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Appendices for the research:

Language Proficiency and Academic Readiness：A Case Study on the Effectiveness of Pre-sessional Programmes at a University in the UK

Tao PENG

Background & Rationale

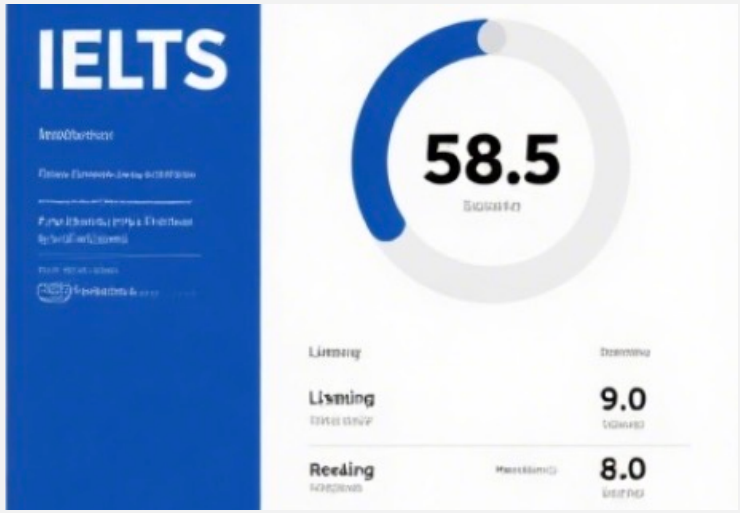
Importance of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Evans & Morrison, 2011).

Aim to address language-entry gap (Hyland, 2006; Pearson, 2020).

PSPs are bridging courses for entry into degree programmes for Chinese international students(Heng,2018).

Concerns remain about actual academic benefits from previous case studies(Creswell and Clark, 2011).

The Hook & The Question



Source: ©Two stories told by D1

- **Main Question:**

How effective is a UK university pre-sessional programme (PSP) in supporting Chinese international students' academic readiness?

- **Sub-Questions:**

1.How do students perceive the effectiveness of PSP activities (e.g., academic writing, critical thinking tasks) in supporting their learning?

2.How do teachers perceive the impact of students' language development in PSP on their academic readiness?

Literature Review

Language proficiency: Modest (Green, 2007); limited in short courses; Variability among students (Pearson, 2020)

Academic readiness: Mixed findings (Ushioda & Harsch, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2017)

Students' Perceptions: IELTS score ≠ actual performance outcome (Elyazidi,2023); Teachers' Perceptions: Cultural differences in expectations(Heng, 2018)

Case Study: Design and methods (Yin,2018); Research strategy (Stake,1995)

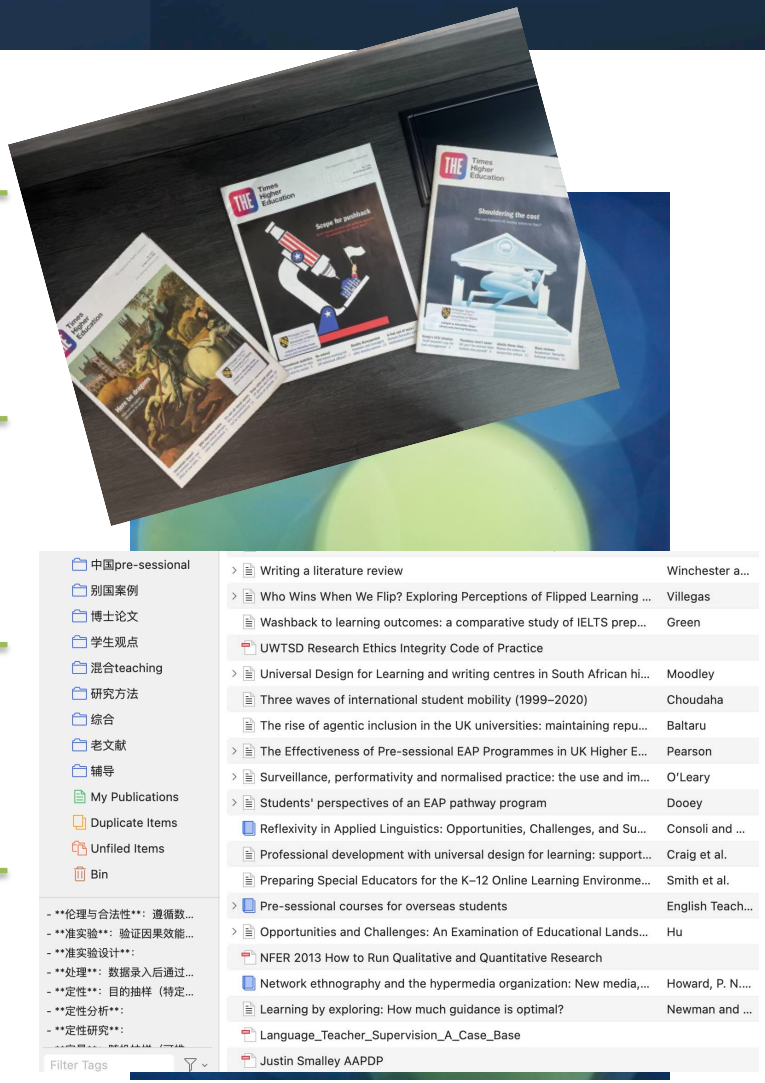


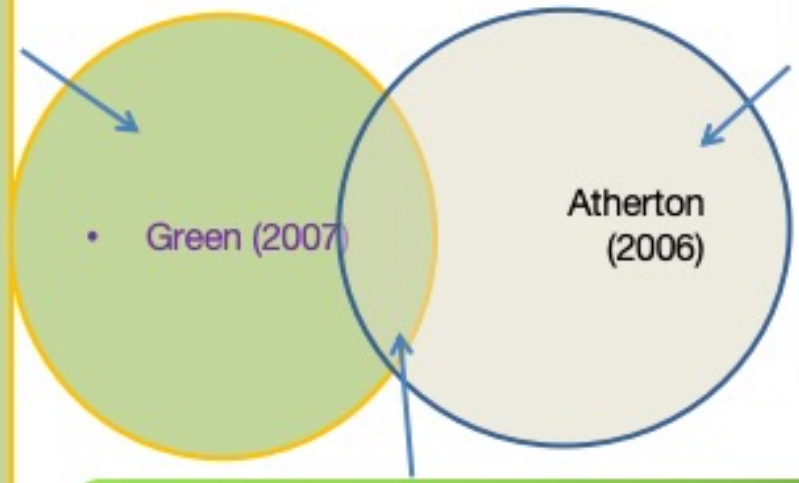
Figure 1: Journals and that I read
Source: ©Author's own by Zotero

Highlight Themes & Empirical Insights from literature

Common themes and similarities

- Most students showed tangible if modest, language improvements.
- However, many continue with borderline proficiency affecting academic outcomes.
- The quantitative study showed modest language gains.

E.g. IELTS improvement (0.191 to 0.324 bands.)



- PSP alumni often had delayed degree completions or lower academic outcomes compared to direct entry students.
- Mixed methods showed high progression rates and increased confidence, but ongoing struggles with academic writing

Based on the development of PSP cases from 1996-2025, most of them explored the relationship between language proficiency improvement and actual academic readiness, providing different perspectives for analyzing the comprehensive effectiveness of PSP.

