Students' Voices Becoming: Feedback Dialogues in Intercultural Doctoral Supervision

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Applied Linguistics and Doctoral Education),
The University of Auckland
New Zealand
2017

Abstract

In this study I draw on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to explore feedback dialogues in the context of intercultural doctoral supervision. The participants are six Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors in a New Zealand research university. Composed of four phases, this mixed-method research offers insights into the intercultural feedback dialogues from perspectives of two research paradigms (postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and constructivist-oriented pragmatism), two disciplines (applied linguistics and doctoral education) and two kinds of dialogues (external and internal). It is a study of feedback, but moves beyond the feedback to the wider context within which feedback is provided and responded to.

In phase 1, I investigate the external feedback dialogues from the research paradigm of postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and mostly from the perspectives of applied linguistics. This study commenced with an analysis of supervisors' written feedback on the first draft of the students' PhD proposals and the students' feedback responses as reflected in the second draft. The findings reveal the non-Chinese supervisors' preferences when providing written feedback in relation to the feedback focus and linguistic formulations, as well as the Chinese international doctoral students' inclinations when responding to the feedback.

In phase 2 I extend the analysis by examining the students' self-reasoning about their feedback responses through semi-structured interviews. The findings suggest that the students' preference for feedback provision differs from their supervisors' feedback practice to some extent. These differences, together with the students' perceptions of feedback focus and formulations, affect the students' feedback responses.

In phase 3, the research paradigm shifts to constructivist-oriented pragmatism. Within this paradigm, I investigate the internal feedback dialogues, through which the students' feedback responses come into being. Insights gained through analysing the same interview data as in phase 2 indicate that the students' feedback responses are the result of a series of complex inner dialogues made by the students.

The research focus returns to the external dialogues in phase 4, in which I trace the developmental trajectory of the transformative voices identified in the students'

feedback responses from perspectives of intercultural doctoral supervision. The students were interviewed a second time and the findings show similarities and divergences among the students regarding the development of the transformative voices in their feedback responses. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of how the voices have developed, one of the six students was interviewed a third time to form a longitudinal case study in which I holistically analysed the four-phase data of this student. The findings from that single case study suggest that the supervisors' personal qualities and cultural recognition, the student's progressive academic expertise, as well as role modelling of peers, all play a part in facilitating the student's assimilation of alien voices, while renovating her culturally enrooted voice.

All these findings lead to a conclusion that feedback works through dialogical relationships among the feedback providers, the recipients and possible others: all the involved speaking subjects communicate the information of students' learning gaps and strategies to fill the gaps through feedback dialogues; more importantly, through feedback dialogues they negotiate their cultural embedded ideologies and perceptions of the 'gaps' and 'strategies', of being 'students' and 'supervisors', and their epistemologies of knowledge construction.

Acknowledgements

The completion of my PhD is a collective work, a result of enormous commitment from those who have sat alongside me and backed me up in this four-year journey: my supervisors, colleagues and friends, and my dear family.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the best supervision team in the world: Associate Professor Barbara Grant, Professor Lawrence Jun Zhang and Dr Molly Mullen. Their collective wisdom and academic experience have guided me in a complementary way and contributed substantially to the completion of this piece of scholarship and to the formation of an emerging researcher. Not only have they offered academic support, they have also demonstrated, in person, the integrity of being an academic, a supervisor and a social human being. I feel so blessed to have them as my supervisors.

I would also like to express my special thanks to my participants: the supervisors and the doctoral students. Their generous participation has made this piece of work possible.

I would like to thank the colleagues and friends in the Doctoral Group and Writing Group for their valuable advice and ideas about my research project and my writings.

I am grateful for the joint scholarship from the Chinese Scholarship Council and the University of Auckland. This financial support has provided relief from the great burden of living and studying in a foreign country.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family: my mother in heaven, 严光惠 (Guanghui Yan), my father 徐东海 (Donghai Xu), my husband 朱向宇 (Xiangyu Zhu) and my four-year-old daughter 朱柯奕 (Keyi Zhu). Without my parents and their love and care, there would be no me. Without my husband's support, I could not have come to New Zealand to pursue doctoral study. My daughter, who brings me the most happiness, is also the cause of my feelings of guilt, because in studying towards my PhD I have not been able to be with her in the same way that most mothers can, and I have missed so much of her growth. They have all walked with me through this PhD journey.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

While this is officially the first chapter of my thesis, it was the last to be finished and it has been rewritten several times. Being the mother and having spent almost four years delivering this baby thesis, I feel that I need to say something in addition to the usual introduction to the study. It is a process with constant struggle, pain, hesitation, satisfaction, joy, excitement and other inexpressible feelings interwoven, which result in enormous hair loss. By thinking hard (and, therefore, losing more hair) I finally decided to present my overall doctoral experience by condensing it through the three realms of Zen contemplation from Master Qingyuan Weixin (Pu, 1984):

In the early stage, I saw mountains as mountains, rivers as rivers;

In the mid stage, I saw mountains not as mountains, rivers not as rivers;

In the late stage, I saw mountains as mountains, rivers as rivers.

In the first year of the doctoral candidature, I saw feedback as feedback and supervision as supervision. These were the subjects to be explored. When I started to collect and analyse the data, I saw feedback not as feedback, supervision not as supervision. They were blurred and I was confused, hesitant and lost. Then I realised that feedback and supervision can be lots of things, such as relationships, representations or dialogues, depending on the aspect being investigated and the researcher's perspective of the investigation. With this consciousness developed, I carefully refined the aspects and perspectives of exploration in a later stage, which I will present in this thesis. Feedback and supervision then became comparatively concrete and clear again. The three realms portray my intellectual journey of knowing, from the surface (blindly confident and oversimplifying), to its entangled and complex nature (submerged, lost and suffocated), to grabbing certain elements of its nature (starting to breathe again). The three realms also witness my journey of philosophic transition from postpositivism to pragmatism with a postpositivist focus and on to pragmatism with a constructivist focus. In this thesis, you will see my experience of the three realms and how I survived particularly through the second one.

1.1. Researching feedback dialogues in intercultural supervision

Intercultural doctoral supervision is a complex and ambiguous area, and this research addresses the important element of written feedback and its role in this delicate process. In what follows, I use Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism to explore the feedback interactions between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors within and beyond the feedback context. This study involves six Chinese international doctoral students who are supervised by non-Chinese supervisor(s) at a New Zealand university. The data include supervisors' written feedback on the first draft of their PhD proposals, the students' feedback responses reflected in revision, and up to three interviews with these students.

I explore feedback dialogues in intercultural supervision externally and internally from multiple perspectives. The text analysis of supervisors' written feedback and students' feedback responses reveals the external feedback dialogues. Moreover, this study strives to look into the reasons for students' feedback responses, which comprise both internal and external feedback dialogues. Investigating the 'reasons' involves examining students' self-reasoning for their responses, and how the responses come into being ('the becoming of the students' voices') as a result of multi-layered interactions.

I examine the becoming of the students' voices in multi-layered dialogues from two aspects. One aspect I examine is the manifestation of the becoming of the voices materialised in the students' feedback responses. These responses are generated when the students interact with others and others' voices which are participating in internal feedback dialogues. The other aspect I examine is the way in which students assimilate the prominent voices identified in the feedback responses and renovate their culturally embedded voices in accumulative dialogues.

