anxiety and frustration for them, which resulted in some groups being constantly reminded to have cameras on all the time. From some of their points of view, when students turn off their cameras, it means they are likely to be distracted and to have lost focus. The previous point about educators’ assumptions about students being disconnected or not actively focusing during the lesson when they turn off their cameras was clear from the interview data, and their behaviour in the live sessions, although guidance had asked them to be contextually sensitive around students’ preferences, and to prioritise comfort, students’ mental health, and relationship building over insisting on classroom norms around cameras and participation in live sessions. During classroom observations and teachers’ interviews, it seems that teachers are bringing their assumptions regarding the new medium of

learning where they relied on particular forms of order and discipline. It is interesting to consider what relationship this had, in the physical classroom, with their prioritisation of students' learning and engagement. It could be that rules were very easily enforced in physical settings, meaning they could focus on other activities, but where teachers felt their rules were not being followed, the focus seemed to shift to their enforcement over studentcentred pedagogies. The dynamic of online classroom discourse could be perceived differently by both teachers and students, owing to their distinct roles and perspectives. For teachers, facilitating a virtual classroom might require adjusting a new method of engagement, one that they were not prepared for, with challenges such as maintaining classroom management through a screen.

Teachers showed their persistence to apply their ideal power dynamic by establishing themselves as the authority by setting clear expectations, rules, and guidelines for students' behaviour during the live sessions. The power-centric approach often prevents the fluidity of online interaction and limited the students' autonomy in their learning journey. Kearney et al. (1984) defined the power dynamic as teachers' capacity to influence students' actions and engagement. During the pandemic, researchers emphasised that teachers had to adapt to the new context of teaching and carry on the process of learning within unfamiliar and unexpected circumstances (Flores & Gago, 2020; Flores & Swennen, 2020). This change in environment, linked to the above-mentioned differences in time zones and task types, requires teachers to utilize new approaches and methods that suit the new environment. This has clear implications for identity, as the identity transition from in-person to online classes invites changes to agency, emotions, cognition, contextual surroundings, learning, and their community membership. This is emphasised by Yazan (2018), who explains the changing components of the teachers' identity in online settings. Nazri & Seyri (2020) mention how many tensions, such as the low professional preparation, could influence transformations to the online context, during the pandemic in particular. Overall, findings here showed that, despite tasks, tools, and programme documentation promoting student-centred learning and more collaborative engagement on the online Pre-sessional programmes, teachers tended to prioritise the maintenance of a controlling identity over students, reacting to what they saw as issues of control, monitoring, and power in live sessions more than proactively trying to create new ways of communicating with students around tasks.

The aforementioned findings have implications for how teachers recontextualised their skills and behaviours to fit the emerging role of guiding learners within the virtual learning environment. The recontextualisation process involves transforming elements of the educational setting, and negotiating their meaning and performance in changing contexts. This transformation encompasses a comprehensive re-evaluation and adjustment of different component such as curriculum, teaching methods, polices, technology integration. Based on Bernstein (2000) & Robertson (2009),

recontextualisation is deeply embedded in the creation of pedagogical discourse, shaping the acceptable boundaries for constructing what is considered official knowledge, as well as controlling the methods and content of pedagogical discourse. While teacher identity is constructed by such factors as a teacher's personality, background, sociocultural associations, knowledge, skills, previous experiences, and community memberships (Bukor, 2015; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Yazan, 2018; Nazari & Seyri, 2020), this is always relational and contextual, and will always relate to their ongoing interactions with their students and curriculum. In this study, teachers' professional identities, constructed based on their previous experience and professional development, might explain the preference for more the reinforcement of more traditional methods and relationships of authority in the virtual environment, as it was a sudden transition, and one that caused teachers to assess which goals they can achieve, and whether changing their roles might entail greater risk than adopting a traditional role.

Another dimension here to teachers' preferences and behaviours might be students' preferences to see teachers as the authority in the classroom, due to the roles and responsibilities traditionally associated with educators in many of their experiences too, and the way that this traditional relationship can help them understand and manage the transitional situation in a similar way to how it helps the teacher. This perception is further reinforced by the fact that many of the students emerged from educational system where authority and control are prominent features of formal education, although, in interviews, many students stated a preference to be more collaborative and communicative, in their tasks.

Learners' and teachers' identities in this context drew on their previous experiences and perceptions of available constructs and their implications. Bucholtz & Hall (2005) stated that identity is not pre-existing or undeveloped, but is constructed through the involvement with others in a context where it is being performed. As the PS Programme is an environment formed by people with different cultural and academic backgrounds, the findings show that the online space was perceived differently by students and teachers, with differences between different teachers and different students too. Learners' and teachers' self-identity is deeply personal and formulated in relation to an individual's sense of self, but also encompassing a complex interplay between one's perceptions of oneself and one's interactions with others, shaped by their past experiences, their understanding of the present, and their perception to the future (Itulua-Abumere, 2014). Learners' and teachers' different perceptions of the online spaces on this programme were constructed over time. Identity positions during the programme changed more for some than others, and was influenced by an interplay between ongoing interaction on the programme, and cultural, social, and personal factors that actors brought to the programme (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The transformation of the environment leads to

shifts in individuals' behaviour, affecting their interpretation of their perception, words, and the significance of the constructs in their surroundings. Moreover, participants' initial feelings about their purposes and status on the programme influenced their trajectories going forward. For example, some who resigned themselves to not being able to achieve certain goals, e.g., creating a positive social relationship with others, simply stopped seeing those as personal goals on this programme, whereas others who believed they could achieve those goals, whether from prior experience or early positive interactions on the programme, kept trying to engage with them.

In terms of engagement, students and teachers perceived the online learning environment differently from the face-to-face setting. Kalmar & Aarts (2022) indicated that their participants' opinions towards interaction via the online platforms showed that 89% of participants believe that online interaction is more challenging, while 65% thought it was harder to communicate with peers online. Based on the data, students described the virtual learning environment as a limited interaction space where they noticed the limited interaction with both their peers and tutors. This was felt by participants in this study, where comparative perceptions of in-person classes were surprisingly prominent in participants' accounts of the online space, as is explained further below.

One important area of frustration and reignition among many was interaction in live sessions. Based on a study conducted by Nambiar (2020), 60% of the learners declared the lack of interaction during online classes. At the beginning, students of this study described the interaction with their peers as a possible but not as satisfactory as on-campus interactions. Students clarified that the missing classroom atmosphere and physical presence of their classmates where they can engage in discussions and activities were the main factors in this. 79% of the participants of Nambiar's (2020) study declared that the quality of discussions in the online learning environment is low, and 75% of the participants in Amir et al's, (2020) study affirmed their preference for face-to-face classroom discussions. They believe that the absence of the full-body language and eye contact can lower the level of connection and understanding between students and their instructors. It was interesting that individual participants' perspectives in this study recognised that effective communication extends beyond words. They grasp the significance of nonverbal cues such as facial expression and body language in physical spaces when reflecting on barriers they experience with online communication. They showed understanding of the differences between the "face" in the physical classroom and the "face" through the video frame, where they assign more authenticity and comfort to the former, and more anxiety and barriers facing the latter. Being present in the same physical space has been seen as beneficial to increase students' motivation, according to Kalmar, et al. (2022), as one of the students in the findings described that the classroom atmosphere has the power to motivate.

The comparative popularity of an on-campus programme, compared to the online one, was very strong for many participants, albeit with some who appreciated the space and work style afforded by the online programme. Based on a study conducted by Adana et al. (2020), 71% of students preferred conventional classrooms over online courses, as the former are more motivating for them. One of the points participants raised was the lack of nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact, as these were described as significant aspects of learning with peers and tutors. They added that the students not using their cameras during the live sessions are contributing to the lack of interaction, which resonates with the views expressed by participants in this study.

Some participants believed that there was a lack of social interaction outside classes, and through social events, during the online programme. These are seen as opportunities to form strong relationships with other students, and were seen as an important part of an intensive international programme. Based on a study conducted by Kemp & Grieve (2014), large number of the participants prefer on-campus environment as they believe that socializing could increase the level of the communication with their peers. The participants in this study certainly emphasized the importance of social interaction, which is similar to Adnan et al.'s (2020) findings that in-person learning will be missed, as the social interaction-based activities are essential in the learning and growth process. They firmly believe that social interaction provides students with a valuable opportunity to engage with others from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds. In their view, this social engagement extends their relationship with their classmates beyond the academic content. Based on the lack of the interaction (as they described), they expressed the feelings of isolation which for some lowered their motivation.

It is interesting that digital technologies have power to connect greater numbers of people with shared interests and investments, and yet, having classmates studying at a distance seemed to negatively influence students' motivation to try to form strong bonds and engage in deep relationship-building activities, as far as this data showed. In one case, socialization was connected to wellbeing, as the participant believed the absence of a social life with others in this environment could influence their mental health and make them feel alone. A number of participants acknowledged feeling alone without the social space to communicate with other students, as in Kalmar & Aarts's (2022) study. However, previous studies have another perspective, that an online social community is created the moment that the students are logged in and introduce themselves to the rest of the classroom (Arbaugh, 2001; Tomei et al., 2008). From the findings of this study, some students attempted to form alternative solutions regarding the absence of social interaction by creating informal group chats via social networking applications such as WhatsApp and WeChat, which created a forum outside the programme to interact, although participants differed in terms of the extent that this was an academic

tool, e.g., to ask and answer questions with classmates, or a social one to form social bonds. According to McCullogh et al.'s (2022) study, student participants established their independent communication networks using social media apps, enabling them to provide support to each other and these platforms facilitated the creation of an online learning community. This was also seen in this study, but to different extents by different students, often depending on the group.

Students additionally described the limited interaction with their tutors compared to their previous experiences in the face-to-face environment. The student-teacher interaction refers to the way that students and teachers communicate or interact (Katz, Jordan & Ognyanova, 2021). Cho & Kim (2013) believe that effective learning for students in the virtual environment is primarily determined by the influence of interaction between students and teachers. Emergency remote educational responses during the pandemic influenced the direct interaction between learners and teachers, which forced them to communicate through technology (Reala, et al. 2021). Among students of this study, there was a prominent believe that there was a lack of interaction with their tutors, especially due to the absence of the teachers' body language, but also related to having the aforementioned difficult negotiations around class management and rules governing communication. Kaluska (2022) agreed that teachers use of the nonverbal cues will encourage, motivate, monitor, and control students, and this was a clear perception among students who felt strongly their interactions with tutors was missing important physical cues that would help them on an in-person programme. In addition, student participants of this study regularly describe the physical classroom as a suitable and sometimes idealised space to participate, including opportunities to ask questions or interrupt with less anxiety and uncertainty than in the MS Teams live sessions.

Both Asian and Arab students explained that in physical classrooms, participating, and interacting and asking questions with tutors would be more effective and manageable for them and their understanding, as they felt physical spaces are more convenient for interrupting and participating in classes. This also showed students' desire to ask, interrupt, and engage in a communicative environment, which is not always assumed in the literature, especially with students from the backgrounds featuring in this study. Other studies have shown that students can show preferences for physical discussions, e.g., Nambiar's (2020) study finding that 59.5% of participants agreed that they do not feel motivated to participate in online class discussions, but the current study certainly showed that students actively wanted to be involved in more open, easier, and more productive discussions and engagement, showing that they were aligned with the student-centred ethos of the programme in spirit, but they did not find engagement easy in practice.

Despite the regular one-on-one tutorials conducted by teachers with the students during the online Pre-sessional programme, conducted via MS Teams meetings featuring full facial views, and various

asynchronous channels for interaction with tutors, students still believe there was a decreased level of communication with the teachers across their online activities compared to being in a physical classroom.

On the other hand, student participants mentioned another recurring factor that lowers the level of the communication with their tutors, which is the use of their cameras on MS Teams. They described this as a barrier to creating and maintaining deep relationships with their tutors. When the teacher shared the screen during the lesson, he/she cannot see who is keeping the camera on unless he/she have another monitor, which has an effect on students too, as they cannot be seen by the tutor during these parts of a class. Accordingly, number of students emphasized the importance of keeping the camera on as much as they can during the live sessions to develop a rapport with educators, despite their tutors having negative views of students' willingness to turn on their cameras, and the fact that they could not be seen even with their camera on if their tutor was sharing their screen a lot. According to studies conducted by Bashir et al. (2021) and McCullogh, et al. (2022), only half of the student participants felt comfortable about the use of the camera. This was something experienced by some student participants in this study too, but for a variety of reasons linked to technology, sociocultural spaces, and learning preferences, and this was counterbalanced with a desire for more on-camera interaction among other students.

Learners faced feelings of anxiety, isolation, and disorientation, as well as opportunities to engage with new affordances for identity expression and engagement, during this shift to an online learning environment. As expected, this presented an opportunity to understand how people see what they interact with online, and how they perceive themselves personally, emotionally, and academically when interacting with others. Learners' ongoing interactions with the new learning environment could develop learners' perception of that environment (Tomei et al., 2008), and this was the case for most participants, albeit with some adapting their views and practices more than others. One influential factor in this process is time, as practices need to be understood, adopted, and adapted by actors in the environment. Time, however, was a prominent force in influencing perceptions of barriers, as such a short and intense programme made some participants, teachers and students, focus on pragmatic, compromised choices rather than pursuing goals that they saw as difficult to achieve on a short programme.

On the other hand, students may encounter varying levels of comfort with technology and online communication, affecting their participation and receptivity to the emerging online discourses. For example, students perceived asking a question during the live sessions as an interruption, while teachers perceived not asking questions as silence, of which they were suspicious, as mentioned above. As a result, teachers were struggling to encourage students to fill silences and participate more,

some even in informal interactions at the beginning of classes. The emergent and relational nature of identity was apparent here, as many aspects of the MS Teams environment, from the hands up function to the role of cameras, developed meanings with in the groups (suspicions over 'them' not paying attention, and needing to understand expectations vs. student-student positioning over wanting to communicate, but not wanting to break the norms of the group by trying something new, such as raising a hand or interrupting). There was a great deal of complex interplay between actors, in the context of an environment with set tasks and goals, which often made the programme documents and guidance (e.g., on what to teach, how to teach, and how tasks should be undertaken) take second place to ongoing negotiation of roles, identities, and expectations. This is a feature of a few findings below.

Teachers agreed with students' points above about the relationships they created, as they described their interactions with students as lacking collaboration and teamwork compared to the physical classroom (despite the fact that not all of the teachers had previous experience teaching the face-to-face PS Programme). Some teachers described the lack of interaction between students in the online programme as being due to limited activities in the environment, whereby they cannot engage many activities as much as the face-to-face classroom.

Additionally, teachers agreed with students regarding the noticeable absence of social interaction within the academic setting. They acknowledged that social moments during coffee breaks, lunches, and social events between and after classes hold significant value, and were lacking in and around the online programme. Teachers believe that students lost important parts of their university life where they can informally interact with their classmates from different cultural and academic backgrounds. Both teachers and students recognise the essential role these moments play in enhancing the overall educational experience, creating an inclusive learning environment that extends far beyond the classroom walls. Students and teachers mentioned their beliefs that deeper social interactions during the Pre-sessional Programme could improve students' language proficiency, which links to another issue around perceptions of the programme as a whole, as, for example, some teachers and students perceive the primary function of the Pre-sessional Programme to be to develop language proficiency. Again, that goes against the programme documentation, tasks, and guidance, both teacher- and student-facing, showing the power that perceptions of roles and purposes have on a structured educational programme.

As well as the aforementioned perceptions that the online environment created barriers to effective communication between teachers and students, and students and students, teachers also believe that there is a lack of interaction with their colleagues in the virtual environment, with negative effects on their performance, job satisfaction, and sometimes wellbeing. Only one of the teacher participants

disagreed with this, as she confirmed the possibility of interaction with her students and her colleagues. She explained that the virtual environment was suitable for her in terms of communication during the live sessions and tutorials, as well as her interaction with her colleagues via a group chat via MA Teams, where her team shared ideas and lesson plan suggestions. For the majority of the teachers, however, they declared missing interaction with their colleagues during breaks and in a staff room, where they can share ideas regarding teaching activities, lesson plans, and just engage with others in a similar position to themselves. The lack of in-group clearly has an impact on some teachers' perceptions of the environment, as there are many examples of othering or generalising concerns over students' behaviour, showing a process of distinction was taking place (Bucholtz and Hall, 2010), but they lacked adequation with their fellow tutors, as they felt they did not have the time, space, or means to establish and maintain relationships with their colleagues during the programme. That is clearly something that motivated returning tutors in the in-person programme, but their perceived absence of this demotivates them in the online environment.

7.4.2. **Research question 2**

What choices, affordances, barriers, and ideologies do students and teachers encounter in the pre-sessional environment, both around the course structure and delivery, and around wider Web-based activities?

From the findings of this study, and as mentioned in the previous section, a number of students talked about the diverse study spaces in which they undertook work on the Pre-sessional programme, such as parks, cafes, or bedrooms. Some of these align with their preferences, as some referred to finding their "comfort zone". When made successfully, these choices were rooted in a desire to create and operate within a physical environment to help them concentrate and be productive in the online environment. However, because of lockdowns in their respective countries, some students had to deal with difficult and recontextualised environments, including shared family spaces, where distractions might arise, and spaces that have certain behaviours attached that do not translate easily to participation in the online environment on the terms of the programme or teachers. It becomes essential to create a comfortable space where there is balance between personal needs and the shared living dynamics, and balancing preferences and expectations was attempted and achieved with very different levels of satisfaction.