Document Review

Pre-sessional Course

Syllabus and organisation of activities

- The Pre-sessional Academic modules are part of an integrated programme designed to allow you to learn and practise the academic skills you will need to succeed in your future university study. The modules have been structured to ensure the development of important academic skills with tasks set to provide practice in the skills being covered in class.
- You will have a **weekly tutorial** in small groups with your listening and speaking tutor over the course. You will need to arrange the best day and time for you.

Weekly organisation of tasks

WEEK 1

This week students will ✓ Meet their teaching team ✓ Gain an overview of the content of the listening and speaking course and assessments ✓ Understand the purpose of a presentation ✓ Understand the basic structure of academic presentations ✓ Understand the need for clear signposting / transition language in presentations and be able to use some basic signposts ✓ Understand the speaking assessment criteria ✓ Learn how to use Flipgrid, a video creation application	
Learning Tasks: First Lesson	**Learning tasks: Second Lesson**
• Welcome: meeting the tutor and other students • Becoming familiar with academic presentations: an introduction with Q and A • Introduction to learning platforms and Flipgrid	• Presentation introduction and overview • The basic structure of a presentation • Using transition & signalling language to reinforce structure • An introduction to the presentation criteria

Reading and Writing Syllabus

Organisation of activities

1. **Learning Tasks (Monday & Tuesday)**

These contain video introductions and active noticing and productive tasks related to syllabus goals. You complete the tasks in your group's discussion board on Blackboard for online students, or in class for on campus students, as per the task instructions.

2. **Applied Tasks (Wednesday = Reading; Thursday = Writing)**

These expand on the Learning Tasks by applying them to your own work and focus on aspects of the assessments on which you will be working throughout the programme.

All assignments except Writing Task 1 (which is submitted by email) should be submitted through eAssignments: https://www.assignments.soton.ac.uk/restricted/Home.aspx

Weekly Content:

Week 1

Learning Tasks	*Applied Tasks*
Using Blackboard discussion boards	*Thinking about reading sources*
Introducing yourself to your group	*Searching for sources using Library Search*
Thinking about different sources	*Planning Writing Task 1 (WT1)*

Learning objectives and weekly overview:

- Building group cohesion
- Understanding learning tools
- Assessing the strengths and limitations of a source
- Thinking about your essay topic
- An introduction to the writing criteria

Key Concepts & How to Conduct

Why This Matters ?

- Triple Helix Academic Literacy
- Critical Thinking & Student-centered
- BALEAP

Method (research approach)

- Observation of academic writing classes
- Semi-structured interview with PSP Director
- Thematic analysis

An Integrated Framework in University S for Efficacy?

- highly-ranked education
- research and knowledge exchange
- enterprise activities

Challenge: Lack outcomes from student questionnaires.
Solution: From literature review and students' interviews

Overview of My Research Design

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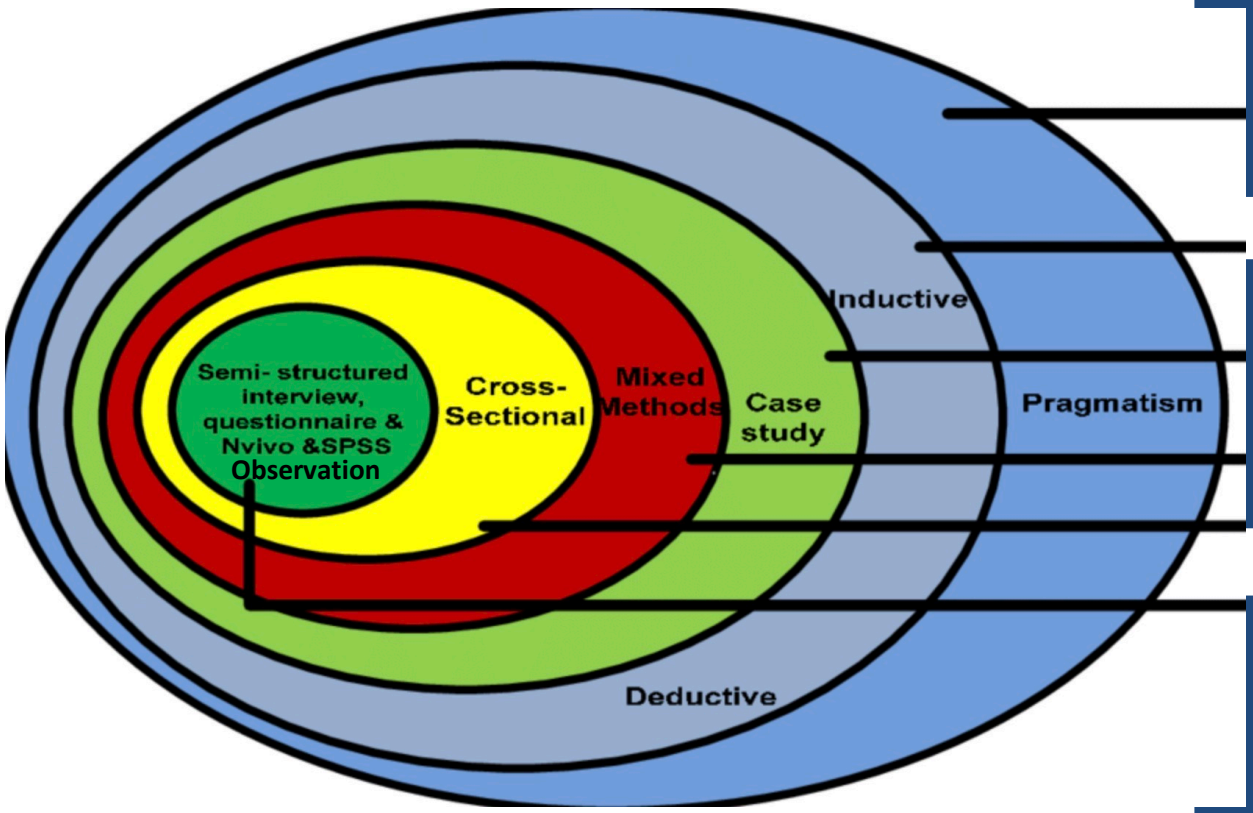


Design Type: Mixed-Methods Design

Participants: PSP students and teachers from 1 UK university (pre- and post-PSP cohorts)

