

## ECDE7018 Research Proposal

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| PhD by Research          | PhD Practice Based       | PhD by Published Works   | Professional Doctorate (including DBA, DProf, Ed D) | MPhil by Research        | MPhil Practice Based     |
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### Proposed Research

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| Proposed Title / Question (20 / 30 words):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Language education and intercultural competence : an international framework for teaching based on the UK's successful Pre-sessional Program (PP) experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Background & Context (approx. 500 words)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>According to data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),an increasing amount of young international learners are choosing to study abroad in cultures and countries different from those in which they were born and raised, with the UK <b>hosting 14% of these students</b> (Packer, 2022) in different educational programs.In the <b>context of different educational policies</b>, careful attention must be directed towards discerning the needs of diverse student cohorts.</p> <p>Since the 1970s, educational programs with such as Pre-sessional Programs (PP), which focus on achieving <b>high standards of English language and cultural competency</b>, have been established as essential components in academic preparation ,which was first introduced into the academic research field by Higher Education Seminar held at Manchester University in April, 1978, organized by The Group for Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students (SELMOUS).This seminar highlighted the benefits of PP instruction in helping students to:</p> <p>“1. understand lectures and make notes; 2.write <b>essays</b> and perhaps ultimately a thesis; 3.read and absorb vast amounts of material; 4 <b>participate in seminars</b> and informal discussion”(The</p> |

British Council ,1978, p. 8).

This emphasis on fostering both language proficiency and intercultural competence. Notably, PP courses offered between 1972 and 1977 by the Department of Education at Manchester University serve as a representative **case study**, demonstrating the program's early impact on English for Academic Purposes(EAP).

Until 2024, online format of PP Course has allowed students to complete their studies in their own country through models such as the **Flipped Teaching (FT)**. For instance, the University of Southampton's online PP course structure and content allow students to develop various cognitive skills. In the online PP course, students engage in self-study using a range of materials; complete tasks in writing, reading, listening, and speaking; participate in live online FT course and discussion forums; collaborate with other students online; and **watch tutor videos**, which will also be assessed in a variety of ways, which include timed online tasks and ongoing coursework etc. (University of Southampton, 2024).

The **earliest** PP have evolved from in-person, academic English-focused framework, which emphasized lecture comprehension and essay writing whilst the **modern** PP integrates Flipped Teaching, enabling students to study remotely, complete diverse tasks, and engage with peers online. **This shift reflects the program's development** towards greater flexibility, cognitive skill-building, and accessible, culturally immersive learning, adapting to the changing needs of international students.

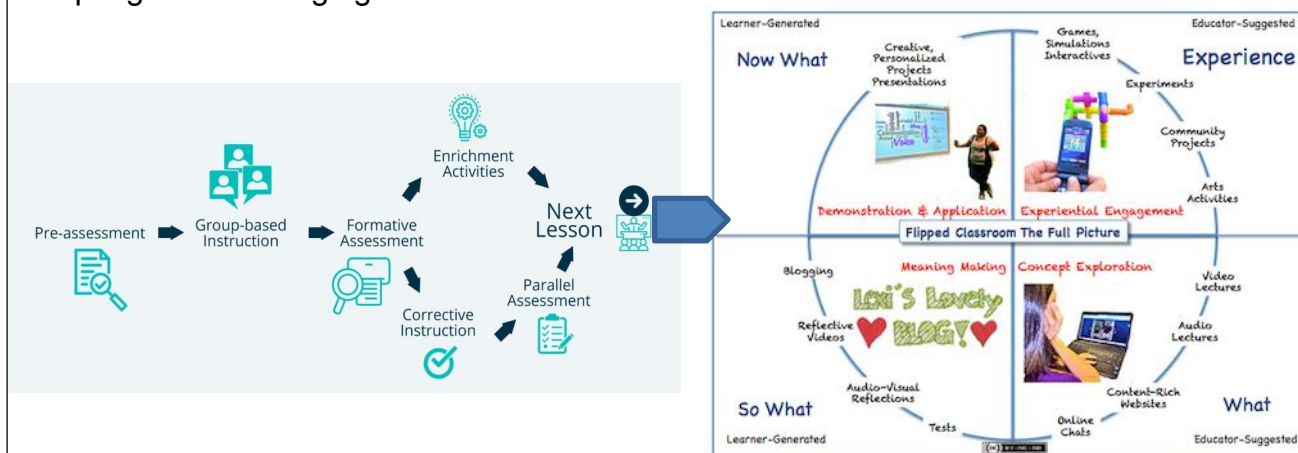


Figure1. Flipped Teaching framework base on Mastery Teaching Theory(Bloom and Krathwohl, 1984)

Furthermore, the trend of the UK students studying in China is on the rise, but it has not become mainstream. This research aims to compare and establish a framework that can serve as a reference for similar programs in China, drawing insights from the successful British Pre-sessional framework, which would be supposed to help conducting or supporting British young-foreign students, not only to visit China but also to improve language and intercultural competence when taking **Chinese language and academic readiness program** in China, such as YùK ē KǎoShì (YKKS) programs in **Tsinghua University, Peking University and so forth**, which aimed at preparing foreign students for higher education in China and bridging the gap between **different educational systems and cultures**.

Aims & Objectives (approx. 250 – 500 words)

**RQ** : How can an international framework for Language Education and Intercultural Competence based on the UK's successful PP experience operate?

This framework aims to standardize practices for teaching language and intercultural competence, using the UK's Pre-sessional Programs as a model to enhance the global educational experience.

The research can have several detailed objectives:

1. Understand the Core ones from those elements of the UK's PP framework as follows:  
(These **core elements** will be filtered for constructing the framework)

**Duration**: It varies from a few weeks to several months.

**Focus**: Academic language skills, intercultural competence, and practical experience, etc.

**Students**: Individuals who are interested in or have a great demand for linguistic and intercultural skills, including MA and PhD students, etc.