Teachers perceived these spaces differently, and considered some spaces that students chose as the reason for distractions and not being disciplined to the live sessions, without understanding students' perspective towards the choices regarding the surrounding spaces. Teachers seemed to have an

idealised notion of students being able to study with cameras on and being able to speak at any time, but students experienced different physical spaces that offered different affordances for participation in the programme. A number of students showed that the surrounding space in the online environment holds significant importance for them. Unlike traditional classrooms with fixed arrangements, the virtual space allows students to choose surroundings that play significant role in shaping their learning experience, whether choosing virtual backgrounds and profile images, or selecting a suitable place that suits their individual preferences, whether it is influencing motivation, engagement, or boosting their productively and concentration. The suitability of the environment plays essential role in shaping the effectiveness of online education, which teachers might be better placed to understand in physical classrooms than in these transitional online classes.

As mentioned above, despite the positive potential of online platforms and the uses of technology during the Pre-sessional programme, the majority of participants described the online learning environment as limited in relation to student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction, and teacher-teacher interaction. Data reveal that pre-sessional students and teachers engaged with diversity of features that could facilitate online communication, but that they still believe that the virtual classroom lacks the proper interaction. Beyond this, it became clear that some practices that could facilitate communication and create clear demarcations of intentions at different points in a class, such as cameras, microphones, raised-hand functions, chats, breakout rooms, document sharing, and presentation modes, actually took on negative implications for some participants, based on how they were managed, and how identity positions and power relations had emerged around their use. Differentiation and adequation were clearly powerful forces in this space, with students fearful of being seen as different in their interactions compared with other students, and with both teachers and students willing to stereotype and make assumptions about the other's intentions and goals based on their classroom actions.

Based on the documentation analysis and classroom observation, the Pre-sessioonal programme structure had many activities that encouraged interaction and communication among leaners. The structure of the programme provided many activities that encourage students to exchange with their ideas and share thoughts regarding different topics. There are several benefits of e-learning, specifically in terms of convenience and affordability, both of which were appreciated by student participants, yet it is important to realize that the e-learning cannot fully acquire the level of personal contact that can be achieved in the face-to-face classroom setting (Clover, 2017; Octaberline & Muslimin, 2020). An interesting element to perceptions on this programme was that asynchronous activities did not bring students together. Discussion board work, and group work in MS Teams channels, did not seem to be sufficient to instill in students a sense of community, shared journey, or

a lowering of barriers that they could take in to live sessions. Although some students reported positive relationships with classmates, it is clear that the extended asynchronous work that students were undertaking with their classmates was not seen as effective at bringing students together, without them having the means to contact each other using digital platforms. The same is true of the teachers, who had limited teaching on the online programme (a couple of classes and a maximum of one tutorial with each student per week), and yet few seemed to create online social spaces for communication with colleagues, despite a general impression that this was regretfully missing from the programme. This suggests that the online environment, while creating fewer perceived opportunities for quality interaction, also made teachers and students more passive, as only a few participants mentioned taking active steps to solve issues with isolation and poor communication opportunities.

In contrast, couple of students participants in this study mentioned that the online interaction would still be their preference even if the in-person programme were available. They prefer written forms of interaction, such as via email or written work with their tutors, or via chat with their classmates. One of the reasons provided to explain their preference is their ability to organise and edit their writing before being seen by the teacher and peers. Many previous studies stated that students who are usually shy in a face-to-face classroom feel encouraged to participate in an online environment (AbuSeileek, 2012; Chu, 2008; Eskandari & Soleimani, 2016; Freiermuth, 2002; Khoshsima & Sayadi, 2016). Shy students can discover that the online learning offers an accommodating space for their particular needs. There are a few student participants in the current study who perceive the virtual learning environment as a suitable place for communication in this context, as they feel shy and nervous to interact with others, and particularly tutors, if face-to-face. They explained that online communication lowered the level of anxiety they usually have when they interact face-to-face with their teachers, which supports some literature in the field (Hobbs, 2002; Kemp & Grieve, 2014) that suggests how online learning can motivate shy students to participate and engage, while also lowering their feelings of anxiety and pressure. A lot of themes from this study linked to emotions and feelings of shyness when analysing student perceptions and behaviours, as students who feel shy or anxious seem to have particular needs they seek in the environment, which can align in part with the programme's student-centered recommendations (e.g., align with written task-based engagement, but not spoken, spontaneous work), and teachers management of the online groups (where there seemed to be a preference for insisting that students are as exposed as possible, both visibly and in terms of making students speak). However, a couple of teachers who participated in this study perceived that the online classes escalated issues around confidence and shyness, as the atmosphere of the group was less communicative, and students' shyness created a perceived need to force them into talking. Even though the students perceived the online learning as more flexible, comfortable, and

less stressful environment grants them opportunity and the time to check their thoughts and writing structure before communicating with the teacher.

In the previous section, time was important to many students as some stated they benefitted from organising their ideas before they talked, or their writing before sharing responses to tasks. Many students showed that, in certain situations, they were waiting for the opportunity and the suitable time to talk during the live lesson, as well as waiting for the teacher to figure their issues during the lesson. On the surface, some initial observations and interview data show barriers to communication online, but this area of the findings show the intentions of the students, the desire they had to communicate, but the fact that, often, they found recognising the right opportunities, and having the right amount of time to prepare to communicate with the teacher and the wider group, were seen as reasons for silence that made teachers perceive a lack of willingness to communicate.

Moreover, despite the idea in the field, and in claims from the programme documentation, that online learning invites learner-centred approaches to teaching, task structure, and, in the end, to producing more independent learners, still the sense of passivity among students was clear, as they saw the online PS spaces as a teacher-led spaces. Teachers' rules, which were explained in the previous section, could explain the possible reasons of learners' passivity. According to Sidky's (2017) study, both students and teachers conveyed a sense of hesitation regarding changes that might occur when moving away from the traditional approaches used in the classroom, and the same feeling of resistance to change was apparent in this study.

Another finding that involved time was the length of the online sessions, which can invite distraction among students, or teachers' perceptions of their distraction when they cannot see or hear them, which occurs especially when the teacher is unable to closely monitor the student's behaviour. Longer lessons may lead to students feeling a loss of focus, which can tempt them to engage with their mobile devices within the absence of supervision. The issue of distraction was mentioned by students, but so was their difficulty understanding and investing in when and how they should speak in this context, which might have created a situation in which they engaged with distracting practices due to feeling passive, and feeling that their intentions to communicate with others was not being recognised.

Cameras were very clearly a source of attention on the programme, both as a conveyer of identity within the groups, and as a construct that carried meaning. Although showing oneself on camera was perceived positively by some students who valued how keeping the camera on facilitated communication with their teachers and peers, there were issues around the use of cameras in sessions. There were many complaints about the feature of MS Teams, in which they could not see others if sharing their screen unless they had another monitor. Teachers felt uncomfortable with the

idea of students having cameras off while they talked, as they could not monitor them, but some students did not appreciate being asked to have their cameras on, for various special and cultural reasons, especially when they knew their teacher could not see them.

No tall learners expressed feelings of comfort about switching their cameras on, but many showed willingness to do so, and a feeling that what they were being asked to do could have made online communication more manageable for them (e.g., being given more time, and understanding clearly when they should speak and why). Growing reliance on videoconferencing has shown the challenges encountered beyond this study. According to Fosslien & Duffy, (2020) and Strassman, (2020), a large number of users express feelings of mental and physical exhaustion resulting from engagement with video conferences for extended periods. The exhaustion could be caused by many factors, one of which the prolonged direct eye contact, which is far less intense in in-person meetings (Bailenson, 2020; Strassman, 2020). On a transitional, international course like the Pre-sessional, especially during the COVID response period, there are many elements to negotiate that would take a lot of energy, from establishing in-group norms and expectations around communication, to thinking about developing relationships with others online in an additional language. It is not surprising that mental health was mentioned, along with anxiety and emotions.

The findings of this study generally showed that most people wanted to communicate with others on camera if the circumstances and atmosphere were appropriate, but there are students who preferred to switch off the camera due to cultural and religious reasons. One of the female Muslim students in this study expressed her preference for keeping her camera off while attending the live sessions due to her cultural and religious background and physical setting. A consequence of this was that she struggled to be recognized by her tutors. This student expressed her preference to work in comfortable environment (her home) without her hijab, despite the possible challenges arising from not being recognized by the tutors. As a Hijabi student, she found herself in two different spaces, her home, which had particular expectations attached to it, and the virtual classroom, which she perceived as a public setting. This brought her norms from the local setting (being at home, it was a space she felt uncomfortable being made to wear her hijab) and the online setting (being a publish space, where if she shows herself, she should be wearing her hijab) into conflict. As with some other students, the physical surroundings often proved more compelling to respond to than the virtual classroom context. Tomei et al. (2008) support the idea that sometimes students might appreciate anonymity in the virtual learning space, for reasons such as their cultural background. As mentioned above, and many times by tutors in interviews, teachers complained about students turning off their cameras, and they labelled that as a key struggle within the online environment. Nevertheless, none of them explained or seemed to have had success understanding the reasons why some students their camera off.

Moreover, some teachers spent time, effort, and identity work in the group enforcing rules around cameras, meaning that those who did want to turn on their cameras were affected by those who did not, and this might have led to a more controlling and less communicative environment.

On the whole, identity work was clearly ongoing, with very wide labels being used to characterise actors and their motivations, such as "students" who lack motivation to participate in classes, but, in fact, far wider identity work was happening, with relevant indexes behind actions ("anxious", "shy", "Hijabi") were not being accessed by teachers, and were not considered in clear guidance on teaching and task management for students or staff. In the shift online, very broad stereotypes and positions seem to have been given more prominence, with characterisations of students taking place, and positions of control and domination being assumed by teachers. Likewise, students also characterised each other and the teachers, but their identity practices seem to be more adaptable and based on their ongoing experiences, perhaps due to the transitional nature of the programme they enrolled on (the PS programme, preparing them to study in an intercultural environment). Despite this flexibility and transitional mindset, there was a perception of nativespeakerism being promoted by tutors and students, both in their aims, and in the values they associated with a presessional programme, which some saw as an intensive course to improve their language proficiency in relation to static, native models of English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

4.6 **Research question 3**

How do students and teachers perceive the shift to online education during the pandemic as influencing their trajectories and students' transitions into UK higher education?

The transition to the online learning has had a significant influence on the trajectories of both students and teachers. The shift brought about various changes and challenges for both groups. Students and teachers have stated a multitude of advantages in the incorporation of technology as a learning and teaching tool.

For students, technology saved their commuting time as they no longer had to be in the physical classroom, and they invest the commuting time in studying. When considering the advantages of online classes, most individuals identified timesaving as a key benefit. This is because online classes can be completed from home eliminating the need to travel or commute to reach campus (Deepika, 2021). The additional time students have for online activities could potentially enable them to engage in more thoughtful consideration of the course material, ultimately resulting in a more profound grasp of the subject matter (Kemp & Grieve, 2014), although, as seen above, it did not always result in the

types of engagement that students or teachers idealised. Also, online learning has offered students greater flexibility in terms of when and where they can engage with educational materials. Also, it offered students access to wide range of digital resources, including online books, articles, and videos. A study conducted by Hebebci et al., (2020) showed that students had a positive opinion towards distance education because of the flexible learning opportunities it offers. This was appreciated by students in this study, although the majority would rather study in person, and held idealized in-person interactions as a point of comparison to what most saw as inferior communication online.

In addition, the functionality of technology, including various tools on MS Teams, has made learning more inclusive, leveling the playing field for students whose primary language may not be the medium of instruction. Students did feel included in the programme, and understood its ethos and assessments, although the potential affordances of technology met barriers in the form of human interventions that failed to find the collaborative potential of these tools. This included tutors struggling to align their desire to monitor and control student engagement in the online environment, and students struggling to understand ways to adapt their own preferences in communication effectively, including them lacking the ability to communicate while avoiding anxiety or potential negative perceptions from others. Some students declared that the online environment provided them with the opportunity to manage their time based on their needs. Similarly, Adana & Anwar (2020) found that students reported having the ability to efficiently organise their study time in the online setting. On the other hand, there were technological barriers encountered during the programme that affected some areas of progress, such as unreliable internet connections and difficulties with IT support at a distance and during the pandemic.

The students expressed diversity in their personal preferences in terms of how they felt they could study most effectively engage with a pre-sessional, both considering whether they prefer on-campus or online, and in terms of how online communication would work best for them. During the interviews, some of the students used phrases and words such as "*easier*" to refer to what they valued, although this was often accompanied by statements like "*I don't know how to explain"*, as it is not always easy for them to know why elements of the programme that worked, or why some elements did not.

The virtual environment is different from the face-to-face one; however, it seems that, as the environment is not familiar, students and teachers are still adopting with the new setting. There were many examples of participants realizing that there is something missing in the online space, but they have not clearly stated the reasons or specifics of that, except seeing body language and physical presence as important. Although the tone of the findings and conclusion seeks to engage with the online shift, in relation to the in-person norm that came before it, the majority of the PS Programme students are international students from different academic backgrounds, which makes comparison

with their educational and cultural backgrounds impossible to ignore in this narrative. Some students refer to themselves as coming from a spoon-feeding learning system, where they are expected to be less communicative and questioning, but students on this programme were simultaneously adapting to the pandemic and the unfamiliar education system.

The Pre-sessopnal Programme emphasised students' roles within the programme by guiding students to be independent learners through guidance, tasks, and ongoing assessments. As a part of the programme structure, students were required to independently prepare tasks before and after the live sessions. The implantation of a new education system can have a profound and far-reaching impact on learners. It holds the potential not only to impact on the content and methods of educational experiences, but also the overall learning experience with others, and individually. The UK education system emphasises critical thinking and independent learning skills as explicit and implicit goals of instruction, and tasks on this programme introduced this concept overtly. Students had to adapt to the culturally embedded aspects of the assignments, which were clearly set out in documentation; however, challenges arising from the diverse backgrounds and experiences that students bring to the programme were located in wider challenges with technology, and negotiating a new space for all (especially the MS Teams live sessions). For example, students are expected to develop the ability to find a balance between description and analysis across various academic tasks, which could include offering insights and critical evaluation on what they read or know. Reaching this level of balance, alongside communicating it in the appropriate voice for different assignments, was a challenge for some in an environment where communication was felt to be less effective and authentic than a physical classroom, and relationships were seen to be more distant. As an aspect that was described as not familiar by many of the learners in this study, the ability to think critically, could be challenging in a transitional period, as it requires them to not only understand but also question and evaluate concepts and arguments, which is difficult to engage with when students are experiencing anxieties and identity issues around interruptions, questioning, and being generally active in live sessions when the momentum is moving towards teachers selecting speakers, and a lack of spontaneous communication.

As a preference, based on the interviews, students prefer the face-to-face learning environment as a space to allow interaction with their peers and their teachers, especially due to the perceived value to them of nonverbal cues. Some students declared that their struggle with the absence of in-person interactions with teachers and peers can make it harder to stay motivated. The majority of participants expressed their preference for the physical classroom (as was explained a few times above), mainly because it is seen as a suitable and familiar space to interact with their peers and teachers. Operating at a distance, in contrast, led a number of students to feel isolated. They added

the importance of the nonverbal cues such as body language, eye contact, and facial expression, which seem to be accompanied by greater pressure and anxiety when recontextualised in live meetings online. Students believed that the nonverbal cues are essential for their interaction with their classmates and tutors in the physical classroom.

Most of the teachers expressed their preference for the traditional environment and the physical classroom. The main reason for their perspective is the perception of the physical educational space as one that facilitates interaction with learners and colleagues. Sulaymonov (2016) highlighted that the spatial distance between students and teachers could have a direct influence on the atmosphere of teaching and learning. However, Octaberlina & Muslimin (2020) stated that educators should increase their level of engagement online, which can be achieved through alternative online platforms, for example, they mentioned that teachers can utilize applications like WhatsApp to establish connection with their students. Additionally, videoconferencing applications such as Zoom offer an opportunity for direct face-to-face interaction with students, in ways other than formal tutorials and classes, which formed these participants' engagement with MS Teams meetings. Less than the half the teachers in this study justified their preferences based on their technological competence, as they described themselves "*not a technology person*", having explained their struggles with the technological devices and the online platforms, especially in the absence of some forms of IT support during the pandemic.

When future uses of technology came up in discussion of pre-sessionals many believed that the technology could be used as a supplementary tool for the programme, but not as the only medium of teaching. However, more than half of teachers of this study stated that they did not experience any major challenges in engaging with the online learning environment of this programme, and they saw it as a suitable environment for classroom management, although they lacked the ability to control students' behavior as they would during the face-to-face teaching. A positive point mentioned, in contrast to the issues of control, was that students are less disruptive online. Whereas a couple of students conversing can disrupt an on-campus class, in the virtual classroom, students may occasionally become distracted themselves, but their actions were not seen as having the potential to distract their fellow peers or the teacher. Despite that positive point, only one teacher prefers the online learning environment due to it being a more organised environment that can facilitate the learning process for students from around the world. The others still prefer on-campus teaching, and find more comfort, confidence, and authenticity in physical educational spaces, which suggests that the online shift would not attract these students as a replacement for their planned engagement with international education.

