



# 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).

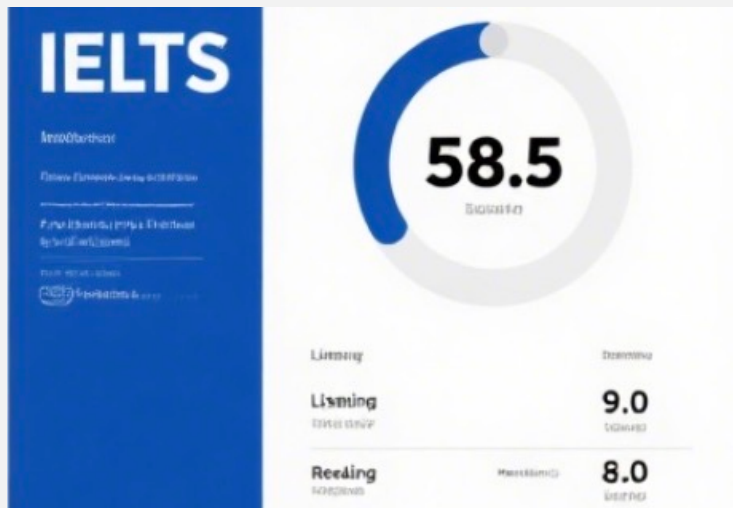
# The Hook & The Question

- **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?



Source: ©Two stories told by D1



# 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  $\neq$  actual performance outcome (Elyazidi, 2023); Teachers' Perceptions: Cultural differences in expectations (Heng, 2018)

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

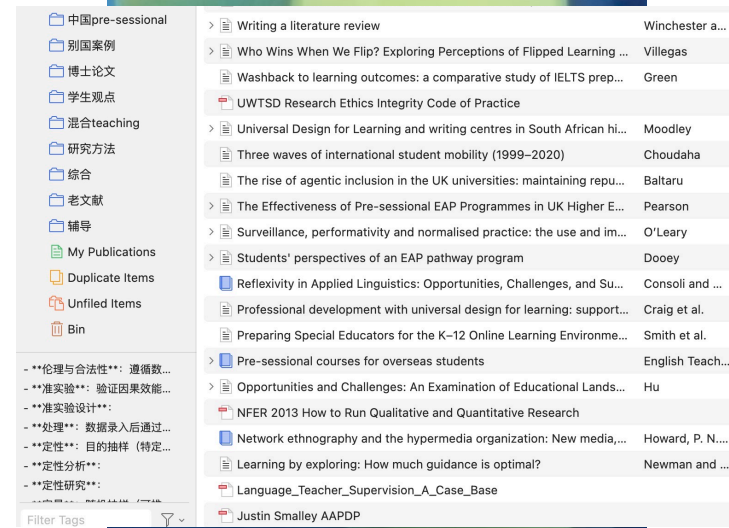


Figure 1: Journals and that I read  
Source: ©Author's own by Zotero

# 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.)

• Green (2007)

Atherton (2006)

- 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Meet their teaching team</li><li>✓ Gain an overview of the content of the listening and speaking course and assessments</li><li>✓ Understand the purpose of a presentation</li><li>✓ Understand the basic structure of academic presentations</li><li>✓ Understand the need for clear signposting / transition language in presentations and be able to use some basic signposts</li><li>✓ Understand the speaking assessment criteria</li><li>✓ Learn how to use Flipgrid, a video creation application</li></ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Learning Tasks: First Lesson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Learning tasks: Second Lesson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome: meeting the tutor and other students</li><li>• Becoming familiar with academic presentations: an introduction with Q and A</li><li>• Introduction to learning platforms and Flipgrid</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation introduction and overview</li><li>• The basic structure of a presentation</li><li>• Using transition &amp; signalling language to reinforce structure</li><li>• An introduction to the presentation criteria</li></ul> |

## 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



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# 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.