This study resides in my shift of research paradigms from pragmatism with a postpositivist orientation to pragmatism with a constructivist orientation. This transition is reflected in the research design and research methods. I employ both inductive and deductive research methods, meaning that the data is examined and interpreted through the main constructs of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and through thematic analysis.

In the remainder of this chapter I will display the territory of my study by exhibiting the development of the main components and their significance for the research. The

research questions and a discussion of the significance of the overall study will follow. This chapter will end with an overview of the thesis chapters.

1.2. Territory of the study and emergence of the research questions

This study develops from my personal experiences of, and interest in, the feedback interactions between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors. The research questions and design further take shape through my explorations into the becoming of the students' voices, as the data analysis proceeds to raise new questions of interest to me.

1.2.1 Why Chinese international doctoral students?

This study is of substantial importance in terms of addressing the dilemmas and needs of this particular group of students: Chinese international doctoral students studying overseas. The New Zealand government and universities take all possible measures to attract international students for financial and strategic development reasons (Ministry of Education, 2015; University of Auckland, 2012). Currently, students of Chinese origin account for the majority of international students and their number is increasing (University of Auckland, 2015). However, diversities in culture and language bring challenges to lecturers/supervisors and international students alike. International students, especially those from China, encounter difficulties in academic enculturation due to their 'foreignness': different, sometimes contradictory research and academic traditions, such as a different ontology and epistemology regarding knowledge construction, a different learning approach and a different conception of supervisory relationship (Biggs, 1996; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999; Stephens, 1997; Wang, 2010).

When compared with students with other levels of study, international doctoral students are more likely to be caught in a quandary between what they bring from their former education experience in their home country and what is expected in the host country, as suggested by Wisker (2012). The reasons are that doctoral students receive more individualised teaching within supervision (McWilliam & Palmer, 1995), interact with supervisors much more frequently and often are required to be more independent than other types of students (Wisker, 2012). A range of studies report negative experiences, such as dissatisfaction, held by international postgraduate students (e.g., Ballard &

Clanchy, 1984; Ginsberg, 1992; Wang & Li, 2011). As a Chinese international doctoral student, I have an in-depth sense of the struggles, and I have witnessed the struggles that some of my peers have experienced in academic socialisation in a New Zealand university.

These differences or 'foreignness', however, can also be productive to both students and supervisors with regard to mutual learning (Grant & Manathunga, 2011; Manathunga, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014; Singh, 2009; Singh & Meng, 2013; Wisker, 2012). The question is how to make the most of the differences. Another issue is that although there is an increase of studies in intercultural doctoral supervision (e.g., Barker, 2011; Manathunga, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017; Trahar, 2011; Wisker, 2012), relatively little attention has been given in the literature to intercultural supervision between Chinese international doctoral students and non-Chinese supervisors. I was keen to research this topic because I am one of the many struggling Chinese international doctoral students who is inspired by ideas of co-constructing supervision and productive cultural differences.

1.2.2 Why written feedback dialogues?

I would like to clarify from the start that 'feedback' in this study refers to written feedback given by non-Chinese supervisors to their Chinese international doctoral students. There are several reasons for my choice of written feedback dialogues, or in other words, feedback interactions as the central focus of intercultural supervision. Firstly, doctoral studies in New Zealand are substantially thesis oriented, since the completion and graduation of the doctorate depends largely on writing and orally presenting the proposal and final thesis. No compulsory courses means that no course examination is required. Through writing and rewriting based on supervisors' written feedback, doctoral students participate in the argument, construct and demonstrate their subject knowledge and are gradually acculturated into the academic community to become independent scholars (Hunter & Tse, 2013; Hyland, 2009, 2013). Hence, written feedback plays a crucial role in doctoral students' learning and the quality of their supervision.

The crucial role of written feedback has also been recognised in a wide range of literature across student levels and disciplines. For instance, written feedback has been extensively researched in fields of undergraduate writing and learning of second

language acquisition (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Truscott 1996, 1999, 2007; Van Beuningen, 2010), in general higher education (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol, 2010; Price, Handley, & Millar, 2011), and in postgraduate writing and supervision (Bitchener, Basturkmen & East, 2010; East, Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2012; Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2011). As a mechanism to support learning (Taylor & Burke de Silva, 2014), feedback makes students learn faster and more effectively by giving them a sense of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve (Carless, 2006). For doctoral students, supervisors' written feedback constitutes the main form of instruction (Basturkmen, East & Bitchener, 2014; Kumar & Stracke, 2007).

Significant as feedback is in learning and teaching, research or surveys conducted in the United Kingdom (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2011), Australia (James, Krause, & Jennings, 2010) and Hong Kong (Carless, 2006) reveal students' dissatisfaction towards feedback. It is perceived to be difficult to understand and interpret (Chanock, 2000), to pose difficulties for decoding academic discourse (Carless, 2006; Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001) and to be lacking elaboration or specific advice to act on (Walker, 2009). Gulfs and dissonance also exist between the feedback provider and receiver (Adcroft, 2011). Feedback, therefore, is important but problematic.

Researchers, however, have not yet addressed some neglected but essential dimensions of written feedback to respond to the status quo, such as the increasing number of the international doctoral students. The majority of feedback research focuses on students at the undergraduate level, and there is a sparsity of relevant research on postgraduate students, especially doctoral students (Bitchener, Basturkmen, & East, 2010; Yu & Lee, 2013). Furthermore, among the feedback studies focusing on postgraduates, few incorporate feedback provision and feedback responses to explore the relationship between supervisors' feedback and students' revision.

Moreover, regarding feedback provision and responses, the students' 'foreignness' also demands attention, as I have discussed earlier. Empirical studies carried out in New Zealand find that supervisors tend to give similar feedback to L1 and L2 postgraduate students, despite these students often having different perceptions of the most helpful feedback (Bitchener, Basturkmen, & East, 2010; Basturkmen, East, & Bitchner, 2014; East, Bitchener, & Basturkmen, 2012). In addition, in feedback studies, L2

postgraduates or international L2 postgraduates are often addressed generally regardless of nationalities, as if they are homogeneous.

As a Chinese international doctoral student who receives and responds to my non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback, and as having been a university lecturer in China who once provided written feedback and witnessed unsatisfactory responses from my students, I cannot help but wonder: Do doctoral students have the same issues, expectations and responses to feedback as the undergraduates? Do Chinese international doctoral students have the same issues, expectations and responses to feedback as any other ethnic groups of doctoral students? Given the important but problematic nature of feedback, and the challenging academic enculturation that Chinese international doctoral students experience, it is worthwhile exploring feedback dialogues between this particular cohort and their non-Chinese supervisors in a given academic context.

1.2.3 Why feedback on PhD proposals?

I have examined the in-text feedback provided by non-Chinese supervisors on the first drafts of six Chinese international doctoral students' PhD proposals and the second revised drafts containing students' feedback responses. In-text feedback takes the form of comments written mostly in the margin by the supervisor (Basturkmen et al., 2014; Kumar & Stracke, 2007). Among all the doctoral writings containing supervisors' written feedback, I chose to examine feedback on PhD proposals for a reason.