From the previous sections, it could be concluded that students' use of digital spaces encounters many challenges on this programme, largely due to their roles in relation to their tutors, who make assumptions about nonparticipation, and try to establish their ideal group interactions through control of the space. Classmates also add pressure in this environment, as asking questions and engaging freely in sessions develops an identity position within the group, which adds pressure to interactions. Final challenges noted for students in this environment revolve around the power of the wider programme, on which students are encouraged to be sharing and communicative, but not always in ways they would choose or that they fully understand, and the evaluative nature of the programme, which places students in a position where they are being assessed in a high-stakes environment, which makes resistance to the environment difficult.

It is comparatively easy for teachers to adapt to the online environment, although the ways they see a comfortable and productive class space does not align with students' preferred practices or the central programme documents, which places some teachers in a difficult position. Although I probmlematised this notion in previous chapters, Prensky's (2001) characterization of teachers as digital immigrants seems to have some justification in this study, as they struggle to connect with colleagues on the online programme, and they struggle with adapting communicative practices from their role as teachers in physical classrooms to the online setting, whereas they appear intent on transferring traditional classroom controls and class focus to the environment, despite various input, an students' perceptions, suggesting that this might not be the most effective course of action.

Contrasting with teachers, students have been framed as digital natives, but this concept is probably more comfortable in stable contexts, whereas, in a state of transition such as online, COVID-response programmes, where everybody is new to the environment and all are negotiating their practices, expectations, and goals, nobody is truly a native, which came across in the accounts of anxiety and concerns around communication. While it is true that many students grow up surrounded by technology and tend to be more naturally inclined toward its use, the distinction between teachers and students as digital immigrants and natives does not appear to be entirely accurate in this study, and jumps in the role of technology in this context make it unfamiliar to all, while aspects are familiar and comfortable for different people and for different reasons. In light of these variations, it is essential to recognize that, particularly in international educational contexts, the digital divide is not only generational, and educators and learners alike be better informed to make better use of technology in education, with an awareness of the people establishing relationships, new knowledge, and wider skills through that technology.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the world has been altered in behaviour, economy, medicine, and education (d'Orville, 2020), and understanding the human effects of that helps us to understand more about ourselves before the pandemic, and builds awareness of what follows. The education system around the world started shifting to distance learning in March 2020, as a considerable number of educational institutions transferred their programmes to the Virtual Learning Environment (Affouneh, Salha & Khlaif, 2020; Basilaia et al, 2020). Students and staff, with different skills, ideas, and motivations, were forced to redirect their operations fully, or sometimes partially, online. Digital learning was already a healthy field of enquiry and innovation, but the shift online during this period was only partly informed by knowledge of best practice in this domain, as we saw non-online programmes, including their learning outcomes and assessments, having to shift online, often for a temporary period, rather than a redesign of the curriculum to suit the new domain.

Although COVID-response online education was distinct from the curriculum designs seen in online education, after the outbreak of COVID-19, the distinction between digital and 'traditional' education was disturbed by official lockdowns and social distancing restrictions forcing programmes online. An immediate response to the pandemic was that many programmes sought to replicate the dynamic nature of face-to-face teaching within the digital classroom, which varied in quality and effectiveness (Affouneh et al., 2020; Basilaia et al. 2020; Shahzad et al., 2020). This study employs a phenomenological research approach which aimed to explore and understand the perspectives of both students and teachers regarding the utilization of technology as a tool for learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The transition to the new online learning environment required both students and teachers to adopt a new medium of teaching, and new or adapted learning tools. Through the research, the study seeks to understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges encountered by students and teachers as they navigate the technology-driven educational spaces of a programme forced to shift online. The majority of HE institutions use online platforms and virtual learning environments (e.g., Blackboard and MS Teams), as well as providing students with other support tools, including library support guides, data/literature search engines, and other software to facilitate their disciplinary studies.

The context of this study was an 11-week summer Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton, which was transferred online in response to COVID-19. This involved both local shifts

towards online education during lockdowns and travel restrictions, experienced by teachers and course designers, as well as students arriving in the online space with their own COVID-19 influenced online learning and communication experiences from their own countries. The participants of this study were a mixture of teachers and students from diverse nationalities, and with different experiential, academic, and cultural backgrounds. The research methods used in this study to answer the research questions were documentation analysis, classroom observation, and unstructured and semi-structured interviews. During the research process, the document analysis (based on, for example, core programme documents, guides, and tasks) became less of a focus, as the variation in what what happening, and what was experienced and perceived by individuals in this context was often quite distinct from how the programme was presented in top-down framing, meaning these areas of the study took different paths, so my focus was more drawn to the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers, drawing on programme structures where these are informative. Four groups were observed during the live sessions, with each group being observed twice, once at the beginning of the programme and once towards the end). The most insightful element of the research was the interviews, which helped explain what was seen and unseen in the live teaching sessions. These were conducted with 17 participants from the observed groups, 12 students and 5 tutors.

5.2. Aims of the study and summary of findings

The aim of this study was to explore the students' and teachers' experience and engagement with the web-based learning resources in the Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton. It focused on understanding the emerging practices, positions, and ideas seen on this COVID response programme, which involved new online activities that were institutionally designed and organised, but individually delivered and managed. How the new organisation and pedagogies are perceived to impact on learning in the context of Pre-sessional programme tells us a lot about learners, teachers, and unseen elements of international education, which, I think, would be missed or assumed when looking at physical, established programmes. The study investigated students' learning habits and behaviours towards learning in this unusual environment, including the online spaces, and the physical spaces they were operating in within their own countries, e.g., their homes, where their understanding of their roles, behaviours, and identities did not always align with the expected behaviours and orientations to online spaces they were in simultaneously as international students transiting to the UK HE context via this programme. This created an interesting relational situation with teachers especially, who reacted in an unexpected way, both in their practice and their perceptions of students' intentions and identities.

This research also focused on PS teachers' engagement with the web-based resources, and their roles and positioning doing so within this unexpected and new context. I expected to see emergent practices and adaptation to teaching approaches, due to this being the first time they had worked on an online PS programme, but, as mentioned above, the exploration of teachers' opinions towards the noticed behaviour of their students was very revealing about what they prioritise in their roles as teachers, their perceptions of the PS programme they deliver, and their relationships with students and colleagues. Moreover, it intended to explore the influence of the pandemic on learners' and teachers' trajectories, performance, and opinions towards distance and blended learning and teaching in this context.

The results of this study revealed that there were low levels of student-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and teacher-teacher interaction during, and sometimes beyond, live classes. That finding was based on both observations and the interviews with participants. Students clarified that the interaction is possible but not as satisfactory as the interaction within the physical classroom, especially due to the absence of body language and facial expressions of their peers and tutors. Despite international education, and transitional programmes such as pre-sessionals in particular, being associated with challenges for mobile students in adapting to intercultural, student-centred, and communicative learning environments, student participants in this study often held in-person teaching in a very positive way compared to online spaces, as they believed issues with and anxieties around communication online would not exist for them if studying in person.

Participants highlighted the importance of academic and social interaction with their peers, which was lacking in the virtual learning environment for both teachers and students. Social interaction was seen as vital not only for academic purposes but also for fostering a sense of belonging and community, which was felt to be missing, and which links to how teachers and students identify with others. This study found clear indications that participants differentiated (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010) from others regularly, especially in terms of characterising "teachers" and "students", and different national backgrounds at times too, but there was a sense that participants lacked adequation, as they did not get the opportunities, they desired to undertake a shared journey with people like them. The experience of undertaking this programme during this time of the pandemic was stressful and isolating, and the majority of participants seemed to lack a sense of shared in-group membership during this time. A number of students expressed their belief that the physical educational environment is a motivating space, where interaction with both their classmates and tutors would be more frequent and higher quality. These ideas about the comparative benefits of

in-person education contributed to feelings of hesitation to participate and ask questions during the online lessons.

It is interesting that although some participants preferred working online, often associated with being shy or preferring to communicate in writing rather than speech, there was a significant deficit perception about the quality of communication online. This was despite the availability of different features on MS Teams, such as breakout rooms, chat (featuring quick responses, emojis, GIFs, and file sharing), and camera and sound functions, and despite the various factors that facilitate communication, such as often having more time and space to prepare what they wanted to say, being supported in understanding others, and being able to see others' faces clearly when they spoke, if the camera were on. Students and teachers focused a lot on the use of cameras in meetings, but there was general agreement that it was not enough to boost interaction, and sometimes students turn off their cameras, and sometimes teachers make restrictive rules about having cameras on all the time, both of which might negatively affect interaction in the groups.

Teachers agreed with the students regarding the lack of interaction within the online learning environment. Teachers noticed the low level of interaction between students during the live sessions compared to the physical classroom. They also expressed the low level of interaction they experienced in relation to their students during the virtual lessons, as they felt students did not participate enough, which made them push and encourage students to participate, which was a feature of much of the interview discussions, and was clear in observations too. Teachers did not only express the lack of interaction and relationship building with and between students, but they also explained the feelings of isolation due to the lack of interaction with their colleagues as they used to enjoy on-campus. Teachers emphasized the importance of interaction and communication with their colleagues during breaks and in the staff room, where they could share ideas and suggestions regarding teaching and lesson plans, and socialise with others who have the same role as them.

Based on the findings, in the classroom, teachers often relied on traditional teaching methods in the online setting due to the sudden nature of transition. This was despite a lot of student- and staff-facing documentation, task instructions, and top-down guidance advocating the opposite approach to engaging with task-based sessions online. This shift introduced power dynamics that placed the teacher as the authority figure, which conflicted with the declared learner-centred philosophy of online education, but also with the expectations and desires of most of the student participants, who, given the quiet nature of many observed sessions, surprisingly reported wanting a more communicative, dynamic, and dialogical space with their tutors and classmates. Teachers

struggled recontextualizing their knowledge and skills into the programme, as their professional academic identity was constructed based on their previous experience, and their desire to monitor students and set rules that will be followed was prioritised over them asking how students were experiencing the programme, or adapting their practices pedagogically to find ways of making students more involved. Students encountered a comparable situation, as most of them described the system they came from as mostly reliant on a "spoon-feeding" method (or similar meaning).

Students' behaviour could be connected to the identity they reported constructing in the previous academic environment, where they saw the classroom as teacher-led space, which might have been why they did not voice concerns about the quality of the communication they were involved with to the teacher, as many saw this as part of the course design, although some did perceive a lack of alignment between tasks as they were set on Blackboard, and how tasks were conducted via MS Teams. A repeated point in the PS programme's structure and documentation is that it claimed to prioritise boosting students' ability to be independent learners, and interview data show that this was not a familiar aspect in students' previous experience. Most participants had to adopt to several aspects of the study environment that they were not familiar with, and most of their reported issues with independent learning (e.g., time management and working independently and with classmates) was embedded in their accounts of dealing with the new medium of learning, with its technology and platforms making them perceive that the quality of their learning and contributions were different than they would have been if the same programme had been delivered in a physical classroom. While students had to deal with common aspects of UKHE transitional programmes, such as focusing on research skills, being independent learner, and developing criticality, they perceived that as being difficult mostly because of the comparison many of them made with what would have been happening in their in-person learning.

In summary, students and teachers apparently needed more time to adapt to the new learning and teaching environment to be able to use it fully effectively. The negotiation of teachers' and students' roles in this environment made the way the programme was delivered differ significantly compared to the ways it was structured and outlined in programme documents, tutor induction materials, and learning/teaching resources. During the interviews most of the participants stated a preference for the face-to-face learning environment, as they saw it as a space that would allow them to interact in a more meaningful and effective way, and really live the experience, as one participant described it.

As both a researcher and tutor, at the beginning of the transition I was anxious regarding the immediate change of the education system. I did not feel I had the experience to teach fully online and adopt to curriculum changes within a one-week induction, where we were introduced to the

technology used during the programme, and how we would use some interfaces differently from how we had in the past. Moreover, it is important to mention again that I was a former student on this Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton years ago. Based on my experience, a few personal reflections are relevant to the study, which I express below.

I have observed a concerning trend emerging within virtual learning environments—a noticeable lack of interaction between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves. It appears that many individuals are still in the process of adapting to this new educational landscape, which has subsequently hindered effective communication. Furthermore, as educators, we must proactively seek out innovative communication strategies that bridge the gap between students and teachers in virtual environments. This may involve leveraging technology to facilitate meaningful interactions, such as utilizing chat features, discussion forums, or virtual office hours. Despite the tools and practices being present and known to tutors and students, barriers still exist in creating communicative practices and spaces on this online programme. By creating accessible channels for communication, we could empower students to engage more actively with course material and seek assistance when needed. Additionally, fostering a sense of community and collaboration among students is essential for cultivating a supportive learning environment. Encouraging group discussions, collaborative projects, and peer-to-peer interactions can help break down barriers and promote mutual understanding and empathy among classmates, but understanding the individuals involved, their perceptions, situations, cultures, and preferences is a key step to achieving this.

Having transitioned from the role of student to tutor, I have gained insights from exploring, discovering, and coming to understand the dynamics of this evolving environment. Initially, as a teacher, I attempted to apply the same strategies that proved success in traditional face-to-face classrooms, as some of the teacher participants did. However, it became evident that adapting these methods to the virtual realm required a significant adjustment. A key realization for me, during this exploration, was the importance of creating space for students to express themselves and communicate their needs. In a virtual setting, where physical cues and interactions are limited, providing opportunities for students to voice their concerns and preferences becomes paramount. For instance, while some students may feel comfortable having their cameras on during online sessions, others may choose to keep them off. It's essential for teachers to recognize and respect these choices, understanding that factors such as privacy, comfort, and cultural considerations may influence students' decisions. A main example of this is the experience of hijabi students who may feel more at ease participating in online classes without wearing their hijab. In the privacy of their homes, they have the freedom to practice their religious beliefs without feeling scrutinized or

judged. Acknowledging and accommodating such personal preferences not only fosters a sense of inclusivity but also enhances the overall learning experience for all students.

Navigating the complexities of student-teacher interaction in virtual learning environments requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes communication, understanding, and inclusivity. By acknowledging and accommodating the diverse needs and preferences of students, educators can create an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. As we continue to adapt to the evolving landscape of education, it is imperative that we remain proactive in fostering meaningful connections and facilitating impactful learning experiences for all.

5.3.Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to our understanding of a phenomena that resulted from a sudden and unexpected situation that disrupted the educational landscape. In doing so, aspects of identity relations, goals, and cultural engagement became apparent, and many of these were captured in this study. This research revealed how elements of this new environment uncover a number of complexities, and provide valuable insights that can expand the knowledge base about what students and staff considered important before and during this time of COVID-response in UK higher education, but these can also inform future directions in HE, particularly relating to presessional programmes, as insights have been gained into the individual and relational behaviours and perceptions of teachers and students, and these increase our awareness of who studies/teaches in these contexts, how they react to programme goals and processes, and how certain changes and actions can elicit particular emotions, positions, and behaviours.

One point that was particularly clear is that international students did not enter the PS environment neutrally, passively, or without evaluations of what they experienced. They had goals to communicate in ways that suited their personalities, physical surroundings, and cultural and religious lives. For example, where a teacher might not hear or see a student in this online environment elicited quite negative views from them, but this is the surface of a much deeper set of questions about what the different students in this space want from their experience (with many of them desiring ways to ask questions and engage more freely with the teacher and wider class), and why they wish to remain unseen or unheard (with some not turning on their cameras for reasons linked to practicality or religion, and others having high levels of anxiety over the way the class is managed, e.g., with the tutor insisting on students having cameras on all the time but

microphones off, as students being selected to talk in discussions making it difficult for students who want to talk to do so).

This does not only advance our appreciation of the contextual focus of the research questions, but also opens up avenues for further exploration and discovery. Over the years, various disruptions, such as technological advancement and financial crises, have reshaped the higher education environment. More recently, with the COVID-19 global crisis, understanding this sudden situation is crucial for educators, policymakers, and educational institutions as we look to the future. Without a comprehensive grasp of these phenomena, it becomes difficult to put practices in place that can help us adapt in quickly evolving educational landscapes. This research will also contribute to the broader academic discourses around online learning, identity in education, and educational discourses in particular, thus enriching the body of literature dedicated to understanding the landscape of higher education.

5.4. Implications and limitations

This study concerns understanding how learners and teachers perceive their roles, identities, and engagement in the virtual learning environment. Understanding learners' and teachers' identities within the virtual environment can lead to the development of strategies to enhance the overall learning experience. Insights gained from the study can help design virtual learning environments that are more engaging, inclusive, and tailored to individual identities.

On top of this, a major part of this study's findings is that how virtual learning environment are set out, and how tasks and guidance are worded and presented, is a very small part of how programmes are actually delivered, experienced, and understood. Originally, I had seen a very clear link between my research stages, with the programme's structure and documentation linking clearly to the experiences of students and teachers; however, this was not the case. Despite the programme setting out a student-centred, task-based approach in both staff- and student-facing documents and materials, actors in this environment took their own ideas to different elements of the programme, based on their preferences, identities, and prior experience. For example, some students and tutors clearly saw the PS programme as a language proficiency course, and priorised behavious and goals that contradicted with the wider environment. Moreover, some tutors prioritised forms of class management that might be assumed and hard to detect, as a preference of the tutor, in a classroom setting (e.g., their desire for students being attentive and seen by them at all times), but when this desire need to be actively enforced in the online space (e.g., with tutors instructing students to turn on their cameras and talk), it becomes more observable, and underlying perceptions of their roles and relationships become clearer.