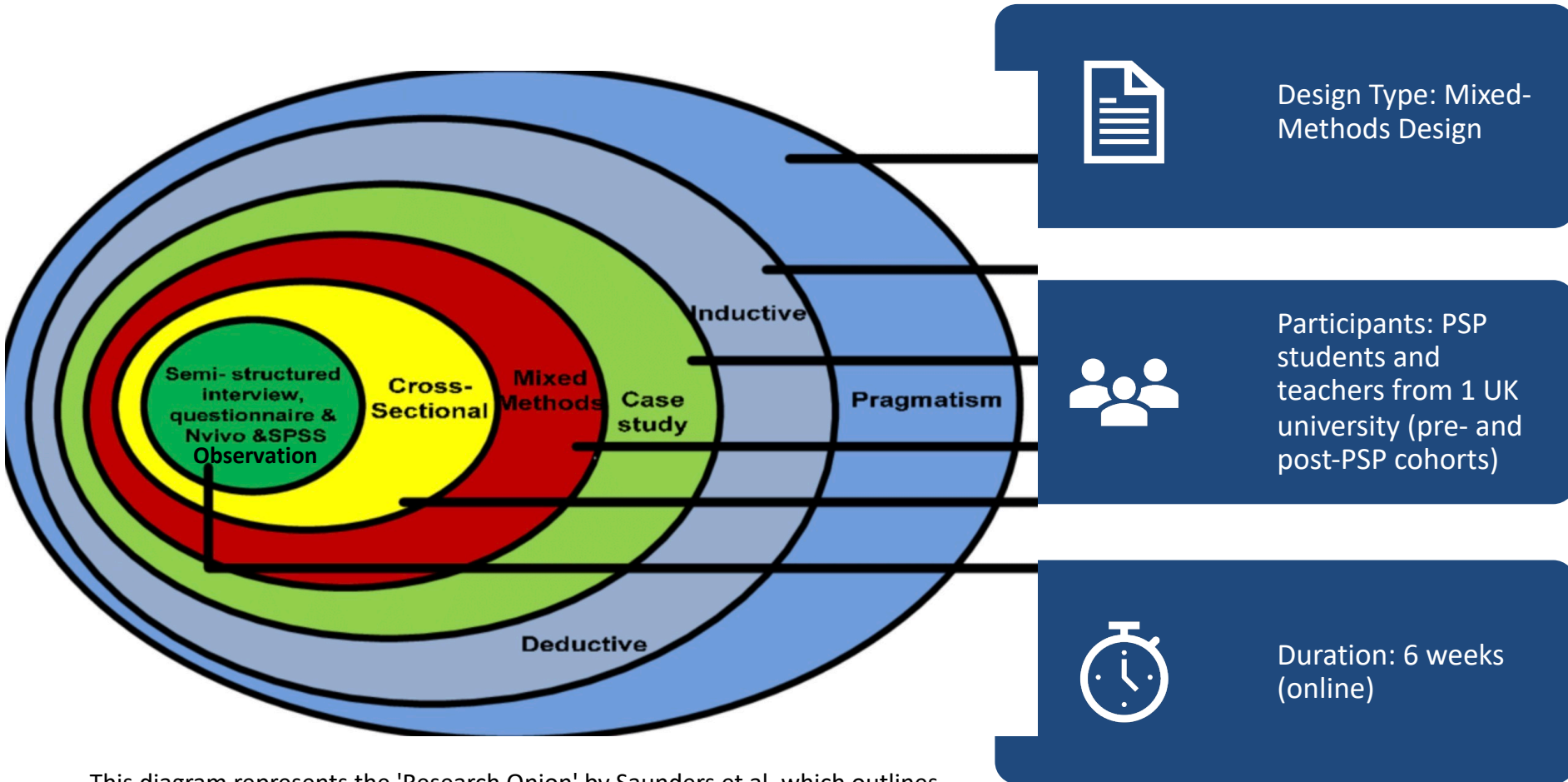
**Solution: From literature review and students' interviews**

# Overview of My Research Design



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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 )