The reason for focusing on feedback on PhD proposals is related to the students' 'foreignness'. In this study, I am looking into the feedback dialogues in an intercultural context in which the learning strategies and knowledge constructions from the students' home culture and the host culture may conflict with each other. Such disparities can make the early stage of doctoral candidature the most difficult, unsettled and transformative. As Golde (1998) claims, the first year of graduate school is often very stressful for new doctoral students, which can arouse negative feelings, and can even cause students to drop out. In the university in which the participants were recruited, there is a 13-month provisional period within which the PhD proposal has to be submitted. Thus, the participants were at the end of the first year or in the beginning of the second year when their drafts were collected, ranging from the 10th to 15th month of their PhD candidature. It is anticipated that generating data at this time would capture some of the complexities of the intercultural communications, as the tension between

the familiar and unfamiliar, between the West and the East, would still be relatively fresh. At the same time, the fact that feedback provision and responses happen in the first year means that participants are left with room for reflection in later interviews during the mid-stage of their doctoral journey. Finally, the proposal is the most comprehensive piece of writing (approximately 10,000 to 25,000 words) produced by the students in the first year and may carry the most substantial feedback.

Up to this point, from my review of literature, along with my research interest, I planned to explore the written feedback dialogues between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors via the following research questions:

(1) What written feedback is provided by the non-Chinese supervisors and how?
(2) How do the Chinese international doctoral students respond to the written feedback?
(3) Why do the Chinese international doctoral students respond to the written feedback in this way?

1.2.4 The becoming of the students' voices

The 'becoming of the students' voices' refers to the process of students constructing their feedback responses through ongoing interactions with others. This particular research focus was outside the initial research plan, but came to the fore in the middle stage, as a result of reading and thinking alongside Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. This reading and thinking in turn influenced my gradual transition from the postpositivist-orientated pragmatism of my earlier research framing to the constructivist-oriented pragmatism that I understand my current standpoint to be.

I use Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism as a theoretical lens with which to explore the supervisory written feedback dialogues, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3. A key reason for this theoretical move is that, in reviewing the literature, I realised that although dialogic feedback has been studied widely (e.g., Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Nicol, 2010; Price et al., 2011), few studies investigate it through a theoretical framework. Through my initial analysis using the theory of dialogism, I began to see that the concepts of 'speaking person' and 'voice' could offer a new perspective on feedback dialogues. In particular, when I thematically analysed the students' interviews on their reasoning about the feedback responses, my mind was

full of Bakhtin's terms, such as 'voice', 'speaking person', 'construct' and 'co-construct'. An idea suddenly occurred to me: could I use the theory of dialogism not only as a lens to understand feedback dialogically, but also as an analytical framework to analyse the reasoning of students' feedback responses? In this way, I could see what voices (ideologies/discourses) are being dialogised and how they interact to construct the students' feedback responses, which I now understand as the becoming of the students' 'own' voices. In addition, the interactions among the voices identified in students' feedback responses involve tensions and reconciliations. This finding leads me to explore another key concept of Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism: the assimilation of others' voices. Others' voices "determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour" (p. 342). The struggles are extremely salient, in particular, when the students' culturally embedded voice of dependence encounters the unfamiliar voice of critical thinking from others. I proceeded, therefore, to explore the becoming of the students' voices in the process of their assimilating the prominent voices of others and renovating their already ingrained voices with respect to their feedback responses. Therefore, as an alternative perspective for the purpose of comprehending students' feedback responses, the research questions were further developed to address the becoming of the students' voices under the umbrella question of 'why'. The following are the final research questions I developed around the focus of written feedback dialogue in intercultural doctoral supervision:

(1) What written feedback is provided by the non-Chinese supervisors and how?

(2) How do the Chinese international doctoral students respond to the written feedback?

(3) Why do the Chinese international doctoral students respond to the written feedback in this way?

    (3a) How do the students talk about their own reasoning about the responses?

    (3b) The becoming of the students' voices at the time of responding: how do their responses come into being as a result of their interacting with others' voices?

    (3c) The becoming of the students' voices in a process: how do the students assimilate the others' voices and renovate their enrooted voices?

These emergent research questions extend the application of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and offer a distinctive viewpoint on the experiences of doctoral students responding to their supervisors' written feedback.

1.3. Significance of the study

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. It expands the literature on feedback in both applied linguistics and doctoral education. Unlike most of the literature, which either falls into one field or the other, this study examines the feedback from these two distinct but related disciplines by drawing upon conceptual frameworks from each field. Being an inter-disciplinary study, it integrates approaches and perspectives of both disciplines, exploring the feedback interactions in a more holistic manner. It adds to the literature by embracing into one study several niche areas: the feedback interactions at doctoral level and in the context of intercultural supervision, with consideration of language, ethnicity and cultural differences. These areas have been either addressed separately in the literature to date or neglected. Moreover, this study is the first of its kind to provide a complete feedback loop/dialogue into research, relating the provision of feedback to its responses. It opens up, therefore, discussions on a full feedback circle, particularly in a milieu where dialogues and students' agency are emphasised. This study is also pertinent in the challenges, opportunities and potential of feedback dialogues by focusing on a specific and increasing cohort of students— Chinese international doctoral students.

From a practice-focused perspective, this study has pedagogical significance for both supervisors and supervisees in improving the effectiveness of feedback in learning and teaching. The analytical frameworks of feedback provision and the revision scale of students' feedback responses are of help for supervisors and students to enhance mutual understanding and to reflect on their own roles and conduct in feedback dialogues. Thus, there are chances to optimise the potential while mitigating the difficulties experienced by Chinese international doctoral students and/or their non-Chinese supervisors.

This study also enriches the employment of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism as both a theoretical and analytical framework. At the same time, it offers a new angle to look at feedback dialogically through dialogic concepts, such as the 'voice' and 'speaking person'. Through those concepts, it becomes possible to examine who the influential

players (main speaking persons) are, and in what way they are influential (interactions of the voices) in feedback and supervision dialogues.

Methodologically, with the shift of paradigms, this study explores the feedback interactions through dual philosophic assumptions. It poses challenges to the researcher, as discussed later in Chapter 4, but it also advances the opportunities to understand the same phenomenon with two different world views. It thus pushes the boundary of research that is limited to one world view.

1.4. Overview of thesis chapters

Including the current Introduction chapter, this thesis consists of nine chapters. I review relevant literature in the next chapter, Chapter 2. By reviewing literature on feedback and intercultural doctoral supervision, I refine the research foci and define the research questions to address gaps in the existing research.

Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical bases of this study. I introduce Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, its main concepts and its relation to the current study, and explain the logic of the research questions theoretically.

The thesis then moves to Chapter 4 where I reflect on the development of my philosophical assumptions and the consequential refinement of the research design and research methods. In addition, the research process, the strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, my reflexivity as well as ethical considerations are all unfolded in this chapter.