The study could inform educators about the importance of acknowledging and validating the diverse identities of learners and teachers. It may lead to the adoption of identity-affirming pedagogical approaches that create a more supportive environment, and one that creates more dialogue between all actors about, for example, the philosophies behind the programme's pedagogy, the practical realisations of what that entails in different spaces, and forms of connection between different actors that allow them to undertake the journey together, avoiding feelings of isolation.

Recognising the variety of learners' and teachers' identities in the online classroom, and how these can be enacted, can contribute to a sense of belonging which can lead to increased engagement and motivation for both students and teachers. The findings suggested that teachers might need training and professional development that addresses the challenges and opportunities related to identity and teaching approaches, as identity management is an important part of their role, but that requires dialogue and confidence that, in this study, was overwhelmed by concerns of student engagement and behaviour.

This study's exploration in the ecology of learning can inform further research on how identity influences engagement in digital learning environments, as it can develop deeper understanding the specific mechanisms through which identity impacts learning and teaching processes. Policymakers may use the study's findings to inform the development polices and guidelines for virtual education which can focus on promoting opportunities suitable for learners and teachers, and which can highlight where shared goals and challenges are likely to exist, and how instinctive behaviour of both students and teachers can be harmful in overcoming challenges in this environment.

This study does have some limitations that need to be taken into consideration. It is natural for an exploratory study that was as open as this to experience limitations, but I found that writing about these limitations helped my understanding of the research process, and might be informative for other researchers seeking to undertake similar studies.

One of the primary limitations relates to the timing of data collection, and its sample size. The timing of data collection refers to when the data for the study were collected. In this case, the data were collected during the early stages of the pandemic, when both teachers and students were still adjusting to the sudden transition to virtual learning and teaching. This means that the behaviours and experiences of some might differ quite dramatically in different stages of this PS programme, when individuals are likely to have adapted their behaviours and expectations, or faced different challenges. Although my research design captured elements of this, if I had assumed that change

over time would be a core focus, I would have adjusted my approach to capture that. For example, I might have focused on fewer groups, but observed and spoken to participants more regularly. This might be an opportunity for action researchers to follow up some themes here, as online programmes are still being offered, despite lockdowns in the UK being finished, as they would have more access than I had to those involved, whereas it is difficult as a researcher to request a great deal of access to students and tutors on such an intensive programme.

Another limitation lies in the size of the sample used for qualitative analysis. A smaller size can limit the generalizability of the study's findings, whereas a larger and more diverse sample can help capture a broader range of perspectives and experiences. A smaller sample may limit the diversity of behaviours and attitudes captured within the population being studied. While I felt that the sample size was useful for this study's goals, I am aware that more depth could have been obtained by focusing more attention on particular participants, especially those who had a lot to share about quite different perceptions of the programme, e.g., those who reported being shy and anxious, those who reported preferring the online environment as a study space, and those who wanted to engage with the class and teacher more openly, but struggled to do so due to either lacking the confidence, or just not wanting to disrupt what had become seen as the group's normal behaviour and interaction patterns.

Another limitation is the timeframe. It would have been interesting, but out of the scope of one thesis, to follow up with participants, seeing what was noticed by the programme management team and changed in future years, seeing how students saw their experiences after joining their oncampus degree programmes, and how teachers approached future iterations of pre-sessional programmes, whether adapting their online teaching approaches, or adapting how they approach in-person roles.

A further limitation is the absence of interviews with key stakeholders such as programme teams and designers, which limits the comprehensiveness of understanding of the programme and its intentions, as well as potential perspectives on wider trends, intentions, and issues communicated to them, whether from tutors, coordinators, or other stakeholders in the institution. Their insights could add more voices, perspectives, and layers to this study. As they are involved in the development and implementation of the programme design, materials, and structures that position the participants and practices under scrutiny, valuable knowledge could be captured through their experiences and perceptions. Interviewing them could have provided deeper information into specific issues, explored unexpected findings, and gained more understanding to the programme development. If I were to conduct the research again, I would strongly consider

presenting data from my thesis to programme leads, to understand their response to some of the key findings. This would reveal a missing dimension to my study, allowing further meanings and positions to be seen. Although the data provided interesting insights into the perceptions, identities, and practices of teachers and students on this programme, future studies could integrate that with insights from programme designers, to better appreciate the context, design, and ecology of the programme more fully.

Another limitation is the use of L2 for interviews. As mentioned above, it is generally recommended to use L1 where possible, in order to gain access to higher quality data emerging from more a more culturally familiar and easily expressed dialogue. However, neither I nor my participants speak the first language of the most participants share an L1, and participants on this international programme came from different national and linguistic backgrounds, so English was the common ground. Even with participants who speak Arabic as first language, we still conversed in English, which had become the medium of communication through the programme. However, I want to acknowledge that I feel I was part of the university environment at this time, and the participants I interacted were engaged regularly with communication through English, and much of the content under discussion was commonly engaged with through English, with terms used being English too. It was not as beneficial as collecting data through a shared first language, but I still believe that the data collected was valid and many revealing insights emerged from it.

A final limitation was the coherence of the methods, as these were not perfectly balanced in what they contributed to the thesis and findings. The document analysis was useful, but, when done, this seemed a different study to the one that focused on student and staff practices and perceptions. If I focused on documents as I intended, I think coherence would be damaged, and findings, which are already difficult to put together into one narrative, would have been even more challenging to communicate. I learned a lot of the research journey about how to deal with the scope of a study like this, but the decisions I made would have been different if I could do it again, with more focus on human participants, and less work on trying to build a picture of the programme reality through documentation as separate from the actions of participants.

These limitations are important to acknowledge because they can affect the validity and generalizability of the study's findings, but they can also inform future research, as well as acting as a useful reflection on the research process. They highlight factors that might have influenced the findings, and it is important to discuss limitations in order to provide transparency and guide future research by pointing out areas where improvements or further investigations may be beneficial.

Chapter 5

Appendix A

A.1 . Participant Information Sheet (Students)

Study Title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Leaning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher: Malak Elyazidi

ERGO number: 61935

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others, but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the needs assessment about?

The researcher (Malak Elyazidi) is a PhD candidate who is seeking to investigate the presessional student and teacher experience and engagement using web-based learning resources in the COVID-19 era. As the COVID-19 pandemic affected the types and settings of learning at the University of Southampton, this study seeks to explore teachers and students' experiences in shifting to online learning in terms of their practices, concerns, affordances and barriers. I am also interested in how expectations of roles and identities are met or negotiated during your transition to UK higher education.

The researcher is a funded student by the Ministry of Higher Education in Libya.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are a student who is registered in the online Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton. As the study aims to understand students' perspectives towards the use of online platforms during the COVID-19 era, it will be useful for me to observe what you do in class and discuss how you engage with learning in this environment. I would like to ask for your consent to observe your classes and conduct interviews with you in order to understand your experiences and perceptions of online learning during this time.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Once you give consent to take part in the study, you will be asked to join the researcher for an interview on Microsoft Teams. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. The interview questions will focus on understanding your experience using the Web for learning, the impact that learning online has had on you, and your expectations of the presessional course and your studies after it. There will be a follow up interview later in the course to discuss your reflections on your experiences on the programme. The interviews will take up to 60 minutes (these can be divided into shorter interviews if that is more convenient for you), also wish to observe some of your classes to understand the online learning environment, activities and types of communication you experience. These observations are not judging or evaluating anybody and will not be recorded, expect with written notes. If you are willing to participate in this research, please contact the researcher via email on mae1g14@soton.ac.uk. Any data collected will be completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. For more information, please also contact the researcher.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There is no direct benefit for individual participation, however this will help inform and shape the study, which could help enhance understanding of teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 era.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no additional risks, or no risks greater than those in everyday life. If you have uncomfortable feelings due to the interviews or observation, you are encouraged to talk with the researcher and request to either change the topic (in interviews) or stop the research activity (in interviews or observations, e.g. if a sensitive topic comes up, and you would feel more comfortable if research stopped at that time).

You can withdraw at any stage. If you do not give the consent form, your interactions will not be noted or featured in the PhD study.

What data will be collected?

The data will be collected by the researcher through:

1- *Interviewing several learners, teachers and course designers through the programme about their challenges and experiences relating to Web-based learning during COVID-19 era.*
2- *Observing several live classes in order to understand the practices and context in which teachers and students engage, and to give a background to understanding the interview findings more clearly, as this is where participants will overtly express their understanding, observations and experiences in their terms, as they perceived them.*

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes. All participants' information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants' names will not be revealed to anyone other than researcher under any circumstances. When analysing and reporting data, all names will be replaced by pseudonyms, and any information that might reveal identities will not be reported. During the study, the data will only be accessible to the researcher and will be stored securely on a University of Southampton computer or in the University of Southampton OneDrive storage. After the study, transcripts of the interviews, with all identifying information removed, will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.

Interviews take place on a third-party platform Microsoft Teams. The third party may have access to the data you share in the interview. There is also a very small possibility that the interview could be listened to by unauthorised third parties (e.g., computer hackers).

For details of the privacy of Microsoft Teams see below.

Microsoft Teams Privacy Statement:
https://privacy.microsoft.com/engb/privacystatement

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time prior to the interviews or observations without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. You can withdraw by sending an email to (mae1g14@soton.ac.uk) or informing the researcher directly.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent. The researcher will share the findings and results with the participants if they are interested to know about the findings of the study, and if you wish to receive an e-copy of the final thesis, the researcher would be happy to send you that email.

Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact either:

The researcher

Malak Elyazidi

Email: mae1g14@soton.ac.uk or

The supervisors

First supervisor: Robert Baird

Email: r.d.baird@soton.ac.uk

Second supervisor: Kate Borthwick

Email: k.borthwick@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions, contact details above.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with

data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and considering taking part.

A.2 Participant Information Sheet (teachers)

Study Title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Leaning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher: Malak Elyazidi

ERGO number: 61935

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others, but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the needs assessment about?

The researcher (Malak Elyazidi) is a PhD candidate who is seeking to investigate the presessional student and teacher experience and engagement using Web-based learning resources in the COVID-19 era. As the COVID-19 pandemic affected the types and settings of learning at the University of Southampton, this study seeks to explore teachers and students' experiences in shifting to online learning in terms of their practices, concerns, affordances and barriers. I am also interested in how expectations of roles and identities are met or negotiated during your transition to UK higher education.

The researcher is a funded student by the Ministry of Higher Education in Libya.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are a teacher or leader on the Online Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton. As the study aims to understand students' and teachers' perspectives towards the use of online platforms during the COVID-19 era, it will be useful for me to observe your class and discuss how you engage with and perceive teaching and learning in the current online environment. I would like to ask for your consent to observe your classes and conduct interviews with you in order to understand your experiences and perceptions of online learning during the COVID-19 era.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Once you give consent to take part in the study, you will be asked to join the researcher for an interview on Microsoft Teams. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. The interview questions will focus on understanding your experience using the Web for teaching and learning, the impact that shifting classes online has had on you, and your expectations of the Online Pre-sessional Programme. There will be a follow up interview later in the course to discuss your reflections on your experiences on the programme. The interviews will take up to 60 minutes (these can be divided into shorter interviews if that is more convenient for you). I also wish to observe some of your classes to understand the online learning environment, activities and types of communication you experience.

This will be particularly helpful for gaining insights that inform the interviews. The observations are not judging or evaluating anybody and will not be recorded, expect with written notes. If you are willing to participate in this research, please contact the researcher via email on mae1g14@soton.ac.uk. Any data collected will be completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. For more information, please also contact the researcher.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There is no direct benefit for individual participation, however this will help inform and shape the study, which could help enhance understanding of teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 era.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no additional risks, or no risks greater than those in everyday life. If you have uncomfortable feelings due to the interviews or observation, you are encouraged to talk with the researcher and request to either change the topic (in interviews) or stop the research activity (in interviews or observations, e.g. if a sensitive topic comes up, and you would feel more comfortable if research stopped at that time). You can withdraw at any stage.

What data will be collected?

The data will be collected by the researcher through:

1- *Interviewing several learners, teachers and course designers throughout the programme about their challenges and experiences relating to Web-based learning during COVID-19 era.*

2- *Observing several live classes and taking notes on interactions that take place, and types of engagement in the class. This will be done in order to understand the practices and context in which teachers and students engage while working online, and it will help inform the interviews.*

3- *Conducting a document analysis of core programme documents, such as assessment briefs, module specifications and programme specifications, as well as analysis of what students encounter, such as instructions, materials, and tasks in other words documents that can provide important insights into the goals of*

the programme, and what tutors and students are encouraged or told to do in relation to that.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes. All participants' information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants' names will not be revealed to anyone other than researcher under any circumstances. When analysing and reporting data, all names will be replaced by pseudonyms, and any information that might reveal identities will not be reported. During the study, the data will only be accessible to the researcher and will be stored securely on a University of Southampton computer or in the University of Southampton OneDrive storage. After the study, transcripts of the interviews, with all identifying information removed, will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.

Interviews will take place on a third-party platform: Microsoft Teams. The third party may have access to the data you share in the interview. There is also a very small possibility that the interview could be listened to by unauthorised third parties (e.g., computer hackers).

For details of the privacy of Microsoft Teams see below.

Microsoft Teams Privacy statement: http://privacy.microsoft.com/en-gb/privacystatment

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time prior to the individual interviews/observation sessions without giving a reason and without your participants rights being affected. you can withdraw by sending an email to (mae1g14@soton.ac.uk) or informing the researcher directly.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent. The researcher will share the findings and results with the participants if they are interested to know about the findings of the study, and if you wish to receive an e-copy of the final thesis, the researcher would be happy to send you that email.

Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact either:

The researcher

Malak Elyazidi

Email: mae1g14@soton.ac.uk or

The supervisors

First supervisor: Robert Baird

Email: r.d.baird@soton.ac.uk

Second supervisor: Kate Borthwick

Email: k.borthwick@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions, contact details above.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

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Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage

(https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and considering taking part.

A.3 Non-target Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Leaning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher: Malak Elyazidi

ERGO number: 61935

You are being invited to take part in the above research study as a non-target participant (I would like to observe your class, but the focus will be on some of your classmates).To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others, but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the needs assessment about?

The researcher (Malak Elyazidi) is a PhD candidate who is seeking to investigate the presessional students' and teachers' experience and engagement using Web-based learning resources in the COVID-19 era. As the COVID-19 pandemic affected the types and settings of learning at the University of Southampton. This study seeks to explore teachers and students' experiences in shifting to online learning, in terms of their practices, concerns, affordances and barriers. I am also interested in how expectations of roles and identities are met or negotiated during your transition to UK higher education.

The researcher is a funded student by the Ministry of Higher Education in Libya.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are a student who is registered in the Online Pre-sessional Programme at the University of Southampton, and you are a classmate of a student who has agreed to be observed and interviewed for this study. As the study aims to understand students' perspectives towards the use of online platforms during this era, it will be useful for me to observe what my target participants do in class to help me understand their experiences, which will also inform the interviews I have with them. As you are in this class, I would like to ask for your consent to observe your class.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Once you agree for the researcher to observe your class, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The researcher will focus on specific students in your class (not you). The researcher will take notes, and no audio or video recording will be taken in these observations. If the observed students interact with you, the researcher will note that without identifying you (you will be referred as 'a student in the class'). However, if you do not consent, your interaction with the observed students will not feature in the PhD data.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There is no direct benefit for individual participation, however this will help inform and shape the study, which could help enhance understanding of teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 era.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no risks greater than those in everyday life. If you have uncomfortable feelings due to the observation, you are encouraged to talk with the researcher or message her to request she leaves the class at that moment (e.g. if a sensitive topic comes up, and you would feel more comfortable discussing it without an observer).

You can withdraw at any stage. If you do not give the consent form, your interactions will not be noted or featured in the PhD study.

What data will be collected?

The data will be collected by the researcher by

1- Observing several sessions and taking notes on interaction that take place and types of engagement in the class. This will be done in order to understand the practices and context in which teachers and students engage, while working online, and it will help inform the interviews with your classmates and teacher.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes. All participants' and non-participants' information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants' names will not be revealed to anyone other than researcher under any circumstances. When analysing and reporting data, all names will be replaced by pseudonyms, and any information that might reveal identities will not be reported. During the study, the data will only be accessible to the researcher and will be stored securely on a University of Southampton computer or in the University of Southampton OneDrive storage.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part in observing your classroom.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time prior to the observation sessions without giving a reason and without your participants rights being affected. You can withdraw by sending an email to (mae1g14@soton.ac.uk) or informing the researcher directly.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent. The researcher will share the findings and results with the participants if they are interested to know about the findings of the study, and if you wish to receive an e-copy of the final thesis, the researcher would be happy to send you that by email.

Where can I get more information?

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact either:

The researcher

Malak Elyazidi

Email: mae1g14@soton.ac.uk or

The supervisors

First supervisor: Robert Baird

Email: r.d.baird@soton.ac.uk

Second supervisor: Kate Borthwick

Email: k.borthwick@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions, contact details above.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the

public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and considering taking part.

Appendix B

B.1 CONSENT FORM (Teacher's Observation)

Study title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher name: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi

Appendix B

ERGO number: 61935

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (teacher PIS) (June ,*2021 /version no.1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in **observation** and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to remove the data once my personal information is no longer linked to the data.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly identified (e.g. that my name or identity will not be used).	
I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed during the study, but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves **electronic and audio recording** ***which will be transcribed and then destroyed*** for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	

I understand that my personal information collected about me such as my name or where I live will not be shared beyond the study team.	
I understand that the transcripts of the interviews (with all identifying information removed) will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.	