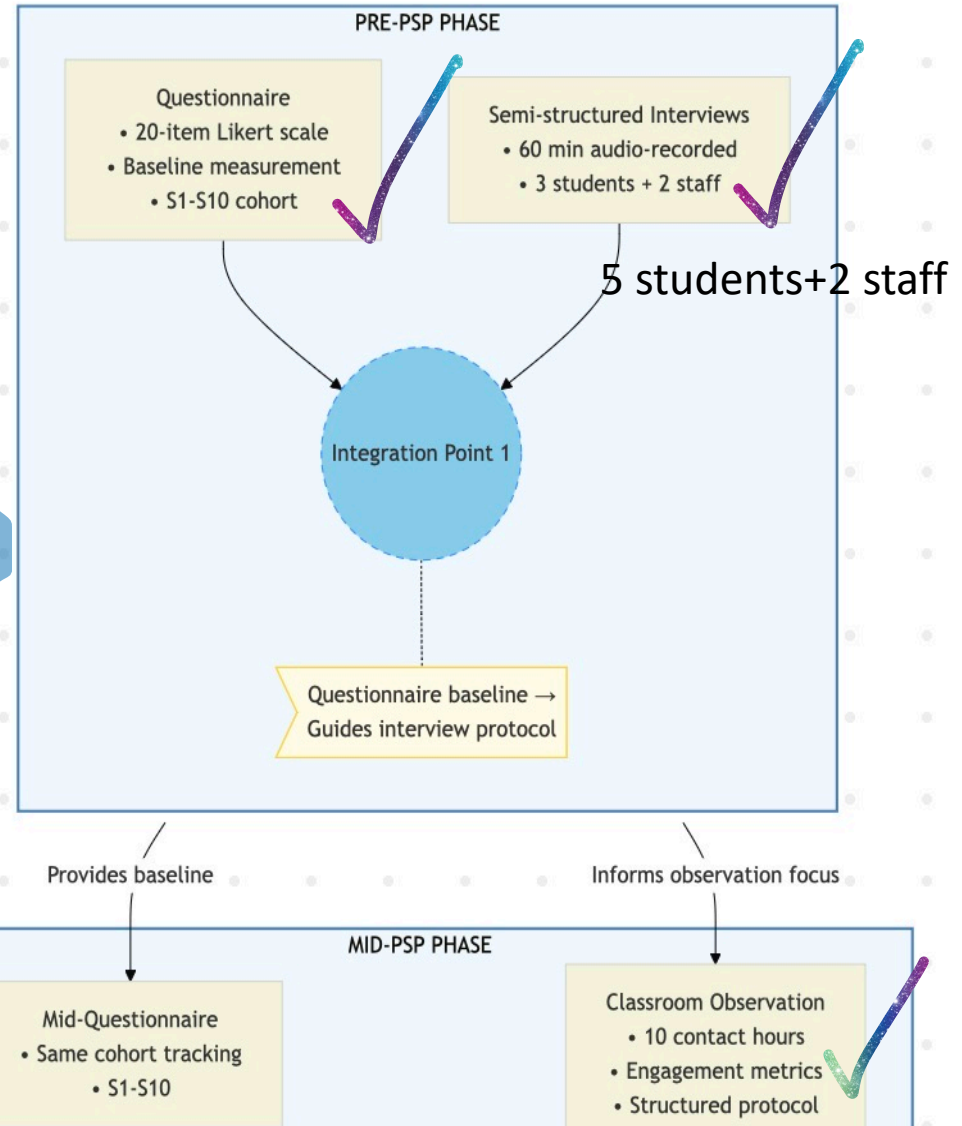
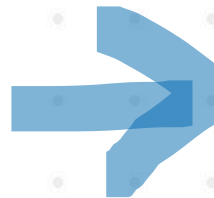
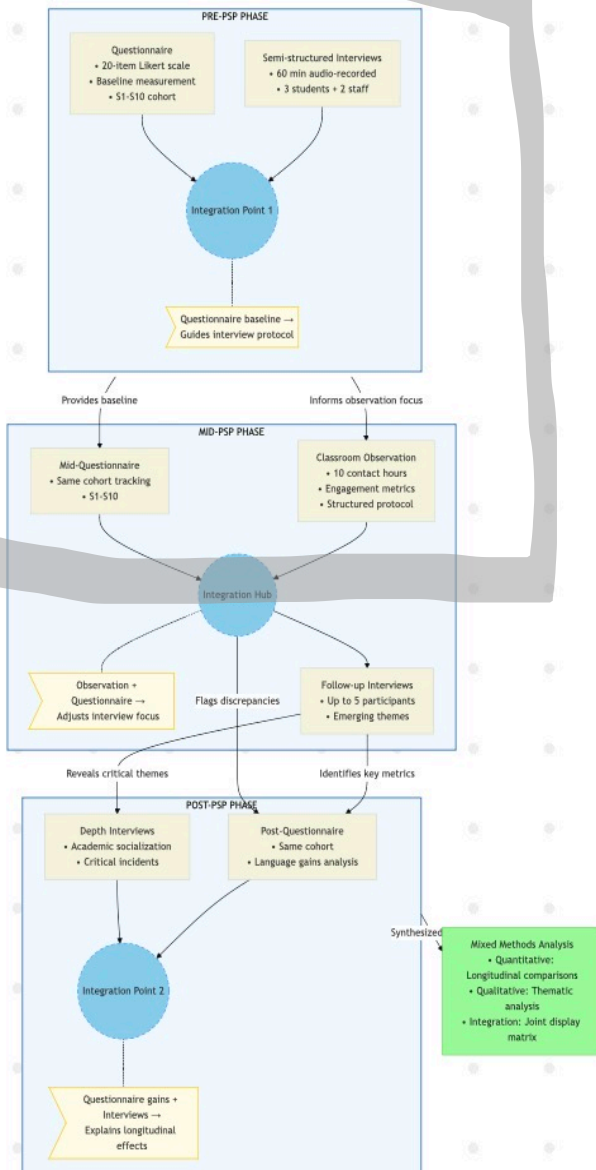
| Method                                               | Strengths                                                                                                                                         | Limitations                                                                                    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