In the next four chapters I analyse the data in different ways. Chapter 5 provides the text analysis of the supervisors' feedback on the draft proposals and the feedback responses made by the students in the revised writing. This chapter answers the questions of what and how the feedback is provided by the non-Chinese supervisors and how it is responded to in writing by the Chinese international doctoral students. Chapter 6 sheds some light on the third research question of why the students respond to the feedback in this way by thematically analysing the students' self-reasoning around their feedback responses. Chapter 5 and 6 are based on the paradigm of postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and draw on the analytical frameworks from the discipline of applied linguistics. In a more consciously theoretical shift, Chapter 7 scrutinises the same

interview data as that of Chapter 6 in order to explore the becoming of the students' voices (responses), at the moment of responding, as a result of conflicting and aligning voices interacting with one another. Chapter 8 looks further into the becoming of the students' voices within a process by analysing the second and the third rounds of interviews. In this chapter, the transformative voices dialogised in feedback interactions are examined beyond the feedback context in order to explore the students' journeys towards assimilating those transformative voices. In this stage, a single case study is developed to investigate the journey longitudinally and to trace the process of 'becoming'—that is, the development of the transformative voices in a particular student's ideology.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 9, I summarise the key findings and arguments, as well as their implications.

Chapter 2. Literature review

In this chapter I will outline the 'big picture' of my research topic in terms of the major findings about feedback dialogues in intercultural supervision. The main areas of research which inform my study are feedback on postgraduate writing and intercultural doctoral supervision. The gaps and key problems identified in the literature provide the basis for my research focus and questions. Another strand of literature relating to concepts of critical thinking, dependence and so forth is drawn on to interpret and explain the themes emerging from the data analysis. This body of literature will be reviewed critically as it is used in Chapters 7 and 8.

In the following sections I give an overview of the main fields of the literature informing this study, penetrating deeply into each area as well as showing their relationships through a series of interconnections.

2.1. Finding the main fields of literature

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my interest in feedback originates from my own experience of being a feedback provider and receiver, a second language writer and an international student. My overall research interest thus lies in the aspect of written feedback dynamics in intercultural doctoral supervision. The primary literature should be supervisors' and international doctoral students' practices and perceptions of written feedback. However, due to a paucity of research in this area, I have expanded the scope of my literature to include two divergent but overlapping areas: feedback on postgraduate writing and intercultural doctoral supervision. These two areas are closely related in that feedback interactions happen in supervision and constitute part of supervision. When examining the range of the literature around feedback on postgraduate writing, I realised, firstly, that it is an interdisciplinary topic which is discussed in doctoral education and in applied linguistics. Secondly, I found that only very few studies specifically address the feedback given to international or L2 postgraduate students (Ashtarian & Weisi, 2016; Bitchener, Basturkmen, & East, 2010; East, Bitchener, & Basturkmen, 2012; Leki, 2006; Wang & Li, 2011). Therefore, I had to turn to the greater body of literature on feedback on undergraduate writing. I found

two aspects to be of significance in relation to my research: feedback on second language (L2) writing in the discipline of applied linguistics and dialogic feedback in education. For the relevance of this study, the first field of literature usually underlines the effectiveness of feedback in improving the English writing and language acquisition. In contrast, the latter field of literature pays more attention to the role of feedback in promoting overall learning and the teacher-student relationships. These two fields of literature are relevant to my study because supervisors' written feedback given to Chinese international doctoral students who are also L2 students deals with the issues of language, subject knowledge and supervisory relationships.

Figure 2.1 The Fields of the Literature Review
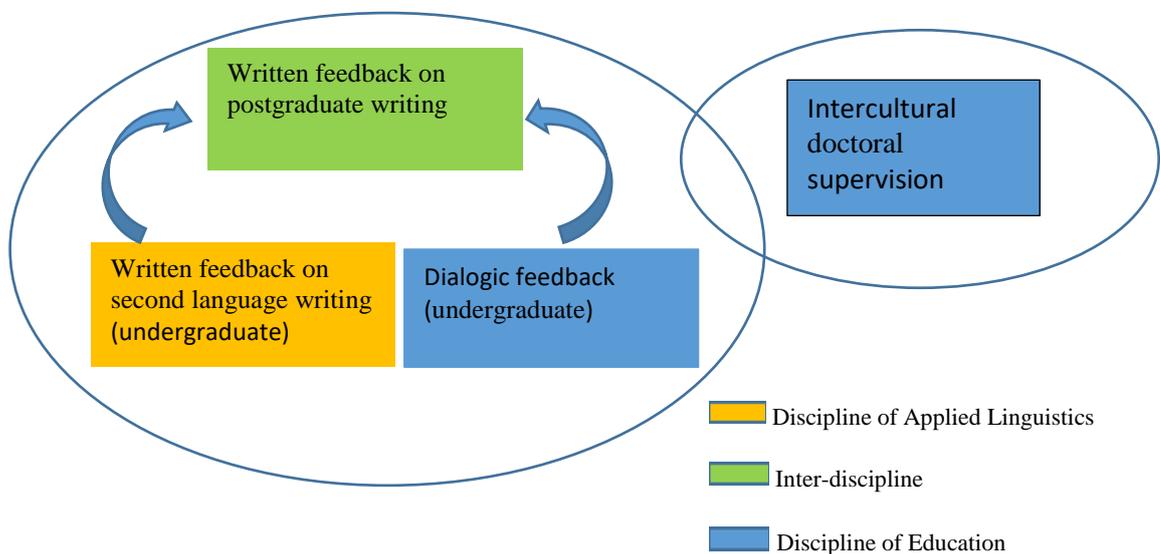
Therefore, as outlined in Figure 2.1, there are two main bodies of literature I will review in this chapter. The first relates to feedback research, highlighting written feedback on postgraduate writing, which is supplemented by the literature on feedback at undergraduate level: feedback on second language writing and dialogic feedback. The second main body of literature comprises studies of intercultural doctoral supervision. The current study is therefore inter-disciplinary in terms of the literature and the conceptual frameworks it draws upon. The two disciplines have their own research traditions which give rise to the two paradigms discussed later in the methodology chapter. Rather than including all the considerable body of research, in the rest of this chapter I will present those studies that are most relevant and influential, and I will explain their interrelationships.

2.2. Written feedback on postgraduate writing

Before I analyse this aspect of the literature further, a brief explanation of the organisation of this discussion will be helpful. In general, I have organised my discussion thematically, around certain issues. In the section on 'written feedback on postgraduate writing', I firstly summarised some background information, such as the different research perspectives, the sources, as well as types of written feedback being studied in the relevant literature. Next I reviewed and organised the related studies mainly according to the research methods applied, including text analysis and other self-reported methods (e.g., interviews or/and surveys), and some common issues those studies have raised. Although this section concentrates on feedback research at postgraduate level, there are two occasions when I discuss feedback studies at undergraduate level in order to offer a holistic review of feedback research on certain aspects. The first occasion resulted from my realisation that few studies have investigated students' responses to their supervisors' feedback via text analysis. I therefore turned my attention to the undergraduate literature on feedback on second language writing, where several influential papers have explored this research focus. The second occasion arose when I encountered difficulties in finding research into how students and supervisors communicate through or about feedback. Again, I looked for findings in dialogic feedback research at undergraduate level. I draw, therefore, on similar studies that involve undergraduate students to address some gaps in postgraduate feedback literature. In this way, what and how feedback at different levels has been researched would become explicit.

2.2.1 Some background: Perspectives, sources and types

Of the existing literature on written feedback on postgraduate writing, many studies investigate either from the providers' perspective—the focus, the formulation and the nature of the feedback (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014; Bitchener et al., 2010), or from the student recipients' perspective—the impact, perceptions, expectations and preferences regarding supervisors' feedback (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2010; Eyres et al., 2001; East et al., 2012). Some combine both perspectives (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Leki, 2006; Li & Seale, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Yu & Lee, 2013).