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……

Date…….. ……

Name of researcher Malak Ahmed Elyazidi mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Signature of researcher……

Date……

B.2 CONSENT FORM (Student's Classroom Observation)

Study title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher name: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi **ERGO**

number: 61935

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (students PIS) (*June, 2021 /version no.1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this **classroom observation** and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to remove the data once my personal information is no longer linked to the data.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly identified (e.g. that my name or identity will not be used).	
I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed during the study, but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves **researcher's observation and written field notes** for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	

Appendix B

I understand that my personal information collected about me such as my name or where I live will not be shared beyond the study team.	
I understand that written field notes in the observation (with all identifying information removed) will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.	

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……

Date……

Name of researcher: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Signature of researcher……

Date……

B.3 CONSENT FORM (Non-target students)

Study title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher name: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi **ERGO number**:

61935

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (non-target students PIS) (June, *2021 /version no.1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this **classroom observation** where the researcher is following some students (but not focusing on me).	
I understand that the researcher may take some notes if I interact with the participants (observed students).	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to remove the data once my personal information is no longer linked to the data.	

I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed during the study, but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves **researcher's observation and written field notes** for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	

I understand that if I change my mind and do not consent, my interactions with the observed students will not feature in the PhD.	
I understand that written field notes in the observation (with all identifying information removed) will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.	

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Name of researcher Malak Ahmed Elyazidi mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Signature of researcher Date.....

Appendix C

C.1 CONSENT FORM (Teacher's Interview)

Study title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher name: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi **ERGO**

number: 61935

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (teacher PIS) (June ,*2021 /version no.1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in **this interview** and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to remove the data once my personal information is no longer linked to the data.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly identified (e.g. that my name or identity will not be used).	
I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed during the study, but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves **electronic and audio recording *which will be transcribed and then destroyed*** for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	
I understand that my personal information collected about me such as my name or where I live will not be shared beyond the study team.	
I understand that the transcripts of the interviews (with all identifying information removed) will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.	

Name of participant (print name)..... Signature

of participant.....

Date.....

Name of researcher Malak Ahmed Elyazidi mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Signature of researcher.....

Date.....

C.2 CONSENT FORM (Student's Interview)

Study title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

Researcher name: Malak Ahmed Elyazidi

Appendix C

ERGO number: 61935

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (students PIS) (June, *2021 /version no.1*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in **this interview** and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study that it may not be possible to remove the data once my personal information is no longer linked to the data.	
I understand that I may be quoted directly in reports of the research but that I will not be directly identified (e.g. that my name or identity will not be used).	
I understand that my anonymity cannot be guaranteed during the study, but that any information collected by the researchers will be kept confidential.	
I understand that taking part in the study involves **electronic and audio recording** ***which will be transcribed and then destroyed*** for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet.	

I understand that my personal information collected about me such as my name or where I live will not be shared beyond the study team.	
I understand that the transcripts of the interviews (with all identifying information removed) will be deposited in the University of Southampton archive and made available for future research and study.	

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……

Date…….. ……

Name of researcher Malak Ahmed Elyazidi mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Appendix D

Signature of researcher

Date……

Appendix D

D.1 Invitation Letter

Project Title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

ERGO: 61935

Dear teacher/course leader,

My name is Ms. Malak Elyazidi and I am a Humanities PhD student from the University of Southampton. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about how students and teachers use Web-based learning on the Online Pre-sessional Programme. This study focuses on student and teacher experiences and perceptions of learning online, and I would be grateful if you would help me to know more about your teaching experiences and outlook during the COVID-19 era.

Once you give consent to take part in the study, I will invite you to an interview (on Microsoft Teams) of 30 to 60 minutes, where we will talk about your perceptions and experiences of Web-based learning, and your expectations of the Online Pre-sessional Programme. A follow-up interview, later in the programme, will ask you to reflect on your experiences teaching online. In order to understand your teaching experience and perceptions during the shift to online teaching, I also wish to observe live classes to see the kinds of activities your students engage in and how communication works online in live Teams classes.

If you are a pre-sessional tutor/course leader at the University of Southampton and you are willing to participate in this research, please contact the researcher via email (provided below). Any data collected will be completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. More information will be provided, but please feel free to contact the researcher with any questions you have.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact me at mae1g14@soton.ac.uk Thank you very much. Yours Sincerely,

Malak Ahmed Elyazidi
PhD Candidate (Modern Languages) Faculty of Humanities
University of Southampton Tel: +44 (0)7597939664
Email: mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Appendix D

D.2 Invitation Letter

Project Title: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Web-based Learning and Academic Practices on a Pre-sessional Programme during the COVID-19 Era.

ERGO: 61935

Dear Student,

My name is Ms. Malak Elyazidi and I am a Humanities PhD student from the University of Southampton. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the how students and teachers use Webbased learning on the Online Pre-sessional Programme. This study focuses on student and teacher experiences and perceptions of learning online, and I would be grateful if you would help me to know more about your learning experiences during the COVID-19.

Once you give consent to take part in the study, I will invite you to an interview (on Microsoft Teams) of 30 to 60 minutes, where we will talk about your perceptions and experiences of Web-based learning, and your expectations of the Online Pre-sessional Programme. A follow-up interview, later in the programme, will ask you to reflect on your experiences learning online. In order to understand your experiences of learning online at this time, also wish to observe live classes to see the kinds of activities you engage with and how communication works online. If you are a pre-sessional student at the University of Southampton and you are willing to participate in this research, please contact the researcher via email (provided below). Any data collected will be completely confidential and your identity will be anonymised. More information will be provided, but please feel free to contact the researcher with any questions you have.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact me at mae1g14@soton.ac.uk Thank you very much. Yours Sincerely,

Malak Ahmed Elyazidi
PhD Candidate (Modern Languages)
Faculty of Humanities
University of Southampton
Tel: +44 (0)7597939664
Email: mae1g14@soton.ac.uk

Appendix E

Appendix E Permission of research

Dr Robert Baird

65/2095 Avenue Campus,

Academic Centre for

International Students,

8th June 2021

Dear Malak,

I am writing to approve your request to conduct your research on the 2020-21 Online Pre-sessional Programmes. The academic team welcome research on current EAP/ESP practices, and we are particularly interested in your focus on online activity in the current circumstances.

I give my consent (in agreement with the Academic Team) for you to analyse tutor- and student-facing course documentation for your study, and I will organise access to those via Blackboard and SharePoint. We also approve you observing online classes and interviewing staff and students about their views and experiences.

Please do get in touch with me (R.D.Baird@soton.ac.uk), Programme Director and Curriculum Lead for Reading and Writing, Tina Kirk (C.E.Kirk@soton.ac.uk), Curriculum Lead for Listening and Speaking, or Chris Lewis (C.Lewis@soton.ac.uk), Curriculum Lead for Independent Learning, if you have any queries in these areas.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Robert Baird

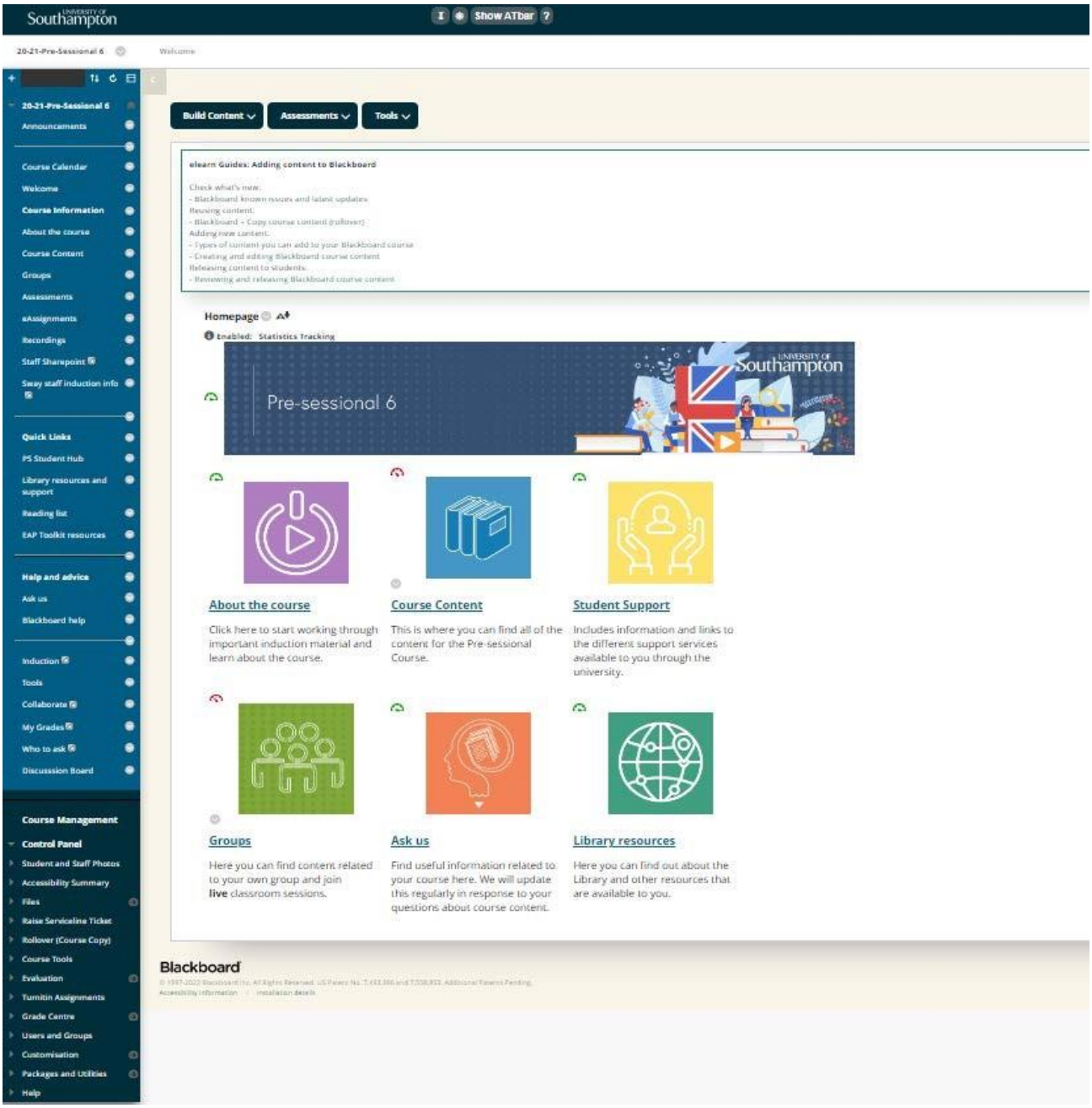
Senior Teaching Fellow

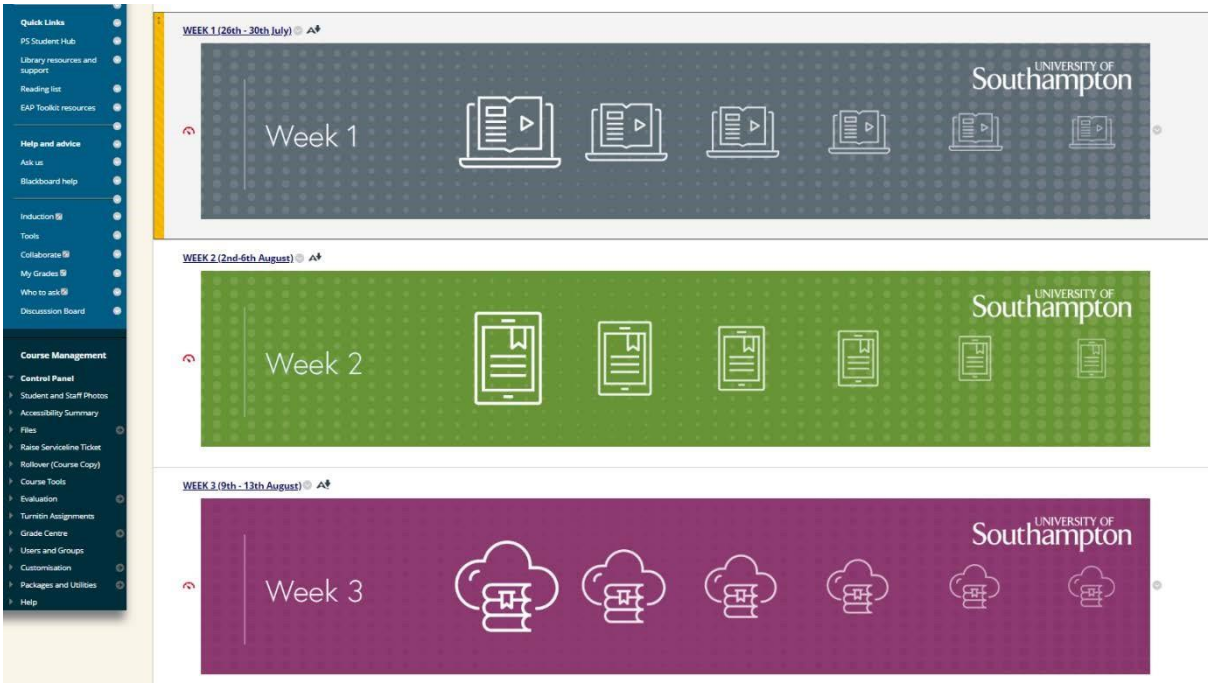
Director of Pre-sessional Programmes, Curricular Lead for Reading, Writing and Intercultural Communication

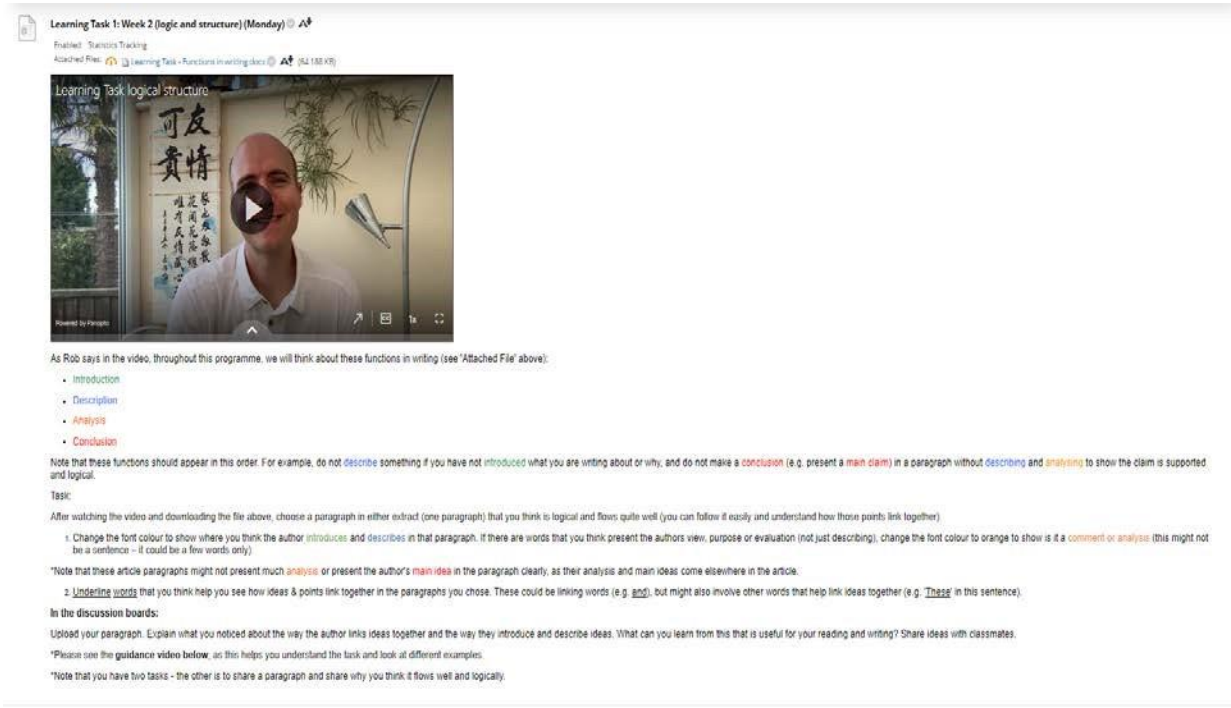
Academic Centre for International Students (ACIS), University of Southampton