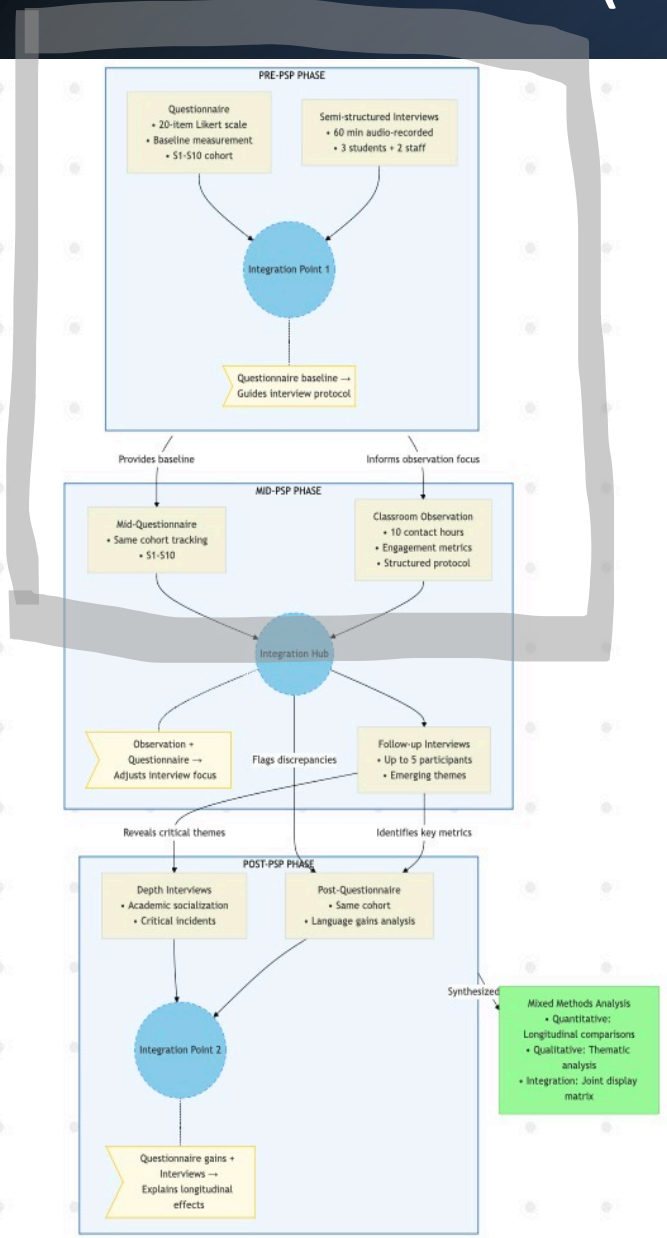
Duration: 6 weeks (online)

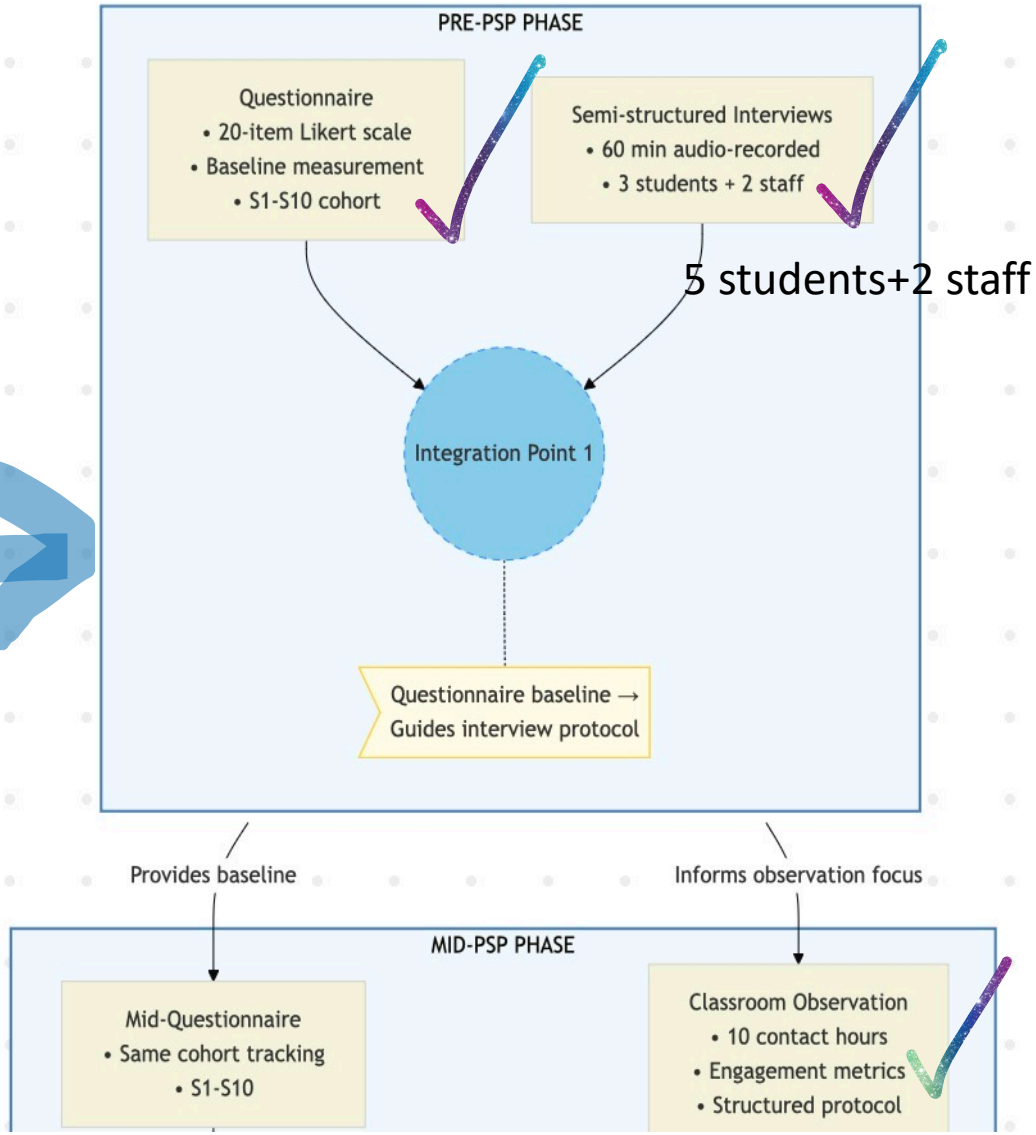
This diagram represents the 'Research Onion' by Saunders et al. which outlines my stages of developing a research methodology.
Source: ©Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill (2011)

Choosing the Right Methods （Source: ©Author’s own ）

Method	Strengths	Limitations	Enlightenment
Questionnaires （Abandoned due to low sample size）	Standardisation: Efficient collection of quantifiable data (Cohen et al., 2018). Anonymity: Reduces bias for sensitive topics. (Dörnyei, 2007)	Superficial responses: Socially acceptable answers may dominate. (Bryman,2016) Limited depth: Miss different insights. (Bryman,2016)	Use mixed open/closed questions to balance breadth and depth. Pilot-test questions to identify ambiguous phrasing.
Semi-structured Interviews	Rich insights: Captures reflective experiences. Flexibility: Probes contradictions. (Silverman, 2017).	Researcher bias: Framing may steer responses. (Flick, 2018). Time-intensive: Requires significant analysis. (Flick, 2018).	Train interviewers to use neutral prompts (e.g., “Tell me more”). Triangulate with observational data to validate claims.
Classroom Observation	Authentic data: Directly documents practices. (Cohen et al., 2018). Contextual understanding: Reveals implicit challenges.	Observer effect: Participants may alter behaviour. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) Subjectivity: Interpretation depends on the researcher's judgment. (Cohen et al., 2018).	Conduct covert observations where ethical. Use predefined coding frameworks to reduce bias.

Data Collection (Pre-Mid-End PSP)





044?

Rupert Medd 16:41 翻译

RM 1400 words
Introduction
3 Paragraphs
Conclusion

Evidence of Writing

Rupert Medd 16:49 翻译

RM Understand BB
& Teams

Student Folder
Writing Task 1 WT1
Essay Title

PSP Day 2

PSP Day 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRESENTATIONS

Elements of a presentation

Task 1: Match the following descriptions of what happens at each stage of a presentation.