In addition to the different research perspectives, the written feedback under investigation usually comes from supervisors, writing project tutors and thesis examiners, forming the basis of analysis in research studies. The analysis of written feedback can fall into categories of (1) most commonly, in-text/on-script/marginal feedback which is sometimes accompanied by overall/end feedback on one piece of writing; (2) feedback on several drafts of writing; (3) feedback on one draft plus students' responses to the feedback reflected in the second draft. The in-text feedback consists of comments mostly in the margin (Kumar & Stracke, 2007) and can be in handwriting or tracked changes using word-processing software (Basturkmen et al., 2014). The overall/end feedback is more of a summary of the concerns, suggestions and evaluation of the feedback provider (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). As previously explained, the studies of the last two categories are scarce at postgraduate level but more frequent at undergraduate level. A subsection focusing on relevant undergraduate studies relating to feedback on multiple drafts as well as students' feedback responses will be elaborated later in this section.

The different perspectives of research, different sources and types of written feedback are mainly examined through text analysis and/or interviews, questionnaires and observations.

2.2.2 Text analysis of written feedback: Analytical frameworks

Apart from some background information, the investigation centres around the main the varieties of analytical frameworks used to analyse written feedback on primarily postgraduate writing and its supplementation on undergraduate writing. Two leading principles direct researchers' categorisation of written feedback: the focus, which is the aspects of writing the feedback pinpoints, and the formulation, which is how the feedback is formulated linguistically. Nevertheless, the meaning and scope of the focus and formulation can differ from one study to another.

The development of the analytical frameworks leads the presentation of related studies. The first significant study was conducted by Leki (2006) in the United States. To unveil the extent and variety of written commentary offered by discipline-based faculty to L2

graduate students [1] studying in a U.S. state university, Leki (2006) examined the commentary on 13 L2 graduate students' course papers. In this study, Leki grouped discipline-based feedback into nine categories: language and writing; checks, underlines, etc.; substantive response; evaluative comment; grades; professional enculturation; task management; name use; illegible comment. These findings reveal a great deal about the variety of discipline-based faculty's written comments. However, the lack of definition of each category blurs their boundaries and makes this categorisation less clear. For instance, task management can fall into the category of professional enculturation, while the checks and underlines can indicate language and writing mistakes.

Leki's framework (2006) was generated from the data, whereas Kumar and Stracke (2007) drew on the functions of speech in applied linguistics (Holmes, 2013). The two researchers categorised one supervisor's in-text and end feedback on a PhD thesis draft into referential, directive and expressive, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Kumar & Stracke's Framework (2007, p. 465)
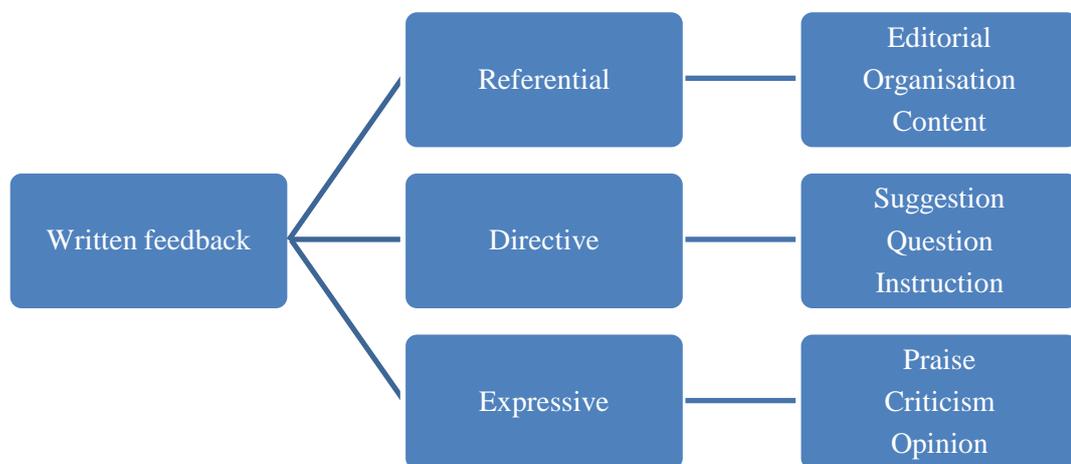
This study intends to explore different types of feedback provided on a first draft of a PhD thesis and suggests a peer-to-peer model in PhD education. According to the researchers, referential comments aim to provide information, which focuses on editorial, organisational and content issues. Directive feedback asks students to do

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[1] 'Graduate students' in the American system is the equivalent of 'postgraduate students' in the British education system.

something through suggestion, question and instruction. Expressive feedback communicates the speaker's (the supervisor's) feelings, which is manifested as praise, criticism and opinion. This analytical framework of feedback is a result of inter-disciplinary collaboration which invites people to see feedback from a joint standpoint between applied linguistics and doctoral education studies. However, this categorisation also provokes my thinking of the further application of the three speech functions. The researchers found referential feedback focused on editorial, organisation and content matters, but there was no reference to the other two functions (directive and expressive) as to what matters they addressed. Although Kumar and Stracke (2007) explained that the referential function focused on the message (the feedback), directive function focused on the hearer/supervisee, and the expressive function focused on the speaker/supervisor, and therefore the directive and expressive did not address any specific matters. This claim is arguable at least in written feedback practice. For instance, the example of the directive feedback from Kumar and Stracke's 2007 article: '*Please clarify*', cannot come out in vain, but addresses either editorial, or organisational, or content matter. In addition, Kumar and Stracke further elaborated in this article the directive and expressive functions of feedback through the method of delivery (e.g., suggestion, question). Following this finding, I am curious about how referential feedback is usually delivered. Through suggestion, question or instruction? Thus, this analytical framework of feedback inspired me to think of extending the current application of the speech function theory into written feedback study in terms of what aspects of writing the feedback (referential, directive and expressive) addresses and how these feedback comments are delivered.

In another study conducted in New Zealand, Stracke and Kumar (2010) used the same analytical framework to analyse two supervisors' written feedback on three drafts of a doctoral thesis, as well as three examiners' thesis reports, to investigate the link between written feedback and self-regulated learning. Despite the inclusion of examiners' reports, another development of this study is the variation of feedback distribution regarding speech functions across drafts and feedback providers. Although individual differences exist, the findings indicate that expressive feedback promotes self-regulated learning.