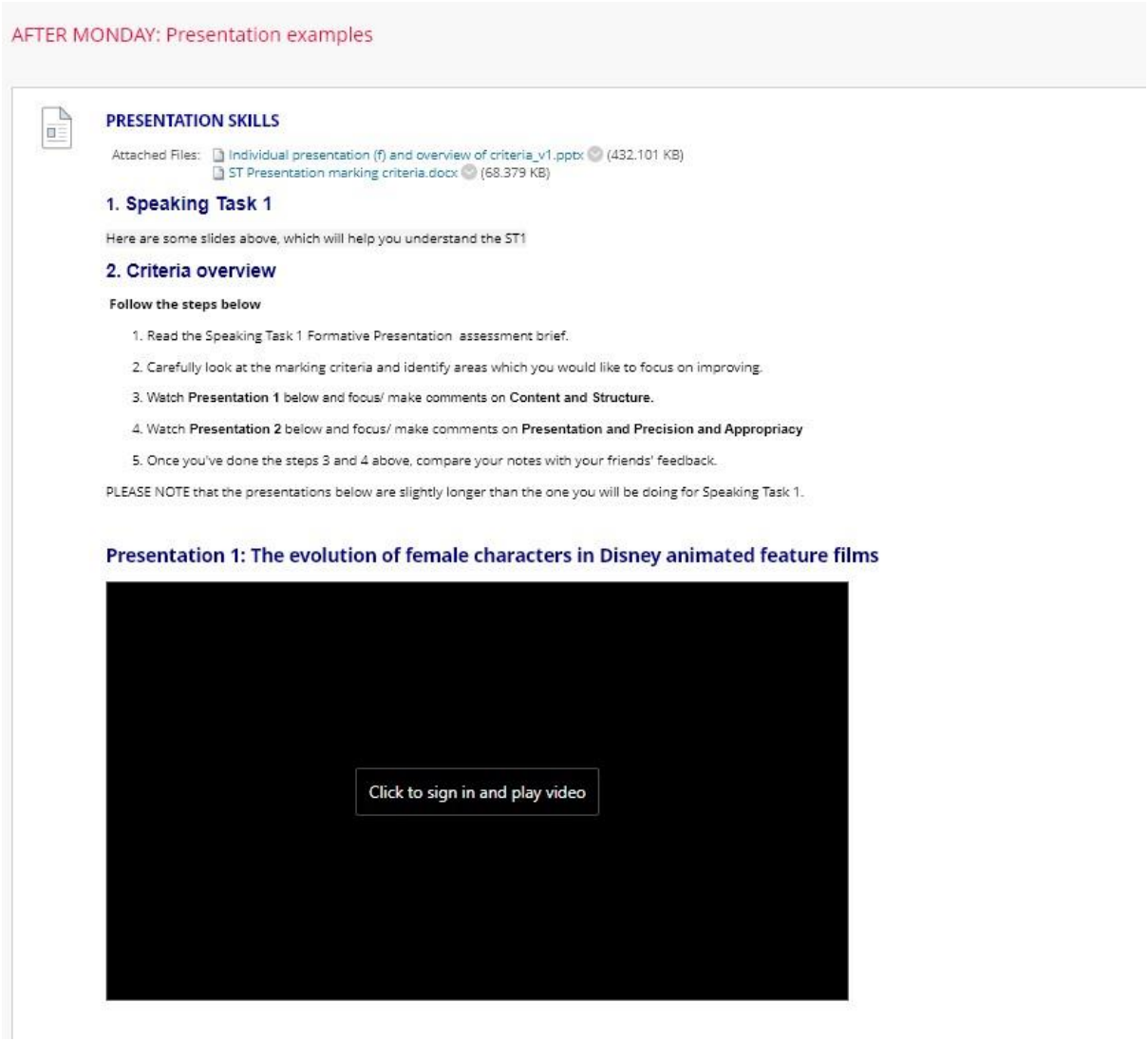
Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 8336 **Email:** R.D.Baird@soton.ac.uk

Appendix F Large-dimension images of Blackboard and learning tasks.




Quick Links
PS Student Hub
Library resources and support
Reading list
EAP Toolkit resources
Help and advice
Ask us
Blackboard help
Induction
Tools
Collaborate
My Grades
Who to ask
Discussion Board
Course Management
Control Panel
Student and Staff Photos
Accessibility Summary
Files
Raise Serviceline Ticket
Rollover (Course Copy)
Course Tools
Evaluation
Turnitin Assignments
Grade Centre
Users and Groups
Customisation
Packages and Utilities
Help
WEEK 1 (26th - 30th July)
Week 1
UNIVERSITY OF Southampton
WEEK 2 (2nd-6th August)
Week 2
UNIVERSITY OF Southampton
WEEK 3 (9th - 13th August)
Week 3
UNIVERSITY OF Southampton


Learning Task 1: Week 2 (logic and structure) (Monday)
Enabled: Statistics Tracking
Attached Files:
Learning Task logical structure
As Rob says in the video, throughout this programme, we will think about these functions in writing (see 'Attached File' above):
Introduction
Description
Analysis
Conclusion
Note that these functions should appear in this order. For example, do not describe something if you have not introduced what you are writing about or why, and do not make a conclusion (e.g. present a main claim) in a paragraph without describing and analysing to show the claim is supported and logical.
Task:
After watching the video and downloading the file above, choose a paragraph in either extract (one paragraph) that you think is logical and flows quite well (you can follow it easily and understand how those points link together).
1. Change the font colour to show where you think the author introduces and describes in that paragraph. If there are words that you think present the authors view, purpose or evaluation (not just describing), change the font colour to orange to show is it a comment or analysis (this might not be a sentence – it could be a few words only).
*Note that these article paragraphs might not present much analysis or present the author's main idea in the paragraph clearly, as their analysis and main ideas come elsewhere in the article.
2. Underline words that you think help you see how ideas & points link together in the paragraphs you chose. These could be linking words (e.g. and), but might also involve other words that help link ideas together (e.g. These' in this sentence).
In the discussion boards:
Upload your paragraph. Explain what you noticed about the way the author links ideas together and the way they introduce and describe ideas. What can you learn from this that is useful for your reading and writing? Share ideas with classmates.
*Please see the guidance video below, as this helps you understand the task and look at different examples
*Note that you have two tasks - the other is to share a paragraph and share why you think it flows well and logically.



Appendix G Four modules marking criteria.

G.1 PRE-SESSIONAL LISTENING & DISCUSSION SUBMISSION FORM AND MARKING CRITERIA

Academic Centre for International Students

I confirm that *I have read and understood the University's Academic Integrity Statement for Students: http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/part8a.htm including the information on practices to avoid, given in Appendix 1 of the Statement and that in the attached submission I have worked within the expectations of this Statement.*

I am aware that failure to act in accordance with the Academic Integrity Statement for Students may lead to the imposition of penalties which, for the most serious cases, may include termination of programme.

I consent to the University copying and distributing any or all work in any form and using third parties (who may be based outside the EU/EEA) to verify whether my work contains plagiarised material, and for quality assurance purposes.

Academic Integrity Declaration: I am aware of the requirements of good academic practice and the potential penalties for any breaches.

I confirm that this assignment is all my own work.

It is very helpful for tutors and students to be able to examine examples of previous students' work. (Student names and numbers are removed.) Please tick here if you are unwilling for this assignment to be used for this purpose in the future. ❑

(Everything below this line is for the tutor)

Listening to source material (live lecture or talk) 50%	
41-50	Demonstrates **a deep understanding of listening content** and has **no problem** drawing inferences from **all** aspects
36-40	Demonstrates **effective understanding of listening content** and **is able** to draw inferences from **most** aspects
31-35	Can demonstrate **understanding of listening content** and **is able** to draw **some** inferences
20-30	Can demonstrate **some understanding of listening content but with limited ability** to draw inferences.
0-19	Demonstrates **little or no understanding** of the listening content and **may not be able** to use this source for **any practical purpose**.
Listening and responding in discussion (ability to interact) 50%	
41-50	Draws on the listening content to **make highly nuanced contributions** and responds to others' points **appropriately throughout**.
36-40	Draws on the listening content to **make relevant contributions** and responds to others' points **appropriately**.
31-35	Draws on the listening content to **make some relevant contributions** and responds to others' points **appropriately but with some inconsistency**.

20-30	Rarely draws on the listening content to **make relevant contributions** and **struggles to respond appropriately** to others' points**.**
0-19	**Does not draw on the listening content to make useful contribution** and does not respond to others' points appropriately.

STUDENT NUMBER		**CLASS NUMBER**	
STUDENT NAME		**TASK**	**LT2: Listening and Discussion Task 2 (Summative)**
COURSE PS16 / PS11 / PS6	**PS11**	**TUTOR NAME**	
Discussion Link (Tutor use only)			
Student position in video (Tutor use only)			

NOTES AND COMMENTS		
Listening to source m terial		**Listening and responding in discussion**
Mark (prior to any penalty for late submission)	**Mark (minus any penalty for late submission)**	**Tutor's signature (electronic)**

Note: All marks are provisional until confirmed by the relevant Boards

Q&A Link **(Tutor use only)**	

G.2 PRE-SESSIONAL PRESENTATION SUBMISSION FORM AND MARKING CRITERIA

Academic Centre for International Students

I confirm that *I have read and understood the University's Academic Integrity Statement for Students: http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/part8a.htm including the information on practices to avoid, given in Appendix 1 of the Statement and that in the attached submission I have worked within the expectations of this Statement.*

I am aware that failure to act in accordance with the Academic Integrity Statement for Students may lead to the imposition of penalties which, for the most serious cases, may include termination of programme.

I consent to the University copying and distributing any or all work in any form and using third parties (who may be based outside the EU/EEA) to verify whether my work contains plagiarised material, and for quality assurance purposes.

Academic Integrity Declaration: I am aware of the requirements of good academic practice and the potential penalties for any breaches.

I confirm that this assignment is all my own work.

STUDENT NUMBER		**CLASS NUMBER**	
DEADLINE DATE	**24th August 2021**	**TASK**	**ST2 Presentation (Summative)**
COURSE PS16 / PS11 / PS6	**PS11**	**TUTOR NAME**	
Presentation Link			

It is very helpful for tutors and students to be able to examine examples of previous students' work. (Student names and numbers are removed.) Please tick here if you are unwilling for this assignment to be used for this purpose in the future. ❑

(Everything below this line is for the tutor)

Content (20%)	
7 –20	**All content** relevant, explained and appropriately supported. **Strong evidence** of argument critical analysis throughout.
4- 16	**Most content** relevant, explained and appropriately supported. **Evidence** of argument and critical analysis
0-13	**Content relevant,** explained and appropriately supported. **Some evidence of argument** and critical analysis but ideas may be more descriptive than analytical
-9	**Content often not** relevant**,** insufficiently explained and not always supported. Little evidence of any argument and critical analysis.

0-5	**Content not relevant or** explained with little or no support No real evidence of argument or critical analysis
Structure (20%)	
17-20	Presentation is **coherent,** with effective and logical progression throughout. Presentation is **cohesive,** with clear links between ideas and sections throughout.
14-16	Presentation **is almost always coherent**, with effective and logical progression. Presentation **is almost always cohesive**, with clear links between ideas and sections.
10-13	Presentation **is often coherent**, with logical progression evident. Presentation **is often cohesive**, with links between ideas and sections evident.
6-9	Presentation **lacks coherence**, with unclear progression. Presentation **has limited cohesion**, with unclear links between ideas and sections.
0-5	Presentation is **incoherent** and lacks a sense of progression. Presentation **lacks any cohesion**, leaving links between ideas completely unclear.
Presentation (20%)	
17-20	Non- verbal communication and visuals **used entirely effectively** to communicate key points and engage the listener. Verbal communication is **entirely effective**, and delivery is **entirely intelligible** and paced appropriately throughout.
14-16	Non- verbal communication and visuals used effectively to communicate key points and engage the listener. Verbal communication **is effective**, and delivery **is intelligible** and paced appropriately throughout.
10-13	Non- verbal communication and visuals **used mostly effectively** to communicate key points and engage the listener. Verbal communication is **mostly effective,** and delivery is **mostly intelligible** and paced appropriately most of the time
6-9	Non-verbal communication and visuals used in a limited way to communicate key points and engage the listener. Verbal communication and not paced appropriate**is not effective,** and delivery of the presentation is ly. **often unintelligible**
0-5	**Little or no** non-verbal communication and visuals do not engage the listener or **are inappropriate.** Verbal communication **is limited,** and delivery of the presentation is **unintelli gible** and inappropriately paced.

17-20 Use of vUse of laocabulary allows for nguage **expresses intenprecided meanings effectivese and nuanced comm unicationly** and **appropriat** of the to**ely**pic.

	throughout.
	Use of vocabulary **almost always allows for precise and nuanced communication** of the topic.
14-16	
Mark (prior to any penalty for Use of language and late submission)	Mark (minus any penalty for Use of language)
almost always expresses intended meanings effectively and appropriately	**Tutor's signature (Electronic)**
Use of vocabulary allows for **some effective communication** of the topic.	**iately** throughout.
10-13	Use of language **often expresses intended meanings effectively** and **appropriately.**
	Use of vocabulary **does not allow for effective communication** of the topic.
6-9	Use of language appropriately. **fails to express intended meanings effectively** and
Note: All	Use of vocabulary is insufficient to communicate the topic. marks are 0-5 Use of language does not express intended meanings.
	Ability to discuss the topic **effectively and with nuance**.
17-20	Demonstrates **clear understanding and ownership** of the topic
	Ability to discuss the topic **almost always effectively and with nuance.**
14-16	**Mostly demonstrates understanding and ownership** of the topic
	Some ability to discuss the topic effectively and with nuance.
10-13	Demonstrates **some understanding and ownership** of the topic
	Limited ability to discuss the topic effectively.
6-9	Demonstrates a **limited understanding and ownership** of the topic
	Clear **lack of ability to discuss** the topic effectively.
0-5	Demonstrates **no understanding or ownership** of the topic

provisional until confirmed by the relevant Boards

G.3 PRE-SESSIONAL READING PORTFOLIO MARKING CRITERIA

Finding relevant and reliable sources (50%)	
40 - 50	Explains relevance and reliability of the source used in an advanced and nuanced way
35 - 39	Explains relevance and reliability of the source used well
30 - 34	Explains the relevance and reliability of the source used adequately
25 - 29	Attempts to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
20 - 24	Struggles to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
0 - 19	Fails to explain the relevance and reliability of the source used
Using sources appropriately and effectively (50%)	
40 - 50	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source in an advanced and nuanced way
35 - 39	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source well
30 - 34	Explains appropriate and effective use of the source adequately
25 - 29	Attempts to explain appropriate and effective use of the source
20 - 24	Struggles to explain appropriate and effective use of the source
0 - 19	Fails to explain appropriate and effective use of the source

G.4 PRE-SESSIONAL RESEARCHED WRITING MARKING CRITERIA

Content (20%)	
16–20	An **appropriate** and **clear position** is taken, supported by **entirely relevant** detail and explanation **Clear evidence** of a **deep understanding** of the topic area as relevant to the task **All points** show justification, analysis and support
14-15	An **appropriate** and **clear position** is taken, supported by **relevant** detail and explanation **Strong understanding** of the topic area as relevant to the task **Almost all points** show justification, analysis and support
12-13	A **clear position** is taken supported by **mostly relevant** detail and explanation **Suitable understanding** of the topic area as relevant to the task **Most points** show justification, analysis and support
10-11	**A position** is taken, supported by **some relevant** detail and explanation **Some understanding** of the topic area as relevant to the task **Some points** show justification, analysis and support
8-9	**An unclear** or **uncritical position** is taken with a lack of detail and/or explanation A lack of **sufficient understanding** of the topic area in relation to the task **Points often do not** show justification, analysis or support
0-7	**Unclear** or **uncritical** position is taken with a lack of detail and/or explanation A **lack of understanding** of the topic area is evident in relation to the task **Points do not show** justification, analysis or support
Use of Sources (20%)	
16–20	Research **fully enhances** and **supports** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **entirely clear** and **appropriate** **All** sources are accurately and consistently referenced according to convention
14-15	Research **almost always enhances** and **supports** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **clear** and **appropriate** **Almost all** sources are accurately and consistently referenced according to convention
12-13	Research **mostly enhances** and **supports** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **mostly clear** and **appropriate** **Most** sources are accurately and consistently referenced according to convention
10-11	Research **sometimes enhances** and **supports** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **sometimes clear** and **appropriate** **Some** sources are accurately and consistently referenced according to convention
8-9	Research **mostly does not support** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **often unclear** Sources are **sometimes** inaccurately and inconsistently referenced according to convention
0-7	**Research does not support** the discussion Distinction between source content and the writer's voice is **unclear** Sources are **inaccurately** and **inconsistently** referenced according to convention
Structure (20%)	
16–20	Essay and paragraph structure is **entirely logical** and **functional** in relation to the task **All points** are logically ordered and their relevance is **clear** Ideas are **linked** and **developed** clearly and appropriately
14-15	Essay and paragraph structure is **almost always logical** and **functional** in relation to the task **Almost all points** are logically ordered and their relevance is **almost always clear** Ideas are **almost always linked** and **developed** clearly and appropriately
12-13	Essay and paragraph structure is **mostly logical** and **functional** in relation to the task **Most points** logically ordered and their relevance is **generally clear** Ideas are **mostly linked** and **developed** clearly and appropriately
10-11	Essay and paragraph structure is **sometimes logical** and **functional** in relation to the task **Many points** are logically ordered and their relevance is **sometimes clear** Ideas are **sometimes linked** and **developed** clearly and appropriately