PRESENTATION SECTION		DESCRIPTION
Aim of your presentation		a. The speaker talks about the presentation topic in detail.
Conclusion		b. The speaker gives his / her name and welcomes the audience
Key words		c. The speaker condenses the information contained in their presentation and evaluates it and / or makes recommendations.
Main Body		d. The speaker makes it clear what is the main goal of their presentation.
Overview		e. The speaker introduces the structure of their presentation very briefly.
Summary		f. The speaker briefly reminds the audience of the structure of their presentation.
Introduce yourself		g. The speaker gives any essential vocabulary which is necessary for understanding

Day 4

Be creative in your research

Rupert Medd 16:39 翻译

RM WT 4

Resources

5-7 professional academic articles (library)

Possibly a Chapter in a book (BUT NOT the whole book!)

2-3 Journalism articles (newspapers / magazines / documentaries / reports / Instagram news outlets /

Example 2d	*There is debate over what the most effective responses to rising obesity rates are, and what areas of research should inform those responses. To what extent can research in psychology inform responses to rising rates of obesity?*
Structure 3 Claim/proposal	
	It has been **claimed/proposed** that X*. To what extent can this claim be considered true/valid/beneficial? **It would be helpful to support the first statement with a citation.*
Example 3a	*It has been claimed that hosting a major international event is beneficial to a country. To what extent can this claim be considered true?*
Example 3b	*It has been claimed that Democratic leadership approaches are more effective. To what extent can this claim be considered valid?*
Example 3c	*It has been proposed that companies should adopt CSR policies. To what extent can this proposal be considered beneficial?*
Example 3d	*Communicative language teaching has been proposed as an effective approach to developing language proficiency. To what extent can this this be considered valid across international contexts?*
Structure 4 Current/recent trend/phenomenon/development	
	There is/has been a **current/recent/trend/phenomenon/development** of X. Assess/to what extent... impact/cause] X/Y?
Example 4a	*There have been recent technological innovations in music consumption. To what extent is this likely to impact on the characteristics of music consumption in the M-pop market?*
Example 4b	*There have been recent advances in textile production. To what extent are these likely to impact on sustainability in the textile industry?*
Example 4c	*There has been a recent phenomenon of the process of increasing polarisation and divisions between political, social groups, and regions. To what extent has social media contributed to this trend?*

PSP Day 3

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Functional language for Listening/discussions - Worksheet

Match these functions to the relevant phrases:

1. Asking for opinions
2. Referring to the lecture/speaker
3. Partial agreement and countering ideas
4. Contrasting interpretations of the lecture/speaker
5. Agreeing and adding ideas
6. Giving opinions
7. Contrasting others' ideas/opinions

Phrases:

Group A

As the speaker said / highlighted ...

As we heard in the lecture ...

Page 1 of 2 177 words English (United States) Focus 100%

Day 6

AB **Amy Boliter**
This one here and on the worksheet there are a list of functions fro
to seven different functions of language in the discussion, and ther
underneath. Oh, hold on, I've got the answers on this one.

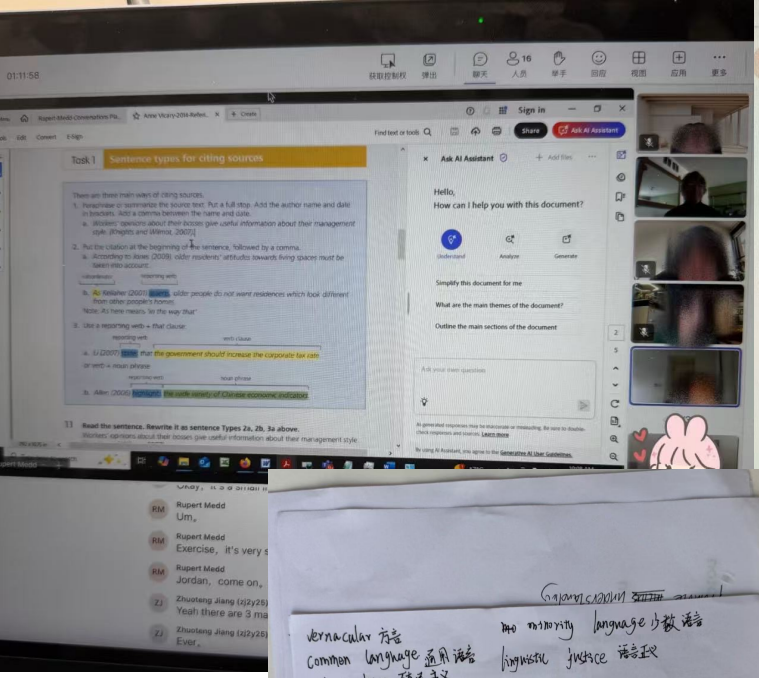
AB **Amy Boliter**
Underneath.

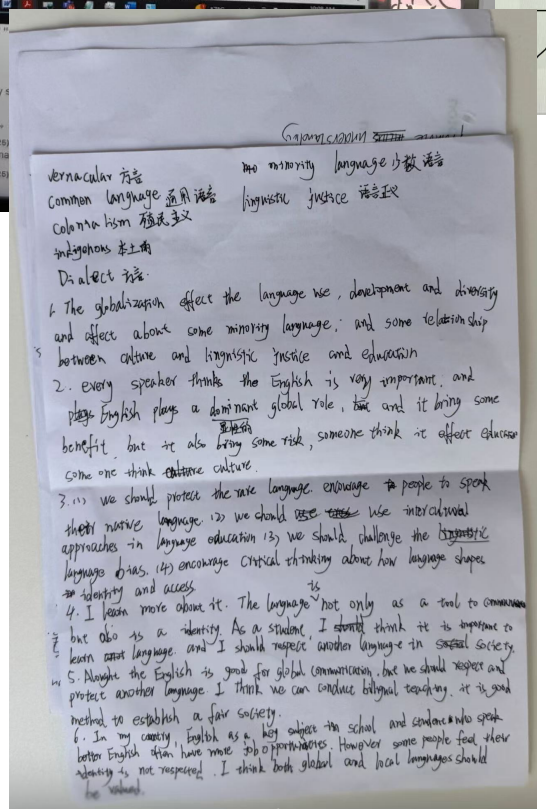
AB **Amy Boliter**
There are groups of phrases OK and you need to match the phrase
functions OK so I

Deadline for Friday is your essay title

WT 2: Extended planning of your researched writing Week 3, Monday 7 July. Ungraded. 250-300 words, 1 - 2 paragraph(s) of researched text that engages with two-three sources.