Building on this model (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010), Basturkmen, East and Bitchener (2014) developed two analytical frameworks to analyse the in-text

feedback on 15 postgraduate dissertations of three disciplines in a New Zealand context, from the perspective of socialising students into the academic discourse community. One analytical framework used in this study is to examine feedback formulations by redefining the three functions of speech (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Formulations of the Feedback (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014)
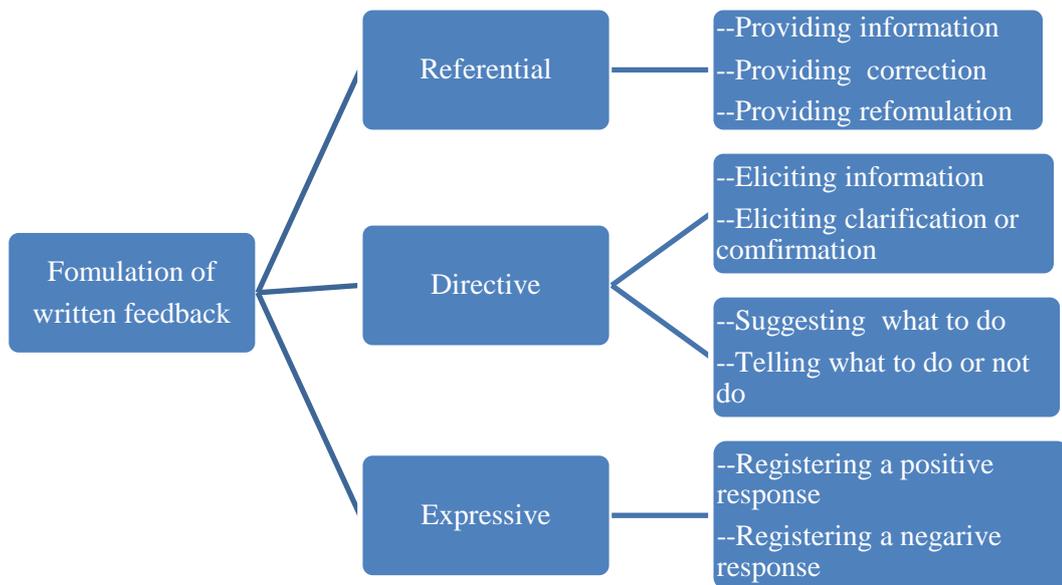
Like Kumar and Stracke (2007), Basturkmen and her colleagues (2014) used the broad categories of pragmatic intentions to analyse supervisors' in-text feedback. Nevertheless, compared to Kumar and Stracke's (2007) model, this model seems more definite and clearer as a result of narrowing down the research focus to the linguistic formulation of written feedback. Moreover, the summarised methods of providing referential feedback (providing information, correction and reformulation) are another distinct refinement. However, what really differentiates this study from earlier studies (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010) is that rather than mixing the feedback focus and formulation as Kumar and Stracke did, Basturkmen and her colleagues (2014) distinguished these two dimensions of feedback and discussed them separately and comprehensively. The researchers' second analytical framework is, therefore, to investigate feedback focus, which refers to the aspects of writing the feedback addresses, as shown in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4 Focus of the Feedback (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014)
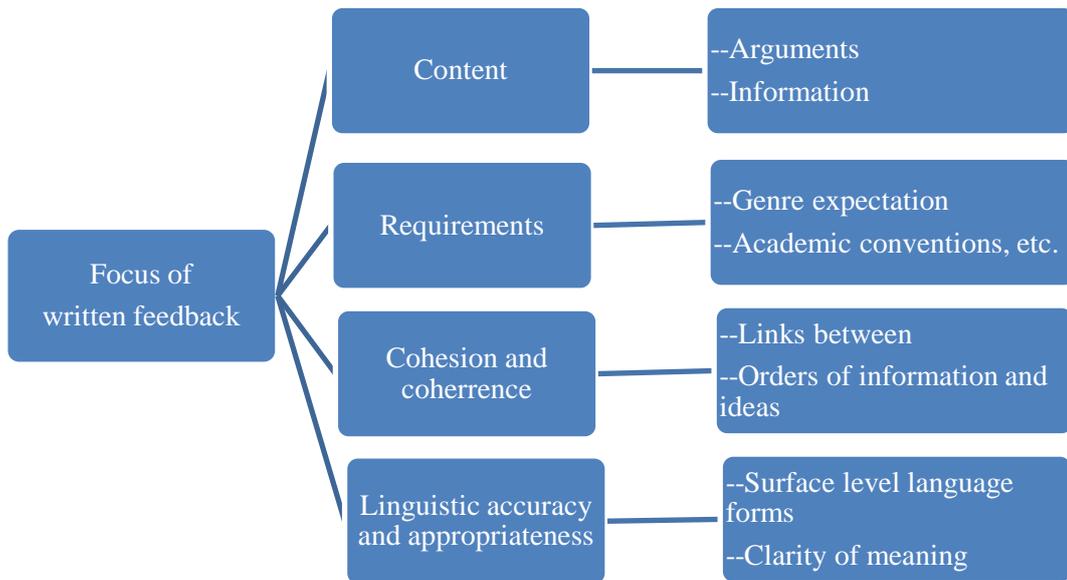
The researchers found, as Figure 2.4 demonstrates, that supervisors tended to give feedback on content (arguments and information), requirements (genre expectations, academic conventions, formatting, referencing and APA style), cohesion and coherence (links between and order of information and ideas) and linguistic accuracy and appropriateness (surface level language forms and clarity of meaning).

This study inspired me a great deal in terms of scrutinising supervisors' written feedback through its focus and formulation. What I feel uncertain about is the researchers' minimisation of the differences across disciplines and students' levels. The disciplinary differences mean that the genres of the texts produced by the students in the three disciplines (Humanities, Sciences/Mathematics and Commerce) may vary, which can lead to different types of feedback. The broad inclusion of master's and doctoral students in the study brings about possibilities of different amounts and types of feedback to students at different levels. Ignoring those differences may affect the validity and further application of the research findings. These concerns motivate me to consider the value of doing a feedback study by reducing variables, for example, focusing on only doctoral students with the same ethnic and language background in one discipline.

Rather than supervisors' written feedback, some scholars have researched the examiners' reports on postgraduate theses. The examiners' reports often consist of two

components: the summative assessment to pass, or conditionally pass, or fail the thesis, and formative assessment to provide feedback to assist the student to revise the thesis (Kumar & Stracke, 2011). The formative assessment in examiners' reports, therefore, is similar to supervisors' overall/end feedback. I align with these studies because some researchers, such as Stracke and Kumar (2010), make both supervisors' feedback and examiners' reports the research focus within one study. Furthermore, I consider the examiners' reports as another kind of written feedback for the students to reflect on or to improve their thesis. For example, Johnston (1997) examined 51 examiners' reports of doctoral theses from five faculties of one Australian university qualitatively for common themes in order to learn about the examination process and criteria. Two types of examiners' comments from the readers' perspective were highlighted: the intellectual endeavours (e.g., significance) and the communication aspects (e.g., the presentation of the literature). Unlike the "readers' perspective" (Johnston, 1997, p. 340), Kumar and Stracke (2011) inspected, from perspectives of the assessor/examiner, six examiners' reports on three PhD theses from a New Zealand university and three Master's theses from a Malaysian university. The aim of this study is to find out the nature of examiners' reports and whether the reports are assessment oriented or feedback oriented. They therefore divided examiners' reports into 'assessment' (judging the quality of the writing) and 'feedback' (clues to improve) and called for a stronger focus on 'feedback'. This study contributes to the literature by differentiating the summative assessment from the formative feedback in examiners' reports and the dual roles of the examiners. The findings can be applicable to doctoral supervision and to supervisors' written feedback, as Yu and Lee (2013) did in their study.