8-9	Essay and paragraph structure is **often not logical** and **functional** in relation to the task Points are **often ordered illogically** and their relevance is **often unclear** Ideas are **often not linked** or **developed clearly** or **appropriately**
0-7	Essay and paragraph structure **is not logical** or **functional** in relation to the task Points are **not logically ordered** and their relevance is unclear Ideas are **not linked** or **developed** clearly and appropriately
Communication (20%)	
16–20	Writing is **always easy** for the reader to follow Key points are **always** conveyed effectively in relation to the task A consistent and appropriate voice is **always maintained** in relation to the task
14-15	Writing is **almost always easy** for the reader to follow Key points are **almost always** conveyed effectively in relation to the task A consistent and appropriate voice is **almost always maintained** in relation to the task
12-13	Writing is **mostly easy** for the reader to follow Key points are **mostly conveyed** effectively in relation to the task A consistent and appropriate voice is **mostly maintained** in relation to the task
10-11	Writing is **sometimes easy** for the reader to follow Key points are **sometimes** clear in relation to the task An appropriate voice is **sometimes present** in relation to the task
8-9	Writing is **often difficult** for the reader to follow Key points are **often unclear** in relation to the task An appropriate voice is **sometimes not present** in relation to the task
0-7	Writing is **difficult** for the reader to follow Key points are **unclear** in relation to the task An appropriate voice is **not identifiable** in relation to the task
Clarity and Accuracy (20%)	
16–20	Language **communicates** ideas with precision and accuracy **throughout** Language **communicates exact relationships** between ideas **throughout** **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary are sufficient** to express intended meaning
14-15	Language **mostly communicates** ideas with precision and accuracy Language **almost always communicates** relationships between ideas **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary** are **almost always sufficient** to express intended meaning
12-13	Language **often communicates** ideas with precision and accuracy Language **mostly communicates** relationships between ideas **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary** are **mostly sufficient** to express intended meaning
10-11	Language **sometimes communicates** ideas with precision and accuracy Language **sometimes communicates** relationships between ideas **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary** are **sometimes sufficient** to express intended meaning
8-9	Language **often fails to communicate** ideas with precision and accuracy Language **rarely communicates** relationships between ideas **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary are often insufficient** to express intended meaning
0-7	Language **does not communicate** ideas with precision or accuracy Language **fails to communicate** relationships between ideas **Grammar, punctuation** and **vocabulary** are **not sufficient** to express intended meaning

Appendix H

H.1 Field notes from classroom observation

Students' interaction with Ts	*Class A1*	*5 minutes before the class, silence. All students are quiet…Teacher is quiet at the first 3 minutes then asked about their day so far.* *Teacher is trying to encourage them to talk, but most of them they don't, when the teacher asks a question… until the teacher choose one of the students. No volunteers.*
	Class A2	*Teacher started chatting with the student who first joined the meeting…More talking in the first 5 minutes waiting for the rest of students to begin the class.* *There is improvement as around 2 students now volunteer to talk when the teacher asks a question*.
	Class M1	*Teacher started chatting with the first student joined while she was waiting for the rest to join. The students are shy to speak, and their answers are with short answers as the teacher trying to ask more question and involve all the students joined.* *Student don't volunteer to answer the questions asked by the teacher, they feel really shy, and not encouraged to speak or participate till the teacher ask someone to answer. It is not easy for them to turn on the mic to answer and even when they answer.*
	Class M2	*Teacher started chatting and more responses are getting from the students, students are more comfortable chatting and answering the questions…there are still few students who don't participate.* *There is improvement as around 4 students now volunteer to talk when the teacher asks a question…but they are still shy…* Appendix H

	Class R1	*Teacher's camera is off, the whole time the students were joining the live session, after around 4 minutes the teacher turn off the camera and mic, and he greeted the students…* *There are two students who volunteer to answer the teachers' questions…*
	Class R2	*The teacher started chatting with the students while he was waiting for the rest, some students were participating, some were silent…* *There is one other student with the Arab students who were volunteering in the first observation session with the teacher…*
Students' interaction	*Class A1*	*Students only interact in the breakout rooms… all interaction with tutors*
	Class A2	*Students only interact in the breakout rooms… all interaction with tutors*
	Class M1	*Students only interact in the breakout rooms… all interaction with tutors*
	Class M2	*Students at the beginning of class had a chat together with the tutor.* *Students interacted as well in breakout rooms.* *The tutor had an activity in the live session helped them to interact and this showed a better interaction between them comparing to another classroom I have observed…*
	Class R1	*Students only interact in the breakout rooms… all interaction with tutors*
	Class R2	*There is not big difference between the observed session… Students only interact in the breakout rooms… all interaction with tutors.*
Behaviour during the lesson	Class A1	*Tutor talked most of the time… tried to invite them to participate, they barely volunteer or interact.*

Appendix H

Activity 2, I joined 4 groups.

	Class A2	*Students don't participate unless tutor called a name …*	Appendix H
Participation		*The teacher still talked most of the time.*	
		Around 1-2 students who volunteered to answer a question, but	*Group 1: students were discussing well.*
	Class M1	*it took them time to*	
Shy students		*The teacher still talked most of the time…most of students are shy to participate and they don't participate unless the tutor called a name and the facial expression of the students showed that they are shy and anxious about talking in front of the rest of the class.*	*Group 2: students were talking Chinese (tutor kept reminding them to speak English only.*
	Class M2	*There are two students, who volunteer to participate when the tutor asked a question.*	
		The rest of students still shy to participate	*Group 3: they were quiet.*
	Class R1	T*he teacher still talked most of the time…most of students are shy to participate and they don't participate unless the tutor called a name and the facial expression of the students showed that they are shy and anxious about talking in front of the rest of the class.*	*Group 4: they were discussing but then they realized that the way they are practicing was wrong and waited for tutor to join to ask her about the right way to do the activity.*
	Class R2	*Still the teacher talked most of the time… it is not easy for them to turn on the speaker to talk…*	
Breakout rooms	Class A1	*Activity 1: I joined 3 groups,*	
		Group 1 & 2: Students speak Chinese (tutor asked them to speak English only).	
		Activity 3: students were silent, they were trying to manage the activity and start talking, the tutor joined and gave them more guidelines about how to do the activity.	

Class A2 *Activity 1: I joined 4 groups,*

Group 1,2 & 3 Students were discussing the activity.

Activity 4: students were silent, they were trying to manage the activity and start talking, the tutor joined and gave them more guidelines about how to do the activity.

Activity 2, I joined 2 groups.

Group 1: students were discussing pretty well.

Group 2: students finished the activity, and they were having a chat about the assessment…

Class M1 *Activity 1: I joined 5 groups,*

Group 1, 2 & 3: Students speak Chinese (tutor asked them to speak English only).

Group 4: students were discussing...

Group 5: one student was trying to organise the discussion while the rest of the group was quiet… Activity 2, I joined 4 groups.

Group 1: students were discussing pretty well.

Group 2: students were talking Chinese (tutor kept reminding them to speak English only.

Group 3: they were quiet.

Group 4: they were discussing but then they realized that the way they are practicing was wrong and waited for tutor to join to ask her about the right way to do the activity.

M2 *Activity 1: I joined 4 groups.*

Group 1, 2& 3: they were discussing the activity and I can see the differences in their discussion.

Group 4: were quiet as they said that they have answered all the questions.

s R1

Activity 1: I joined 5 groups.

Group 1 and 2 were taking Chinese when I joined.

Group 3 were trying to answer the questions.

Group 4: one student was trying to encourage the rest of the group to discuss and trying to ask them the questions (Arab student)

Group 5: they were discussing that they don't understand the questions the right way to answer, and they were waiting for the tutor to join them.

s R2

Activity 1: I joined 4 groups.

All the groups were discussing and were trying to answer the questions, the discussion was going smooth in all groups.

Activity 2: I joined 5 groups.

Group 1,2,3 & 4 were discussing pretty well.

Group 5: were struggling to understand the question to be able to answer.

Activity 2: I joined 3 groups.

Group 1 was quiet.

Group 2 was speaking Chinese.

Group 3 was discussing pretty well

Appendix I Interview samples

I.1 Student Interview Sample

Intro for the interview:

Thank you for participating in my study, as it was mentioned in the invitation letter and the participants Information Sheet, this research concerns understanding students view towards their experience with online PS programme. All you need to do is share thoughts and feelings about your experience. So, could you talk to me about your experience with online PS programme during the pandemic?

It was a different experience because it was something new and happened suddenly. We don't have the accessibility to deal with the teacher like the face-to-face... the physical interaction with the tutor was missed and t was really difficult to ask about few details like in the face-to-face one, as I don't know why it felt more difficult. Like I feel like I should wait for the lecture to finish to be able to ask questions, not like the face-to-face where I believe it's easy to interrupt the tutor to ask questions, I believe this was huge obstacle for me. You need to added effort to unmute, or you have to talk, or you have to raise your hand, somehow, we tried to skip all through these stuff and end up not asking actually, so it would either the questions is very needed to be asked or other that not really ask anything just like try to find the solution. Plus, there was no motivation like the face-toface, I actually slept during few classes as I don't have to turn on the camera. One of the advantages is the possibility to study anywhere, I believe this is something very important, even you can wake up 5 minutes before the lecture, or to attend the live session in the park for example, the studying remotely give you the opportunity to be in your comfort zone, besides time and location, saving time of transportation, save money buying notebooks. so, I believe these are the advantages we had from the online learning. If I want to speak about the feelings, I guess it has both sides, you look at as all of sudden the whole experience changed, from face-to-face to online, and I believe there are a lot of things are definitely missed from the face-to-face f and it can't have them within the online learning. Besides the online course, the education system in the UK was a bit different depends more on projects, like when you study the module, they gave you assignments based on evaluation and not only depend on exams, but in our country, they barely give you assignments and presentations, it's mixed between practical and theoretical, in our

country, they mostly focus on theoretical part. The other thing, critical thinking, back in my country it's literally spoon feeding, if we get for example a question out of the curriculum, everyone feels confused and keep going back to the lectures and how all that happened. These are the two main things were new for me.

Have your learning habits changed based on the online environment?

I feel that I should be more committed when it's f2f, like to attend lectures and stuff, online it depends, I won't mind I believe missing a live session. To be able to be actually productive, I try to decide like 11-5 just try to study and feel the environment like an actual studying even if I am at home and there is no cafes and library, to be more productive, sometimes I sleep till late at the night and wake up late as I study at night so if becomes more habit not being a morning person. So, my studying be more in the evening, I would be more focused. My time management would be choosing the best time of the day to be studying and trying the specific time to study.

Can you tell more details about what you meant about the things will be missed?

I believe the biggest challenge is the fact that I was excited to practice the language in the university environment, but it becomes just limited to the couple of hours that we have the live sessions where I can possibly use and practice the language, which is a very limited time. I think if we were in the face-to-face, we would get the chance to interact and practice the language more with classmates and native speakers we might meet during our time stay in the UK but having classes online while we still in our home countries, it really limited the time that we can use and improve our language. As much as you believe that you can ask the tutor questions and interact with classmates, it is really hard to actually do it, muting, raising hand, concentrating or not on Teams is not like face-to-face environment as I have mentioned earlier. Also, working in groups is less interesting than f2f, It used to be more challenging. Because f2f for example we have similar schedule, we know what we are doing in campus, so it's easier to set a time to actually sit together and do the projects, when it's online, somehow through these classes, these hours, each one could be doing something different, because each one in a whole other country, it's more challenging to set a time and discuss things, so maybe the most challenging is to agree on a time, especially if it's different time zone. Other than that, is discussing, it depends as a previous interaction and if I know my classmates, it's easier than the first time. Interaction could be awkward and not smooth to do. Time zone also was an issue, as like some students are attending classes in a time, they didn't use to attend classes in like some students have to attend classes during the night, for me I was not having this issue as my time zone wasn't very different from UK time zone, but I have noticed a number of my classmates who are struggling with this problem. Another obstacle is losing the

feeling of being a student, like university activities, you can't have classmates to discuss with, not having the feeling of going from one class to another with your classmates, so the whole student life experience it was missed, which is something that could motivate or could give you a break let you feel like there is someone is going through the same thing you are in, so I believe this was one of the points was annoying, not having the library space as well to go study. Also, I remember one of the obstacles, I had a problem with my laptop and Teams specifically as I couldn't turn on the camera, you could face some technical difficulties and not all of us can have a suitable laptop, so because it wasn't common at that time, I had to understand how to deal with these stuff, how like realize that you are unmute, you should be aware of this and don't speak in the middle of class lol, sometimes you get challenges to get used to the new technology, whether you are from being in meetings, how to deliver information, through technology or emails, you have to find the suitable place as well, like not to have a noisy environment to do the tutorials or meetings, sometimes there will be a problem with the internet connection and you can't join live sessions, internet cuts off and discounting during the class that it cause difficulty to understand the lesson or miss information. So, it's a difficulty to get used to technology itself, and sudden technical difficulties, through the connection or devices we had. The advantages obviously that we realise now that if you want to stay online, it will help through work, studying online like forced me to learn about Teams or Zoom which I believe it reflected on life as well. So, it's an advantage to be able to connect with the whole world through technology., whether it's studying or working.

How did you deal with the technical problem?

I took my sister's laptop and once I had to login with my phone with it wasn't convenient to see the slides clearly.

Do you have any additional thoughts or ideas you would like to share?

Mmm I don't know what else I should talk about?

How about the use of the learning platforms during the programme, like the websites and applications used to use?

Well, the application we used like Team, it was interesting at the start of the course like everyone was talking about teams, like in media how people talk about this used application during the lockdown, when I firstly used it, it was fine not challenging, but there are many aspects that needed to be improved like the background noise; it was very annoying, but I believe now this problem has been solved, also, mmm oh what I liked the most not to have turn on the camera that's because I am a hijabi, so it would be more comfortable for me not to wear hijab. So, not having to turn on

the camera as we weren't forced to, so this helped me to be comfortable in my house. But again going back to the previous issue about talking with the tutor because of turning off the camera I might not be recognised, they might not remember you and might only remember your name only, sometimes, face-to-face helps to make better connection like to interact with someone and see the facial expression, because sometimes voice only isn't enough to set the whole scene, sometimes the body language is very important, it could be some misunderstanding sometimes, or not feeling like the good interaction and might feel some awkwardness. Even with my classmates during presessional it was the first time meet new people remotely, I didn't feel the need the to know them or interact with them outside the class, and this limits to know people, other than that you don't event your circle bigger so before even people not in your class or just in university or campus to make friends with, through events or walking from class to another but online, there is no need or you don't feel the need or effort to know, and feel awkward to be initiative through texting, also when I need help I used to ask my classmates but now I would prefer to self-search to get it or ask the tutor to go through it because I don't know the really know who's good in class. I didn't get the chance to meet new people, I can't like a conversation you can hold with them or discussion after class or brainstorming f2f or like learning new tricks or understand another perspective, this thing is very limited and make double effort to have even a near experience as online so like I guess if things stay online and not in a campus, the chance of making new friends will be very low like doing it face-to-face. Because people don't usually memorize stuff through chatting like the memory is usually visual like in the mind of the person, like having face-to-face interaction would be better for the person.

During the live sessions, because you are using your laptop, your phone and your camera is off, was it easy to get distracted?

Sometimes, yes, you get distracted, especially if you're not turning your camera on and you know you are not being watched, as if you are in class, you have like something is being made or a noise, you can actually get distracted, hold your phone, check your text, it isn't the same as like class, and having the feeling in f2f that you have to respect the lecturer because he's there and watching me and need to focus, maybe online the probability to be distracted is way higher than the actual f2f. actually, once I was very tired and slept late at night and I have a lecture at 9am, I logged in and went back to sleep as the camera is off and I was really tired.

Would you like to add anything?

Studying remotely would reflect on work sometimes, like sometimes, some field like IT or anything could require a laptop, it helps to manage the work without even being in office, sometimes. Online

also boosted the technology more for work, like for example in my home country if corona didn't happen it would sill the same, it made people jump 5 years to the future in a way. It accelerated the technology change.

Thank you, Aura!

I.2 Teacher Interview Sample

Intro for the interview:

Thank you for participating in my study, as it was mentioned in the invitation letter and the participants Information Sheet, this research concerns understanding students view towards their experience with online PS programme. All you need to do is share thoughts and feelings about your experience. So, could you talk to me about your experience with online PS programme during the pandemic?

When the course began, I guess, I did feel quite nervous about it; first, but I think students were equally as nervous as well. I don't think I found it very difficult, it went quite well considering I was quite nervous about doing it. I don't think I had any particular challenges, but everything went quite well. I think just with the idea of presentation and structure perhaps and even things like PowerPoints, I think just a really easy quick example would be, you know quite often you'll get a student who just got loads of a complicated slides, or a lot of text on slides or you the quality of their presentation is not great and then just saying well, you know, I know that you find it difficult when I put too much text on a slide and I'm talking at the same time and you're trying to read it, and how would you feel if you were in the audience? Watching this presentation and that slide came up or if I produced that slide in my class, I think you probably find it quite challenging reading all that text while I'm taking in the same time so just using my you know the fact that I have to do these like ok it's not presentation, it's a class but we're all using the same technology and it's all about communication and trying keep it structured and logical and coherent and I need to do that. Those challenges I face as well when I'm trying to communicate information to you so it kind of having to think ahead, you know, are they gonna be able to read this amount of text? Is there too much information? Is there too little information and I have to do that as well and I think find that quite useful to think ok yeah perhaps he's right, if I saw that slide in my class and he was talking over it as well, then I wouldn't be able to follow it, there's too much information, things like that? For me it's one of the biggest changes, definitely feel a little more isolated, bit less supported, I know if I have a question to one of the coordinator, very well supported that I can go back to them

at any point and get some support, I don't want to say that I felt under supported but in terms of sharing ideas with a group of my colleagues in team, feels a lot more isolating, so you've got something in the syllabus that you're going to do next week maybe something you've never done before or starting from scratch, normally the first thing I do in staff room is chat with one of my colleagues, what you do? would share some ideas, good ideas for this and this, because I worked in independent learning and academic skills previously, as a team one of their strengths is that generally people are really good at sharing ideas and working collaboratively to develop ideas and share ideas. Working online, I haven't felt significantly diminished and I tend to just usually communicate with two or three colleagues and to help support each other and maybe put in a call to them before a class and saying well I have got this far with it, I am thinking of doing this and doing that, what would you do and bounce some ideas around and share some materials and that feels really helpful, because… I think sometimes just reassurance as well, just you are both looking at,,, taking similar approach just and that's what I find very different working online, because you kind of feeling a lot more isolated and if you do have any slight.. again with marking, marking the discussion for example, I found them really challenging so it's good to share your concerns or your fears with a colleague, so now I feel little bit more limited to sharing those concerns with just one or two colleagues whereas before in my group meetings this time, it felt like I was the someone who have a question, someone else might have another question, it wouldn't really have much for discussion or the opportunity to share ideas where certainly my experience with working academic skills was a key part of it really, that's been a significant difference for me, I really don't want to say the well less supported, because that sort of makes it sound there is no one there if you got a problem and that wasn't the case, I knew anytime my coordinators very supportive, I can ask questions very quickly and one of the positive things I get response very quickly as well, that was good. I think it's a bit less of collaborative environment, it's probably the best way to say it.