# Data Collection (Pre-Mid-End PSP)



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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

键入消息

PSP Day 2

**PSP** AN INTRODUCTION TO PRESENTATIONS **Day 2**

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                                        |

Be creative in your research

Rupert Medd 16:39 翻译

RM WT 4

**Day 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 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 popularity of increasing polarisation and division between different social groups, and regions. To what extent has social media contributed to this trend?

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Functional language for Listening/discussions - Worksheet

Match these functions to the relevant phrases:

- Asking for opinions
- Referring to the lecture/speaker
- Partial agreement and countering ideas
- Contrasting interpretations of the lecture/speaker
- Agreeing and adding ideas
- Giving opinions
- 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)

AB Amy Boliter

This one here and on the worksheet there are a list of functions from to seven different functions of language in the discussion, and then underneath. Oh, hold on, I've got the answers on this one.

AB Amy Boliter

Underneath.

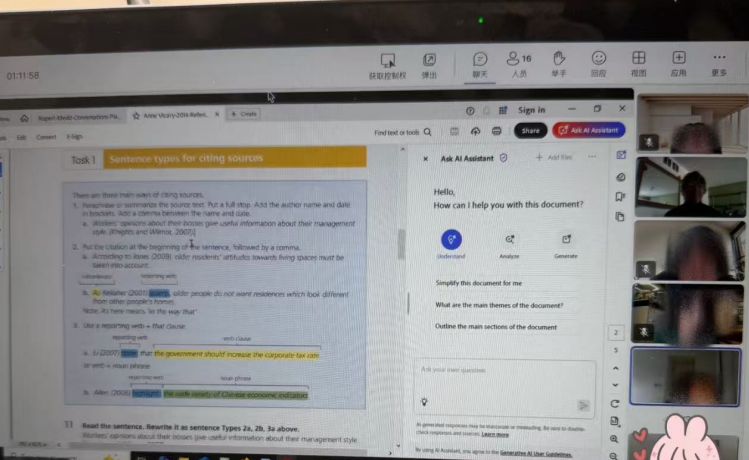
AB Amy Boliter

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

DL

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.