Building upon the assessment-and-feedback division (Kumar & Stracke, 2011), Yu and Lee (2013) conducted a study in Hong Kong on the nature of supervisors' written comments on the draft proposals of three Chinese doctoral students. Aside from sorting the comments into assessment and feedback, the researchers also looked at the developmental differences of this distinction across the three drafts. The findings suggest that supervisors were inclined to give more feedback than assessment-oriented comments across the different drafts. The results from interviews also indicate that the students consider that feedback scaffolds the academic writing process. I believe there are grounds for arguing the legitimacy of this dichotomisation of supervisors' comments, as some comments may embrace both assessment and feedback. In a sense,

the feedback here, as clues to improve (Kumar & Stracke, 2011) and with the intention of "closing the gap between current and desired performance" (Parr & Timperley, 2010, p. 212), implies a kind of deficiency, and it functions as indirect critical assessment. Yet, the progressive development of supervisors' comments in multiple drafts and the sole focus on Chinese doctoral students are the two distinct features differentiating Yu and Lee's study from the other. The students' assurance of the scaffolding effect of feedback also reveals their preference for comments with clues to improve and close the gap, rather than a simple judgement without explanation. This finding drives me to consider whether Chinese international doctoral students studying overseas have the same inclination towards their supervisors' written comments.

Another relevant study (Ashtarian & Weisi, 2016) compared written comments of five native English speaking supervisors (British) in the United Kingdom with those of five non-native English speaking supervisors in Iran (Iranian), apropos the patterns and the percentage of affective markers to the L2 MA Iranian students. Supervisors' feedback was categorised into comments with affective markers and those without. Affective markers, according to the researchers, are any utterance functioning to reduce potential face threats, which incorporate politeness strategies, such as the use of 'please', 'could' or 'might'. The findings reveal that compared to non-native supervisors, native supervisors use more affective markers to mitigate the effects of their negative comments. The nuance of this research lies in the comparison between the native and non-native feedback providers and the use of mitigation to soften the feedback. This study strikes me in two ways. The first is that since a difference exists between native and non-native supervisors in their use of affective markers in providing feedback, could this difference also exist between native supervisors and non-native students, such as Chinese international doctoral students? And do Chinese international doctoral students respond differently to supervisors' feedback with and without affective markers?

These studies reviewed all embrace the component of text analysis of written feedback at postgraduate level. They either generate the analytical framework from the data or draw from an existing framework. Moreover, models are now more specified and clarified, having developed from earlier work that had the ambiguity of blending every feature of feedback together. However, with many studies investigating supervisors' feedback provision, how postgraduates respond to their supervisors' written feedback in revision remains mysterious. The development of the feedback across drafts also

requires further research with more detailed frameworks, apart from the broad assessment and feedback model (Yu & Lee, 2013). I turn, therefore, to related feedback research at undergraduate level to gain some insights.

Analytical frameworks from influential undergraduate feedback studies

Although my focus is written feedback on postgraduate writing, two analytical frameworks on undergraduate feedback practice are worth mentioning, because they are influential and add something significant to the text analysis of supervisors' written feedback. They are Ferris' model (Ferris, 1997; Ferris, Pezone, Trade, & Tinti, 1997) and Hyland and Hyland's model (2001, 2006b).

Ferris and her colleagues (1997) examined the marginal and end feedback provided by one United States-based exemplary teacher to 47 advanced L2 students on the first draft of their six assignments during the Spring and Fall semesters. By developing an analytical model, the researchers investigated the pragmatic intent and linguistic forms of the teacher's written feedback, as well as variations relating to the students' abilities, assignment types and early, mid and late stages in each semester. They classified the pragmatic intent of feedback, which is the teacher's goal(s) in writing the comments, into directives, grammar/mechanics and positive comments. The linguistic features of the feedback, on the other hand, were identified as syntactic form (e.g., question, statement/exclamation and imperative), presence/absence of hedges and the text-specific/generic. Based on this model, this study suggests that the teacher's feedback strategies vary over time, across students' abilities and across the genres of assignments. This is a very complex study involving several key variables: pragmatic intent, linguistic feature, time, genre of writing, and students' ability levels. It serves as a reminder of the progressive or dynamic nature of feedback provision that seeks to cater to different students' feedback needs at different stages.

In a subsequent paper, Ferris (1997) added up the comment length and incorporated the pragmatic intent and linguistic features of the comments into the comment types. For instance, one category of the comment types is "Make a positive comment/statement or exclamation". As well as developing this analytical model, Ferris examined the first and the revised drafts of the same 47 advanced L2 students' assignments, working out the students' revision rating to measure their feedback responses. The results showed that a significant proportion of feedback led to substantive revision, but some types and forms

of feedback (e.g., longer, text-specific feedback) seemed to be more helpful than others (e.g., shorter, general comments). Although Ferris' analytical model and its variation are critiqued as overcomplicated to some extent (Hyland & Hyland, 2001), it is the first of its kind to offer a comprehensive analysis of the teacher's written feedback. In addition, this study makes a breakthrough by relating students' revision to different types and lengths of feedback, as well as the use of hedges through text analysis. It can be inferred, therefore, that how feedback is formulated affects students' feedback responses. Even though this study focuses on L2 undergraduates in the United States, its findings may apply to Chinese international doctoral students studying in New Zealand, in so far as I am interested in looking into whether or how feedback formulations influence Chinese international doctoral students' feedback responses.

In a different approach, Hyland and Hyland (2001) examined the forms and patterns of praise, criticism and suggestions and the ways they were used in feedback provision in two consecutive drafts. The feedback under examination is the end feedback given by two writing teachers to six L2 writers in an undergraduate English proficiency course in New Zealand. The feedback was examined through text analysis, which was supplemented by class observations and interviews. The researchers cross-analysed the end feedback in relation to (1) its functions or acts: whether the feedback is seeking to praise, criticise or suggest; (2) the developmental trend regarding the distribution of feedback acts in drafts and final copies; (3) the focus of the feedback acts, which referred to ideas, form and mechanics, academic and research conventions, the process of writing and global issues; (4) and the mitigation strategies. The findings revealed that praise was extensively used (tripled) in the final version of students' writing to mitigate suggestion and criticism, and the teachers focused their praise and criticism more on ideas. It appears that the teachers tried to be more encouraging in the final drafts by using more praise, and they emphasised 'ideas' most.

This analytic model of written feedback is less complex and clearer than Ferris' model. Ferris (1997) and Hyland and Hyland (2001) addressed the purpose of feedback through different means: functions of the feedback in Hyland's work, intent/aim of the feedback in Ferris' work. Furthermore, Ferris inspected the linguistic features and linked students' feedback responses to feedback provision, while Hyland and Hyland looked into the aspects of writing that the feedback deals with and the development of feedback in different drafts. In addition, Hyland and Hyland's (2001) model resonates with that

created by Basturkmen et al. (2014) with regard to what (feedback focus) and how (feedback formulation) the feedback is provided, although these two studies engage students of different levels with different writing purposes.

Inspired by these studies, particularly the three ones regarding the analytical framework of written feedback (Ferris, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Basturkmen et al., 2014), I decide to explore through text analysis the non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback to their Chinese international doctoral students, focusing on feedback provision (what and how) and students' responses. It is a difficult decision, as I have to drop some critical ideas, such as the development of feedback across drafts.