**Staff - student ratio**: 1:12 (it may vary), and there is 1 social organizer, etc.

**Facilities**: Rooms, a language laboratory, a small library of supplementary reading materials, and the use of the premises for social activities, etc.

**Setting**: University or language school environment.

**Students' needs**: For example, a survey on whether students adapt to the social environment since their arrival; feedback on whether students have practiced the language related to their specific subjects (syntax, vocabulary, style), etc.

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2. In PP course design, how are the different elements and needs balanced? It means that they influence the PP approach, which should be a combination of “**3E**” in my research.

E. g. **Evaluate** stakeholder needs;

**Explore** cultural adaptation strategies;

**Examine** balance between academic and language learning.

3. **From my experiences and my previous research on related Programs in China**, the research will conduct a comparative study between PP and similar programs in China.

|          | Pre-sessional Programs(PP)                                                                                                            | Similar Programs in China                                                                             |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Approach | Structured classes <b>focusing on cognitive skills, critical thinking</b> and intercultural competence relevant to academic contexts. | <b>Hands-on learning</b> through direct interaction with native speakers and immersion in daily life. |
| Content  | Includes training and assessment on navigating cultural differences in <b>academic settings</b> , and developing                      | <b>Real-life communication scenarios</b> , cultural activities, and                                   |

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | communication skills for a multicultural environment.                                                                                                                                                           | interactions with locals.                                                                                                                                  |
| Methods | Lectures, workshops, role-playing, and simulations to practice intercultural communication, community engagement to <b>facilitate practical intercultural communication</b> especially in academic environment. | Lectures, workshops, cultural excursions, <b>language partner programs</b> , and community engagement to facilitate practical intercultural communication. |

*Table 1. Comparison of PP and Similar Programs in China*

Comparative analysis at meso-level between PP and similar programs in China as below:

|                          | Pre-sessional Programs(PP)                                                                                                                    | Similar Programs in China                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Learning Environment     | Controlled academic setting with a structured curriculum designed to <b>transition students into university life</b> .                        | Dynamic real-world /online environment that offers unpredictable, authentic experiences enhancing language and cultural understanding. |
| Language                 | Targeted towards academic proficiency and understanding the language used in educational contexts.                                            | Broader focus on practical communication skills, fostering fluency and confidence in everyday online and offline conversations.        |
| Intercultural Competence | Offers a foundation in intercultural communication tailored to academic settings, preparing students for multicultural academic environments. | Develops intercultural competence through immersive experiences, enhancing both personal and professional intercultural skills.        |

*Table 2. Comparison of PP and Similar Programs in China (at meso-level)*

In summary, this research aims to analyze the PP Course from multiple perspectives including educational programme management, language and cultural education within historical, social, and cultural contexts. The objective is to **provide an overview of its comparison** and explore how an online FT framework could be applied if a **pilot study** of certain cases from UK's successful PP experience is conducted, focusing on the evolution of teaching forms and contents in the PP Course. Additionally, it intends to evaluate the impact of the curricula on international students by comprehensively analyzing various factors. Culturally inclusive teaching practices are crucial as they can significantly affect international students' sense of academic success.

In the research, the literature review will be analyzed in Google scholar and other literature search engines using *EAP Pre-sessional English course, Language and Intercultural competence, Flipped Teaching, Visit to China Program, YKKS*, etc. as keywords, trying to critically identify

research gaps in the literature, particularly concerning the experiences of international students who are in EAP Pre-sessional Course in the UK.

As the person in charge of related Programs in university, the researcher would explore existing studies on :

- Macro-level: Language education and Language education policy (levels, types, fields/approach, content, method)
- Meso-level: Environment, Language and intercultural competence;
- Micro-level :Case study of Flipped Teaching(FL) in Pre-sessional Program(PP).

✓ Ethical Approval

The research will prepare and submit an application for ethical approval, detailing the research design, participant recruitment strategies, and measures to ensure confidentiality and informed consent. After that, it is available to collect enough research data from randomly selected samples from a great “student” population of the UK pre-sessional program and methodology would be proposed as below.

✓ Empirical Research

The researcher will select a sufficient sample of PP students in 2025 and 2026 at University of Southampton and other universities to carry out a questionnaire survey to address the questions (E.g. whether teachers' teaching enhances Language and Intercultural Competence for the same individual), using the same questionnaire, and to conduct a research **tracking in the two phases** , before the PP Course and in the end of the PP Course, respectively and **the results will be analyzed by quantitative tools** . It is expected that more than 100 questionnaires will be distributed.

As Hudson(2022) conducted small-scale qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews with six PP practitioners who were involved in designing and delivering online PP courses during the pandemic, **in my research, a representative samples** of 10-20 individuals will be selected from the 100 statistical samples for **individual or focus group interviews**, results will be analyzed by **NVivo qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)and so forth**.

If going further, the study will also envisages a group research of students in offline EAP Pre-sessional English Course and online EAP Pre-sessional English Course, provided that the sample is adequate,also in the context of Mixed Methodology Research.

✓ Mixed Methodology Research

When Paula(2021) compares **traditional versus flipped approaches in different PPs** with Mixed Methods Research (MMR) ,she delves deeper into the pedagogical and motivational aspects of FT, examining how the approach affects students' learning experiences and teachers' roles, which helps to fill this gap by focusing on student and teacher's experiences within the PP framework.

Based on **previous study from her and others (as Reference in Introductory Bibliography shows)**, in my research, detailed statistical data and thematic insights will be provided ,which also utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather perceptions from students and teachers, such as **case study, regression analysis** etc., offering a comprehensive view of the flipped teaching framework's impact on PP instruction.

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