Rupert Medd - 10:20

RM Referencing styles

7/7

- Direct citation =

'The realisation that human consciousness centres around an ecological whole has always been the root reality for many alternative cultures,' (Medd 2020, 132)

"here is the text I have copied - and it finishes here" (PAGE NUMBER)

Page 15

"here is the text I have copied - and it finishes here" (PAGE NUMBER)

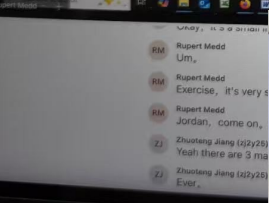
9/7

Indirect - acknowledge the source where the information came from.

70% of China's youth aged between 20 and 30 frequently watch crime films (Kaylee, 2023)

Paraphrasing - rewrite a phrase / a sentence in your OWN words

(Kaylee, 2023).



Glossary

vernacular language 方言  
common language 通用语言  
colloquialism 俚语  
indigenous 本土  
Dialect 方言

1. The globalization effect the language use, development and diversity and effect about some minority language; and some relationship between culture and linguistic justice and education

2. Every speaker thinks the English is very important, and plays English plays a dominant global role, but and it bring some benefit, but it also bring some risk, someone think it effect education some one think 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 not only as a tool to communicate but also is a identity. As a student, I should think it is important to learn other language and I should respect another language in social society.

5. Although the English is good for global communication, but we should respect and protect another language. I think we can reduce cultural 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 opportunities. However some people feel their identity is not respected. I think both global and local languages should be valued.

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

## Student Interviews after Assessment

## Student Materials for Preparing Assessment

### 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

31

- 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 help students with time management? Would it benefit all students?
- Can you think of a solution to this problem?
- Are you sure this would apply in all cases?



### BREAKOUT ROOMS:

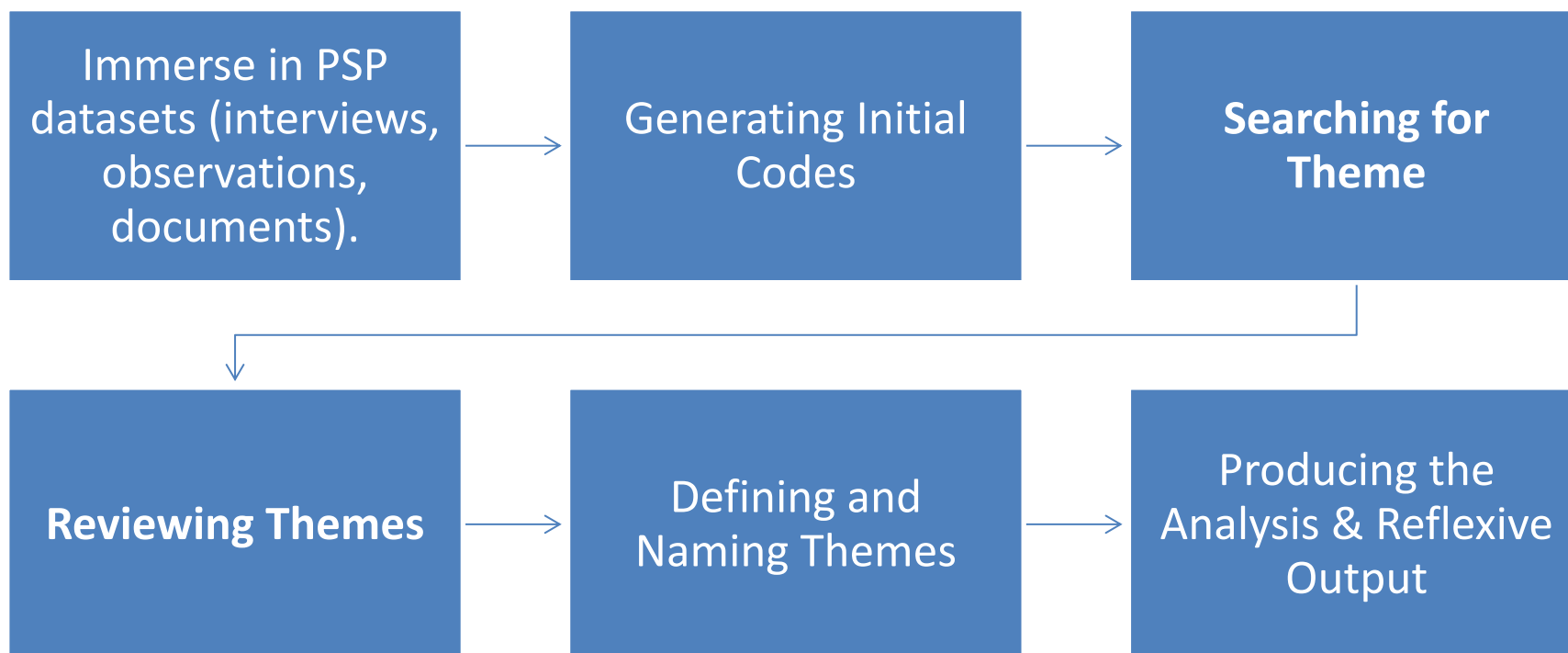
- In break-out rooms, share your notes of the questions you heard Helena and Kim ask in the video.
- Work as a group and rewrite those questions to make them more specific.
- In your groups, write 3 questions the speakers could ask to help each other reflect on how they personally use technology in their teaching practice.