Day 7

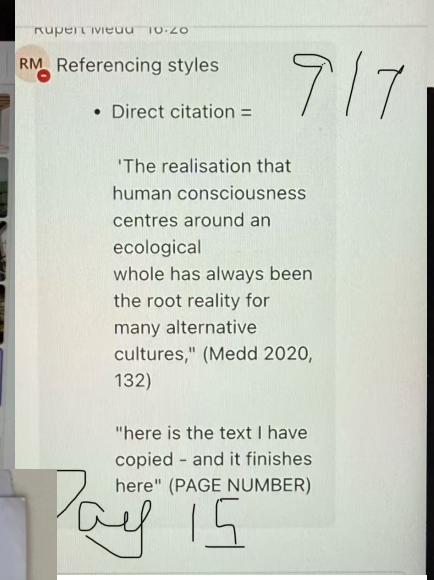


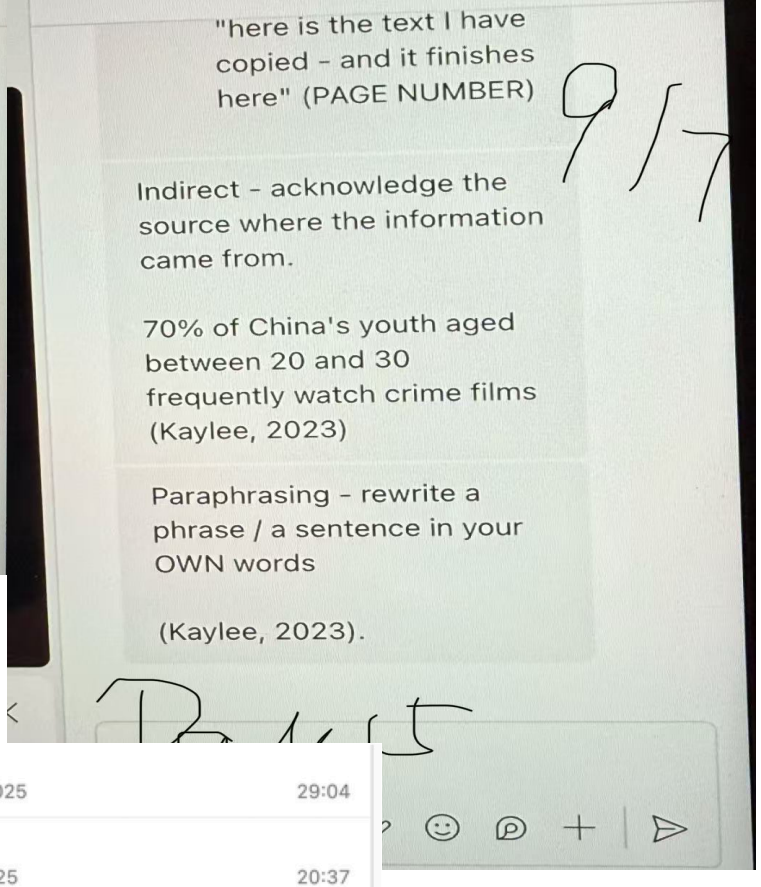


vernacular 方言
Common language 通用语言
Colonialism 殖民主义
indigenous 本土的
Dialect 方言
the minority language 少数语言
linguistic justice 语言正义

1. The globalization effect the language use, development and diversity and affect about some minority language, and some relation ship between culture and linguistic justice and education
2. every speaker thinks the English is very important, and English plays a dominant global role, and it bring some benefit, but it also bring some risk, someone think it effect education some one think culture culture.
3. (1) we should protect the rare language. encourage people to speak their native language. (2) we should use intercultural approaches in language education (3) we should challenge the linguistic language bias. (4) encourage critical thinking about how language shapes identity and access
4. I learn more about it. The language is not only as a tool to communicate but also as a identity. As a student, I think it is important to learn language. and I should respect another language in society.
5. Alought the English is good for global communication, but we should respect and protect another language. I Think we can conduct bilingual teaching. it is good method to establish a fair society.
6. In my country, English as a key subject in school and students who speak better English than have more job opportunities. However some people feel their identity is not respected. I think both global and local languages should be valued.

Student Materials for Preparing Assessment





T3	2025	29:04
T5	2025	20:37
T2	2025	21:37
T1	2025	30:20
T4	2025	45:46

Student Interviews after Assessment

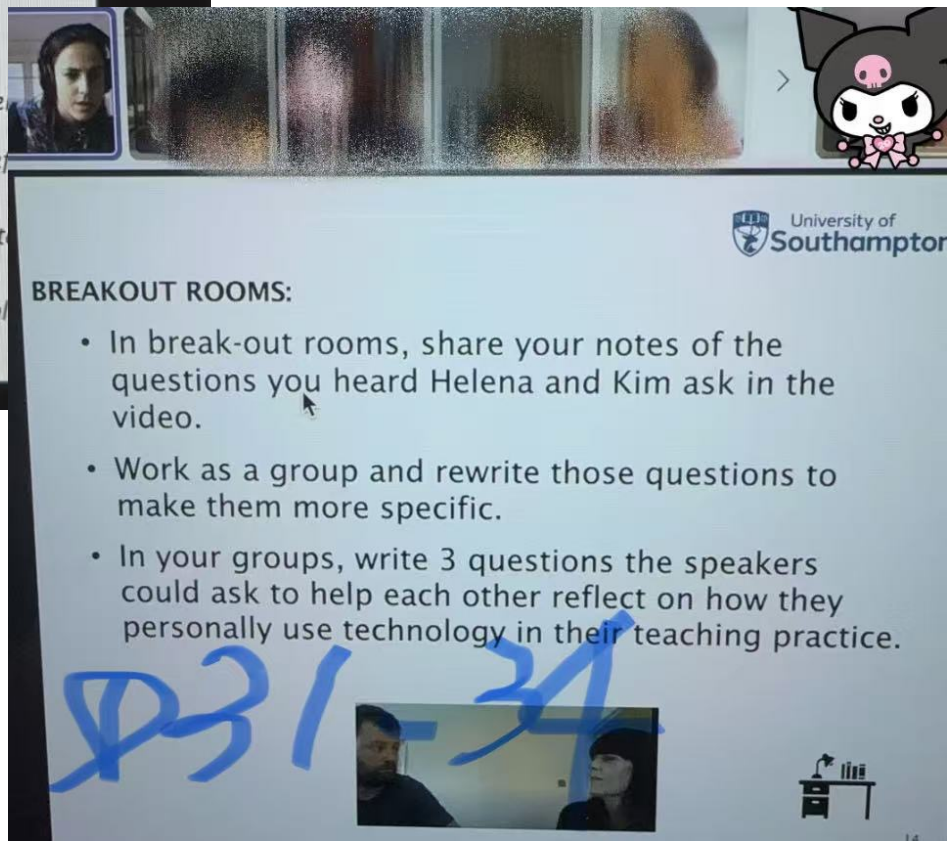
University of Southampton

What makes a question good?