I think perhaps made more of an effort to perhaps feel on a level with them as well, also talked to them about you know that this is kind of difficult for everybody working online, you know I face challenges with it as well and being in straight and level with them about that, which is something I might not normally have to discuss but you know and then when if they face technical challenges that really worried about doing something online or preparing presentation and I will sometimes use my experience to help them, you know, say well look I have to do this as well, I have to plan these lessons, I have to develop my presentations in a way that hopefully makes sense, so using my experience to help them, I sort of found myself doing that a little bit more and helping create a kind of we're all doing this together kind of thing that sort of I've done a bit more of that really and that seems worked quite well, they seem to react quite positively to that.

What about the interaction with the students?

I think the students were typically nervous about the speaking to begin with. I would usually try ask questions and leave it open for people to speak, but quite often I got silence and you really need sort of encourage people to speak and one technique that I do use it sounds a bit scary but I will just call out a name and slidely pick someone and if they have no answer or they say I'm sorry I don't know then I say don't worry and then maybe ask somebody else. And after a while that process I mean the students told me after class or during tutorial that they are a bit scared speaking because of the cultural change, I don't know if it's worse being online or if it's really that much different, it might inhibit them little bit more and to speak, but after you know two to three weeks, everyone feels a lot more confident with the idea that they might get asked to speak, but really emphasizing that it doesn't matter if you don't know the answer or it doesn't matter if you say the wrong thing. In what we're teaching there isn't, there's often not really a wrong answer, so as long as you can make them feel comfortable about their speaking then that's my main target to begin with, to sort of make everyone feel comfortable that it's ok to say something in fact it's better just to say something and that I will sort of appreciate your effort for having a go at saying something rather then, you know, dismissing somebody for saying the wrong thing that really it doesn't matter, I think my whole objective certainly in the first couple of weeks was just to get people comfortable with the idea that you have to speak in class and it's ok to do that and it's ok to say the wrong thing and very quickly usually that everyone starts feeling a bit more comfortable with the structure. So I think, I mean I did use few things last year like polling and things when I was doing online but I didn't really use it so much this year, I was just trying out a few different things more last year found worth and didn't work and then also managed putting them into groups as well I don't know, getting people to go into groups using channels last year so I would be pre-group everybody before the class and in the first couple of weeks I would usually stick to those groups so they have the opportunity to get to know a little group in the class and then when they do go off to do group work activities, I would always make sure I go and drop in when everyone of those and just you know listening to the conversation maybe just ask few questions and check everybody's happy with what they're doing, and in a way that works quite well, it was a bit scary thinking ok I'm sat here on my own in my room at home and the 16 students having separate meetings and felt like it's kind of strange feeling, you could just literally walk away and you know, so it's quite, that was quite strange at first but I quickly got into the feeling quite comfortable just dropping in on their meetings, the were quite comfortable with that. I would I think generally opt for the f2f. I think it's just because the interaction with the students is nicer and I think they find it more rewarding, you find it more rewarding, you feel maybe a closer bond with your students but the

online I think does have some benefits as well, things feel more immediate, you know, when you ask students show me this or share your screen with me, things are quite, it's quite quick, it's quite efficient so I think that's possibly a benefit and I think the only, strangely, cause I probably originally thought this would be difficult, but actually I don't feel I have to do so much classroom control, I don't feel that people, even though, they are at home and they have the potential to just you know turn off your cameras if they wanted, even though, you know that's discouraged and I really didn't have that problem this year either, I think it's a problem last year a little bit, but yeah I didn't feel that I needed to classroom control wasn't a problem where it has sometimes been a bit more of an issue in class. I found that more easily distracted. Or more easily distracted in class or in a group and specifically certain two people will sit together and somehow managed to slightly distract the whole classroom that wasn't really a problem online. Overall, in summary, I would still prefer f2f I think.

How long do you believe they were to get used to this? Have you noticed that at the beginning they were not active and were not interacting but then you notice the change?

Within, after the first two weeks, people are interacting very well generally and I actually was quite surprised how well if you set them a task and you sort of leave them in a room in a channel in teams, occasionally you will drop in on a class and they could just be very quiet, you don't really know what they are doing, you don't know if they are busy doing other work, which they could be, they could be writing an essay for another part of the course, and so occasionally things like that would happen or they'd be silence and you just have to say is everything ok, what you know? How you are getting on and someone would say we're just reading, we're just reading the questions again themselves or something like that, but I was overall really surprised and impressed that usually they would have quite constructed discussions in those groups, in those online channels, so work quite well, and later in the course and more so this year, I put them in random breakout rooms, so I don't know if you know how the breakout room. This year I was using the option where automatically select each group as well, so it's getting them comfortable with a fixed group to begin with and then a little bit later of the course I was just putting them into some random groups as well and then occasionally we'd go back to the fixed group as well and I think that's quite nice for them to sort of go back to their original group of four. So usually have the combination both of those was quite useful.

Do you that it was easier for you in the f2f classes to help students to be comfortable than the online ones?

Yeah, that's difficult question really because I think, sometimes classroom control could be a bit more difficult f2f, if you, my experience after few weeks when everybody starts feeling quite

comfortable, you would find two or three people sitting together, pair up in group or pair and they will sort of distract each other as kind of like school kids and sometimes be quiet immature as well and that of course could have negative effect on the rest of the class and be distracting for me too teaching and that isn't much of an issue I haven't encountered online, in some respects that has been easier, you do sometimes see someone sort of laughing and I'm sure they have a group online chat, they might be typing while you are teaching, messaging each other, so that could obviously quite distracting and because they are online there's not very much you can do about that where is if they were in class with a phone on their desk that would be just easier to say just could you put your phone? That was a major challenge I found on the pre-sessional, particularly with Asian students who are on social media a lot their phones during class, I hate doing it but that but sometimes you have to treat them bit such young teenagers or school kids and you just have literally, you are not a school kid, I don't want to treat you as a child but I am going to have to ask you again to please put your phone away and I haven't found that so much as an issue it could be going at the background and so not aware of it. So the key is keeping them engaged and ask questions so they have to listen because they might be asked the question at any point, I think just keeping it interesting and keep them engaged so it might ask question so I better listen because it might call my name. so, maybe a little bit of fear. Finding ways to keep people engaged so they have no much of opportunity to lose focus this kind of good, but I think overall in terms of classroom control, online might be easier in some ways, but I think you don't have the opportunity to take longer to get to know people's personalities online and characters and you know if they are doing round, seem long time I have thought in the classroom, you know if they can do the group activity they can go around to talk to the group, somehow feels easier, it's easier to feel more connected, I can see what they are doing, and get to know them quicker I think, so I think there are some positive elements working online but definitely some negative aspects as well.

How about students' interaction with each other?

The interaction together is less, I don't think they form such tighten group, which obviously when I hear in person, they get to know each other very well as a group, and they tend to do a lot together as a group, they got to know each other so I think they feel more, I don't think the online allows them that so much ability to do that, I think it limits their ability to get to know each other as well and tend to find maybe people, I think this is quite different think about what they are, they seems so much as individuals, it takes them longer to get to know each other and I don't think they know each other the same extent, they sort of, some of them interact quiet well in the groups, I suppose most of them do, but it gives them a little less opportunity, if you are in person, you sort of gravitated towards different people and get to know them, sort of you know you might be putting

a group together during your class but because you see each other outside of class and socially, there's a lot more of opportunity for them to interact with different people in the class and get to know those people, you might find people pairing off into groups forming friendships like that, whereas I think in online that doesn't happen so freely they, I put them into group so they have the opportunity to meet those people or teams put them into groups, but I think many of them properly don't, I think they stay as a sort of social group on their social media, and continue messing themselves just like that but I don't think they in the 11 weeks that we have in the pre-sessional or in person I think some form really tight bonds with each other during that period and I think online they don't that in the same extent. The difficulty is sort of the time limited so you going to kind of limited to tutorial time you got but I have being working with some students and putting more time on one or two students, will just longer tutorials and maybe got into a bit more depth about ways they can try and help themselves so I have had that so I'm not really so much with learning difficulties but one or two students just asking, I'll be honest you know, I'm listening and speaking but one of the students was really, they were really talking about their writing and really struggling with it because I felt that the same, the problems they were having I think it's to do with structure and their writing and it really carried over into their presentation work as well. So that I just spent quite a bit of time just looking at through an academic writing books online and showing them some additional resources and really trying to break things down into kind of more simple, trying to look at things quite simple, I think one of key problems that students have is there's so much to learn and so much information and especially with academic writing, it just seems so complicated that they just sometimes think of it as being complicated and I think it sometimes helps them to say let's just take a step back and let's just look at some examples of you know some paragraphs or paragraph structure or topic sentences or whatever it is but, also for me looking for how they can apply that in that presentation as well particularly coherency, they are quiet good at sometimes doing a presentation that starts making sense and suddenly they are just throw something in there that just makes no sense at all, where is that come from? Or what's that mean? Or it's not explained and then just sort of going back again and would that make sense to you if you were watching the presentation and just trying simplify things and say look it's really helping them go back to the planning stage and outlines and I have had to do that with few students and just sort of go some of the basics and just sort of saying keep it simple and that's one of the key things but it's usually been less to do with learning difficulties I think that just general understanding is usually come when I've seen their first results or seen their first presentations, that they just need to really take step back from it and go back to the planning stage and think clearly about what you gonna say in this section and having a clear idea before you actually write that paragraph or before you develop that section in your presentation, what's you're trying to achieve in that section and trying to help

you do it to make sense and isn't just going to be confusing for you or confusing to anybody else so yeah, had to do that quite a lot.

Any challenges that you were facing or students are facing, have you noticed there were certain, I know it might be sounds difficult to you for this question, but have you noticed any difficulties with certain nationality than the other? In online course…

Yes! But not specifically different in online so that some of the key challenges id Asian students feel much more inhibited about speaking and talking in class but that is quite typical in the classroom environment as well, so yeah there are generally a lot less, I haven't, think I had one or two Arabic students last year, this year almost entirely Chinese students, but yeah certainly the willingness to speak and the react to questions and answer questions then Chinese students particularly are a lot more inhibited, it takes more time to break down barriers and get them talking whereas typically my experience with Arabic students, they are more willing just to put up their hand and volunteer answers and have to manage that a little bit carefully, because you are always get an answer from one or two students in the group and sometimes you have to say well, can anybody other than Malik, because Malik Is giving me all the answers today, you know, so yeah, but that is same experience I had in the classroom as well, I don't think it's specifically an online challenge, specifically online, sometimes, some of chinses students seem a little bit more find some of the technology little bit more challenging as well, you know just sharing screens and things like that or they seem a little bit, sometimes but on the other hand, they're also can be very quick at doing things they know or familiar with, they will do it very quickly, but introducing new technology or new, sometimes find that a little bit challenging. I think the main… I think... again it's not really online specifically but again I find Arabic students will tend to have a lot more confidant, speaking, volunteering answers, feeling courage to do that, they don't need much time breaking down barriers with them, then from my experience with them seeing their writing is quite limited, but then it's easy to think that they are very good but then actually sometimes, they're writing when you see it, there's still quite problem. There are certainly a lot more confidant in their ability where the Chinese students often lack confidence I think, and certainly with talking and speaking and working in groups everything is just slower and they need to be encouraged and have to really feel that it's ok to talk and it's encouraged, you have to really keep encouraging them to share their opinions and share their viewpoints. I think maybe one of the key differences that, maybe a slight difference, Chinese students will be very good at, you know for listening, I think of listening here, if they have to listen to something they will be very good at just trying to repeat what they think I want them to hear so they want to say things like oh yeah I heard this and heard this and this so they are trying to proof to me that they understood the listening but they weren't, they won't

challenge or give a criticism of it than that well, they lack criticality if you like, but again, not really an online thing, it's just… I found that a lot in listening tests and I was really looking for them to listen to material, to think about and answer questions that were related to that listening material and instead of answering the questions they have asked, they're quite often just say, yes I agree and I hear this and this and this and trying to say I listened and understood it and what they are not doing is really thinking about the questions that they have being asked about the listening and to get their own opinions and their own viewpoints and explain why and they'll tend just to agree to say yes I agree with that I heard that in their listening and I agree with that and maybe some other nationalities will understand that they are being asked a questions and being asked to give a personal viewpoint quicker or volunteer that more quickly and they'll say well yeah in my opinion I did hear thus and I agree with it to some extent but I think there's some problems with this idea or I don't think this is the best way to do it, while chinses students will be less willing to question and challenge ideas, but again, not really an online. From online perspective I don't know if I really the way they interact with each other but it's kind of quite difficult because when I think both years it's mainly Chinese students that I've had when I've been working online, I think I had one Arabic student last year so, I think he was really good in class but I don't think he interacted, he often take a lead in a group situation, so if they are in a group of three or four he would say ok well what do we think about this and he will sort organize the group a little bit or take the lead in that group so it's really useful to have someone like that in the group who perhaps a little bit more outgoing and get the conversation going but yeah I think other than that will found it quite difficult to integrate with the rest of the group, again that probably would be the same in the classroom environment.

For the technological difficulties, sometimes they are facing challenges with the technology, can you tell me to what extent, during the whole course, how often they have problem with technology and how fast they will be able to work on the challenges? How have they overcome these challenges?

It's usually just explaining something in a little bit more detail, I think one examples of it is using, submitting assignments using e-Assignment. So it's quite often when they're introduced to a new piece of software or new process and my experience was that there is some of the Chinese students were more likely to make mistakes with that, you know something that really you would be very carefully about it, submitting my assignment, a number of students who submitted the wrong assignment to the wrong submission, when I went to open their presentation for example, I'd find an essay in there and I had that in two or three occasions, depressingly one student did it again in their final, they made the same mistake twice, for their formative and then their summative the attached the wrong assignment and so the kind of thing you know if it's me I would be being very

careful in submitting my assignment and I will be checking every stage to make sure I've yeah, I find with the Chinese students particularly you have to explain things really clearly maybe explain it again and perhaps check it again next week, I don't always have that fate that they are going to get it right when they're introduced to a new process or a new piece of software so It's quite difficult to say how quickly in terms of time, you know it's more a case of explaining just when you, if they made a mistake, quite often they have to make mistake before they realize the consequences that you can't really get this wrong again because if you get it wrong gain it's going to have a big impact, you know it's only then sometimes they will really make the effort to do it carefully, so yeah again it's a case of explaining things again to them , I don't know if it's a cultural thing but if it was an Arabic student, I feel that they might not have that challenge to same degree.

About assignments, from your perspective what do you think about the assessment structure online in general, I mean how effective I mean from your perspective, how much they are affective, do you believe that they're some changes, what do you think about the assessment online?

The first thing I would say, it's nor specifically about the assessment but just a number of them, it feels like they are there… it feels like there are it's quite a lot of assessment and if the deadlines feel very close together for the students, they're literally be submitting an essay yesterday and have a reading task today and then something else tomorrow, so there are certain points of the course where it feels multiple deadlines are all very close together so that is a real challenge. In terms of the assessment, I think that I can only really speak about speaking and listening, but the listening test doing online is quite challenging cause it seems very, I do you know the format? It feels like almost as much about speaking as it does listening, so you sort of you are assessing someone on listening but based on their ability to sort of talk about that listening content, it might just be that it's difficult to mark but I think one of my slight concerns about it is that, if you were given in a classroom environment or they sort of in a more traditional way of doing listening test was that they do it in exam conditions and they'd hear their listening material once or just in that, so it really does test their ability to listen, in this environment, they are giving the listening content for 24 hours and I, my suspension is many of them will turn that to a transcript because is easy to do that and even I haven't mentioned and I don't know if it's relating back to some of your earlier questions, students will often got captions ups on teams, so what's normally listening it becomes listening and reading or just reading, I don't know if that weakens their ability to listen or not or just relying on captions when they are working on teams so going back to the listening exam or the listening assessment I feel some of them might turn the listening to, somehow produce a transcript form it, so it turns more as a reading exercise, I don't really know but I'm suspecting that instead

of taking notes of they are hearing, they somehow turning that listening content as quickly as they can to a transcript and they start highlighting and reading in the same that you would look an essay or doing some research from a book, so it's very difficult, you can say you referred to that really well from the listening content and you have made a good point there, but did you read it or did you listen to it. I felt like that during the discussion, when somebody turned to speak, the would say yeah I agree with you, and you see them often looking to the other direction and almost start reading slightly script like, it could be just from their notes and it could be highlighted from transcript. So I think from the listening point of view, I think it's brilliant you got captions on Teams, its really good and the technology actually pretty good and pretty reliable, the text comes up is pretty good, you do wonder slightly if it helps their ability to read or does It weaken their ability to listen, I don't know.

Appendix I

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