31-34





# Data Analysis



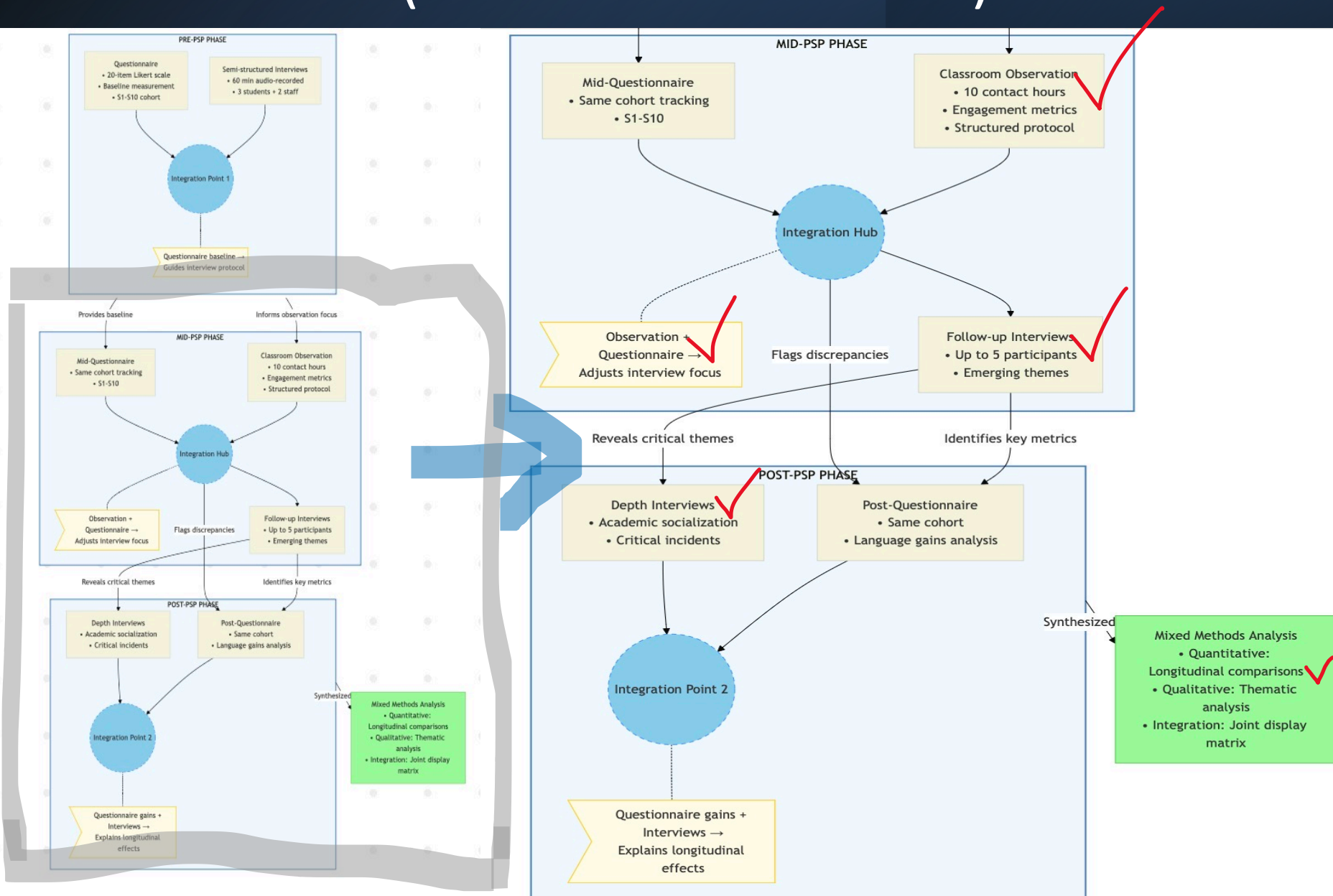
**Be Reflective? Be skeptical?**

# 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 )

## 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 <b>classroom observation</b> 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 <b>researcher' s observation and written field notes</b> 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](mailto: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](mailto:2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk) . Thank you very much.

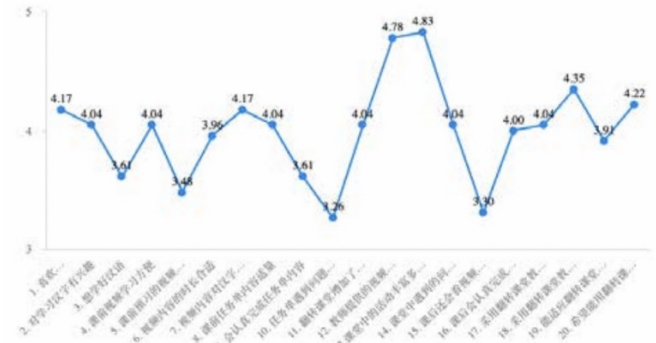
Yours Sincerely,  
Tao PENG  
[2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk](mailto:2411134@student.uswtd.ac.uk)

# Data from Interviews and Questionnaires with Students with the guide (Creswell, 2009)

|    |       |
|----|-------|
| T3 | 29:04 |
| T5 | 20:37 |
| T2 | 21:37 |
| T1 | 30:20 |
| T4 | 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



## Data of Student's Interview and Questionnaire

### 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 |

student learning think week language programme really think know question

like maybe idea tut writing three

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done come something thinking

teaching pre way

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change find right six one Chinese going