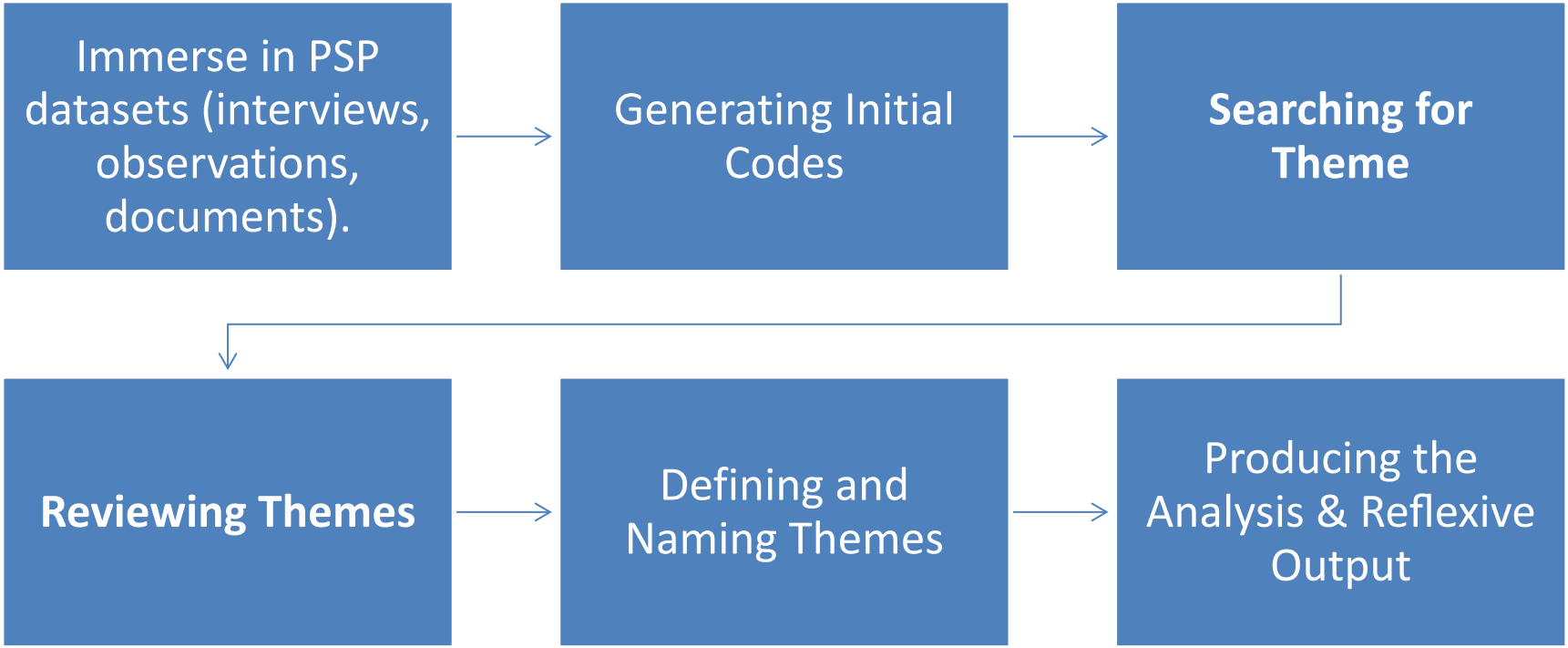
- Ask open questions starting with Why? / How?
- Ask questions about specific information mentioned to show your understanding and criticality
- Ask questions that encourage reflection and personal examples

- *The first speaker prefers the X approach to the Y approach. Which approach do you prefer and why?*
- *Do you agree with the first speaker's opinion on X? Why?*
- *How do you think you could apply approach X to your studies?*
- *How would this technique he students with time management? Would it bene all students?*
- *Can you think of a solution t this problem?*
- *Are you sure this would appl all cases?*

D31



Data Analysis



Be Reflective? Be skeptical?

Case of Week 1 Analysis: Key Findings from PSP （Observation from academic writing lesson ）

- 1. Emphasis on Structure & Rigour
- Clear templates for essays (Intro, Body, Conclusion) and presentations.
- Teaches conventional Western academic formats.
- Goal: Create a reliable framework for students.

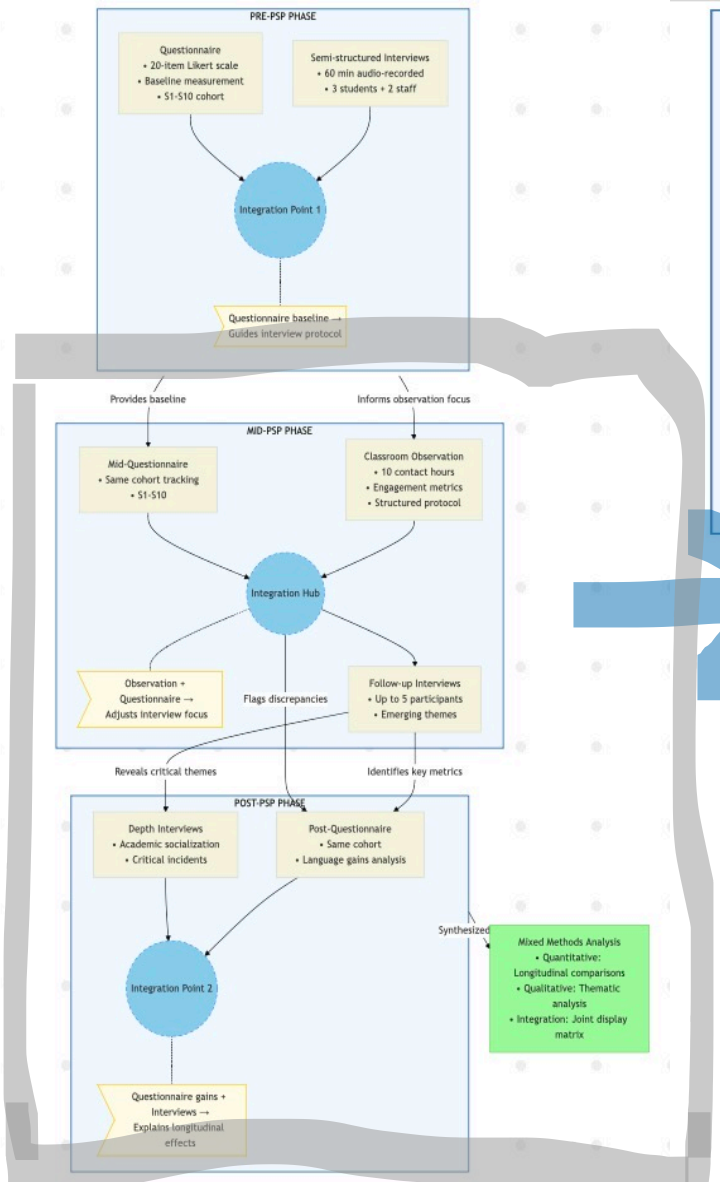
2. Cultivating Research & Critical Thinking

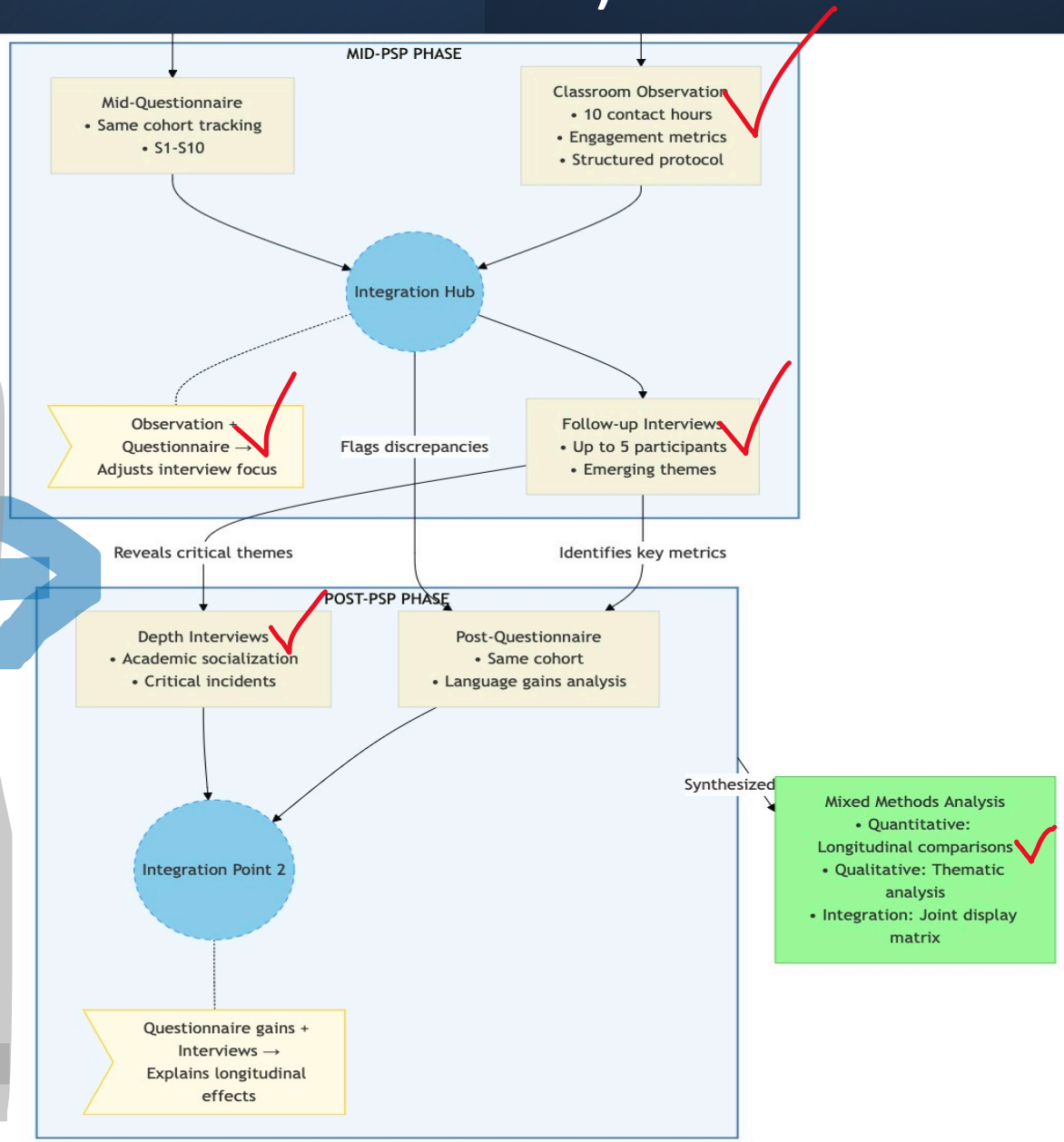
- Early integration of multiple sources (academic & journalism).
- Essay questions designed for analysis, not description (e.g., "To what extent...").
- Focus on evidence-based writing and synthesis.

- 3. Scaffolded Learning & Digital Integration
- Progressive task design (Title → Plan → Full Essay/Presentation).
- Integrates digital tools (Blackboard, Teams, WPS AI) from day one.
- Builds digital literacy for hybrid university environments.

Week 1 = **Academic Acculturation**: skills + norms + confidence for future success

Data Collection (Mid-PSP to Post-PSP)





Consent Form, etc. （Source: ©Author's own）

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CONSENT FORM (Non-target students)

Title: Language Proficiency and Academic Performance:
A Case Study on the Effectiveness of Pre - sessional Programmes at a University in the UK
Researcher name: Tao PENG
Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the participation information sheet (non-target students) 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.	

Name of participant (print name)……
Signature of participant……
Date……
Name of researcher: 2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk
Signature of researcher Date……

Invitation Letter

Project Title: Language Proficiency and Academic Performance:
A Case Study on the Effectiveness of Pre-Sessional Programmes at a University in the UK

Dear Student,
My name is Tao PENG. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the effectiveness on Pre-sessional programme (PSP). This study focuses on language proficiency and academic performance in PSP, and I would be grateful if you would help me to know more about your learning experiences during the PSP.
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, experiences, and your expectations of PSP. 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 2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk . Thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely,
Tao PENG
2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk

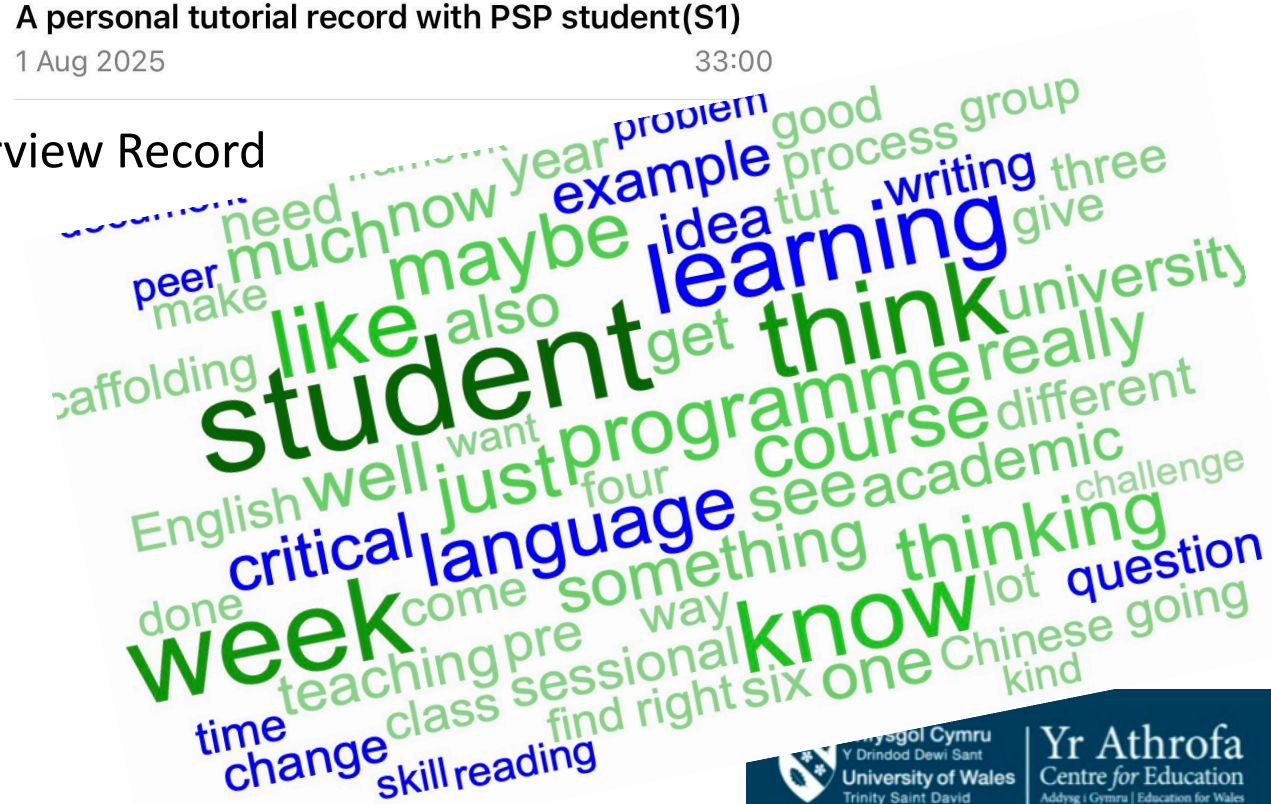
Data from Interviews with Students (Creswell, 2009)

T3	2025	29:04
T5	2025	20:37
T2	2025	21:37
T1	3, 2025	30:20
T4	2025	45:46

A personal tutorial record with PSP student(S2)
1 Aug 2025 43:39

A personal tutorial record with PSP student(S1)
1 Aug 2025 33:00

- Student's Interview Record



Readability

Automated Readability Index	3.9
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	3.3
Coleman-Liau Index	10.2
SMOG Grade	8.3
Average Grade Level	6.4
Flesch Reading Ease	87.0