skill reading

1 Aug 2025 

1 Aug 2025 

1 Aug 2025

1 Aug 2025 



- © wordsift.org

# 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**

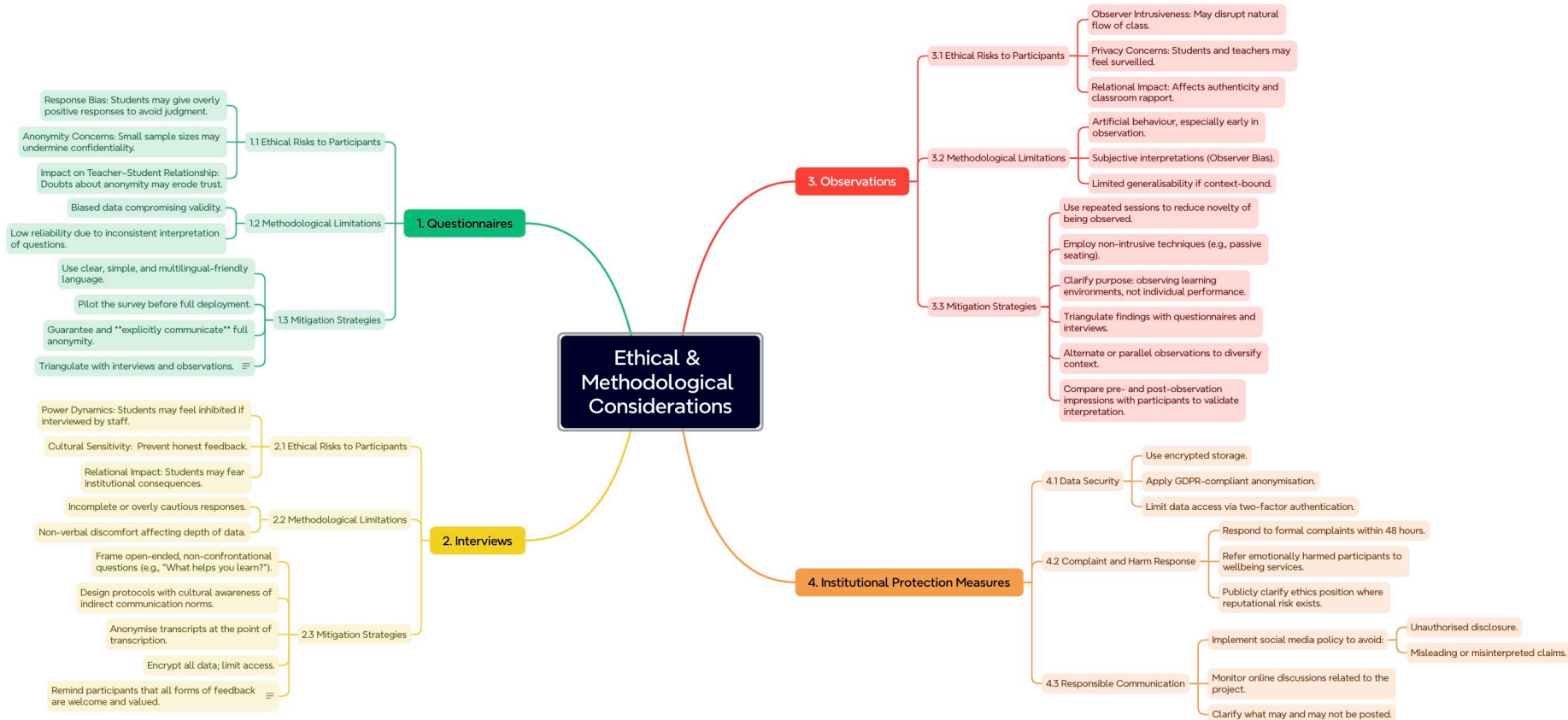
## Finding 3: Making the Invisible Visible

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

# Ethical & Methodological Consideration

(Source: ©Author's own)

(Full explanation available in the printed version)



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



(UWTS, 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                        | ■<br>■      | ■<br>■      | ■<br>■      | ■<br>■      | ■           |
| Theoretical Framework Development        | ■<br>■      | ■           |             |             |             |
| Data Interpretation & Analysis           |             |             | ■<br>■      | ■<br>■      |             |
| Draft Writing (Chapters/Sections)        |             |             | ■           | ■<br>■      | ■           |
| Revisions & Feedback                     |             |             |             | ■<br>■      | ■           |
| Final Editing & Referencing              |             |             |             |             | ■           |
| Submission Preparation                   |             |             |             |             | ■           |

# Thanks to all who helped with my study (Please See References in the Report)



LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER  
RESEARCH.



FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME FOR  
FURTHER DISCUSSION.



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