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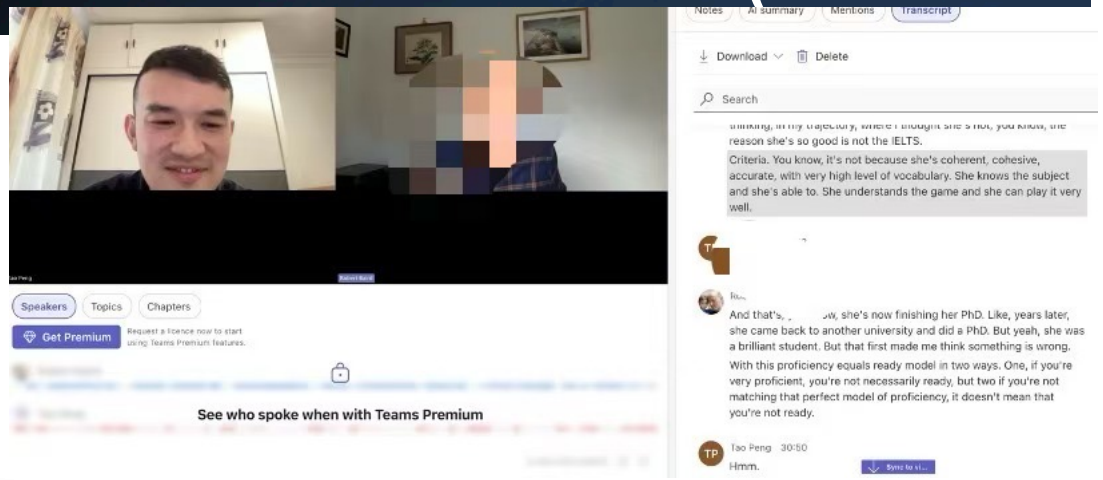
Data from Interviews with teachers (Saldaña, 2016)

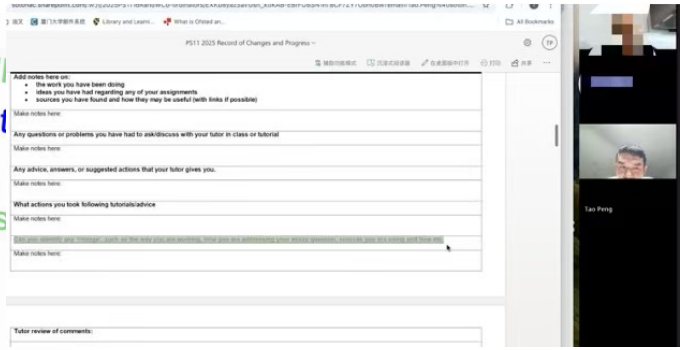


Rob's words to the PSP
1 Aug 2025

Rob's words in graduation
1 Aug 2025

Rob's suggestion for writing
1 Aug 2025

Rob talked about the academic readiness
1 Aug 2025



- © wordsift.org

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Findings from my **PSP Research**

Finding 1: Beyond Proficiency to Practice

- "I don't think pre-sessional is about improving people's language proficiency... It's more about allowing students to develop their readiness to study." – Interview with D1
- Focus: academic literacy practices, not just academic writing rules.

Finding 2: Alignment and Misalignment of Perspectives among Different Stakeholders

Finding 3: Making the Invisible Visible

- Weekly e-folders as pedagogical tools.
- Encourage reflection and dialogue.
- Foster self-regulated learning.

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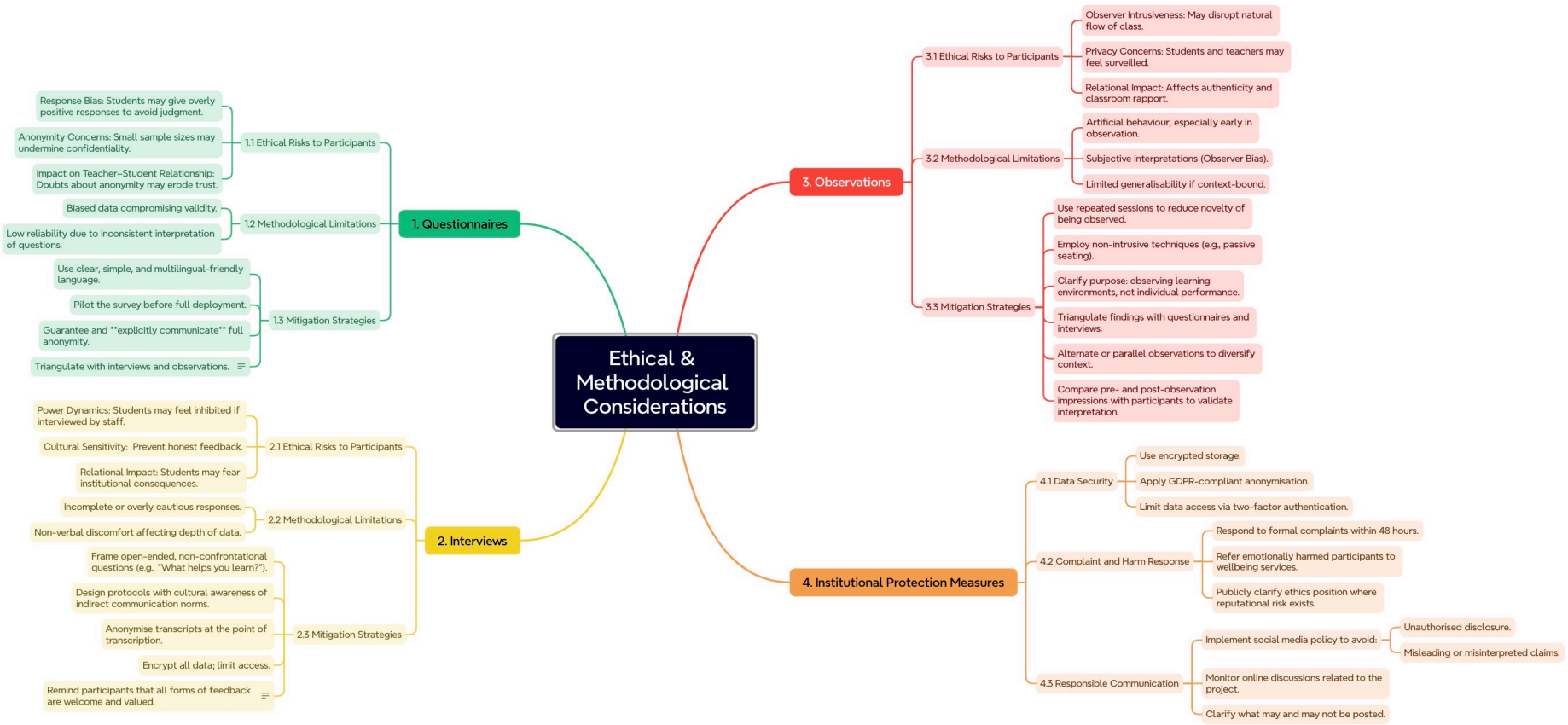
Ethical & Methodological Consideratio

（Source: ©Author’s own）

（Full explanation available in the printed version)



DATA ACCESS AND CONSENT (THORPE ET AL., 2017)

(UWTSD, 2023; BERA, 2021)

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY (HENG, 2018)

Research Timeline

（Source: ©Author’s own ）

Task	May (W3-W4)	Jun (W1-W4)	Jul (W1-W4)	Aug (W1-W4)	Sep (W1-W2)
Finalize Research Questions & Objectives					
Literature Review					
Theoretical Framework Development					
Case Study Data Collection					
Data Interpretation & Analysis					
Draft Writing (Chapters/Sections)					
Revisions & Feedback					
Final Editing & Referencing					
Submission Preparation					

Thanks to all who helped with my study

LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER RESEARCH.

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION.

2411134@STUDENT.UWTSD.AC.UK