2.2.3 Feedback studies by other methods

The function, linguistic features, aspects of writing, nature and developmental trend of feedback and students' feedback responses are elements studied separately or integrated via text analysis throughout the literature. Nevertheless, text analysis is only one way to examine the feedback and/or feedback responses. Other methods, such as interviews, surveys and classroom observations have also been employed by researchers to investigate written feedback at postgraduate (Bitchener et al., 2010; East et al., 2012) and undergraduate levels (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland, 2013; Straub, 1997).

In this area of literature, most studies examine postgraduate students' perspectives of the most helpful feedback. For example, Eyres and her colleagues (2001) investigated, in a nursing programme in a Pacific Northwest university, 15 doctoral students' perceptions of helpful or not helpful faculty feedback to their writing. The results indicate that comments showing support and encouragement, as well as evoking students' thinking, are most popular. This study goes beyond feedback itself to the pre-feedback phase, the assignment design, and to students' expectations towards supervisors, which brings a wider range of area to the discussion. Another study by Can and Walker (2010) explored through mixed methods 276 social science doctoral students' perceptions and attitudes towards written feedback and feedback provider. This study found in the qualitative stage that students prefer straightforward, clear and detailed feedback ranging from content, arguments, organisation, flow and mechanical issues. Later, an eight-factor model was developed based on these previous findings, showing the relationships among different factors to doctoral feedback practice. This research stands out because it is one of the very few studies which uses advanced

quantitative method, thus validating and further developing the model fostered in the qualitative stage. These two studies (Eyres et al., 2001; Can & Walker, 2010) explored within one discipline doctoral students' perceptions of the most helpful feedback, which makes the feedback and the perceptions disciplinary specific. I am in the Faculty of Education and, therefore, the question of whether doctoral students in education would have similar or different perceptions towards feedback is foremost in my mind after reviewing the literature. However, these studies do not mention or differentiate students' demographic information, such as their origin and language background, which leaves room for further research.

Studies which examine feedback longitudinally are also worth mentioning, as they draw attention to the developmental trend of feedback provision or receiving. For example, Caffarella and Barnett (2000) probed, using focus groups, observations and written and oral reflections, 45 doctoral students' perceptions of a scholarly writing project at its early, mid and late phases at a university in the United States. Though feedback is only part of the focus, they concluded that feedback practice should be a dynamic and tailor-made process. Rather than a group of doctoral students, Li and Seale (2007) traced one student's doctoral journey to uncover how criticism was produced and managed within the supervision relationship. This study analysed the supervisor's written feedback along with another five types of data (e.g., audio-taped supervisory sessions). The study identified four types of criticism delivered by the supervisor (direct and indirect criticism, criticism with caution and criticism with guidance or support), as well as strategies to maintain sound supervisor-student relationships. The longitudinal studies offer insight from the direction of process and development, helping understanding of the phenomenon in its development over time.

Unfortunately, the two studies did not specifically examine written feedback at doctoral level longitudinally, only including it as one aspect of many. Thus, research tracing the development of feedback provision or/and responses during a specific phase of study is needed to see whether feedback providers change feedback strategies or whether feedback recipients change their responses to the feedback demands.

As noted earlier, the literature described to this point examines written feedback from the postgraduates' perspectives, regardless of the students' language and cultural

differences. The following studies fill this gap by differentiating the students in one way or another.

In research from the perspective of the supervisor, Bitchener et al. (2010) employed questionnaires and interviews to examine in a New Zealand context 35 supervisors' perceptions of feedback focus in relation to content knowledge, genre knowledge, rhetorical structure and organisation, coherence and cohesion of argument development, and linguistic accuracy and appropriateness. Though with little elaboration of each category, which may cause some confusion, this study brought the L1 and L2 postgraduate students into consideration and found that supervisors tended to give similar types of feedback in different disciplines regardless of the type of student. The supervisors seemed unaware of the diversity existing among students when providing feedback. As an L2 postgraduate student myself, I cannot help but wonder whether L2 postgraduates want and/or need the same types of feedback, and given in the same way, as L1 students. The same researchers carried out another study (East et al., 2012) which sheds some light on this question.

East and his colleagues (2012) explored students' perceptions of the most effective feedback, through use of questionnaires. By exploring feedback priorities of L1 and L2 postgraduates, this study reveals that L2 students appreciate direct feedback on language and organisation of their writing, balanced and more clearly directed feedback, as well as feedback prompting autonomy and developing intellectual capabilities. It is thought-provoking that this study makes a distinction between L1 and L2 postgraduates concerning their feedback preferences. However, it neglects the L2 students' cultural differences by only taking the students' language background into consideration. Students from Spain and students from China or Japan are all counted as second language learners, but their cultural differences may lead to some subtle or major divergences of their perceptions of what is most helpful in feedback.

Several studies find evidence for the significant impact the culture brings to the students' perceptions of feedback. Evans and Waring (2011), by comparing the indigenous and international postgraduates in the United Kingdom, found that culture and culture-related cognitive style (learning style) influence students' perceptions of the value of different forms of feedback. For instance, the international postgraduates value detailed and comprehensive feedback more than the indigenous students. Wang and Li (2011)

on the other hand suggest dialogic and culturally sensitive feedback approaches are valued in supervision by international students in their study conducted in Australia. They located in their study two tendencies of students' feedback experiences, related to the culturally embedded impact of supervisory feedback. They found that students who felt frustrated and/or uncertain about their feedback experiences preferred the feedback to tell them what to do, whereas those who felt inspired and/or confident would like to have feedback to guide them. Both studies (Evans & Waring, 2011; Wang & Li, 2011) reported findings on the essential role that culture played in international students' feedback perceptions, which called attention to intercultural or culturally sensitive feedback provision.

Nonetheless, students' cultural difference, or the 'foreignness', is largely viewed as a challenge or cause of problems in feedback practice. Tian and Lowe (2013) reached a different conclusion in researching the role of feedback in cross-cultural learning (Chinese postgraduates in a university in the UK), by drawing on Holliday's (1999) notion of small culture[2] and Berry's (1997) model of sociocultural adaptation[3]. They maintain that feedback is part of the new academic culture, but can act as a bridge between norms, rules and practices of two cultures, to induct students to this new academic culture. This study conceptualises feedback in an intercultural context as a tool (bridge), an active element which could constructively influence academic socialisation and teacher-student intercultural communication. This theorisation of feedback is different from the traditional view, which sees feedback as the product of often problematic teacher-student intercultural communication and academic socialisation. At the same time, the roles that feedback plays are more diversified; apart from supporting learning and teaching (Price, Handley & Millar 2011; Taylor & Burke de Silva, 2014), it serves to identify and close the gap between the actual and the potential level (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Ramaprasad, 1983).

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[2] In contrast to the large culture, which is the default notion of culture and refers to "prescribed ethnic, national and international entities", the small culture "attaches 'culture' to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour" (Holliday, p. 237).

[3] Sociocultural adaptation, according to Berry (1997), refers to "how well an acculturating individual is able to manage daily life in the new cultural context" (p. 20).

2.2.4 Common issues raised

Some of the broader issues about postgraduate feedback are so prevalent that most studies reviewed here, no matter how varied the design or research questions are, discuss one or more of the aspects. The most popular issues examined in the relevant literature include but are not limited to: students' emotional reactions when receiving feedback, and different types of supervisory relationships as well as their positive and/or negative influences on feedback provision and responses. Furthermore, the discussion of supervisory relationships in feedback studies is often associated with how they facilitate or impede feedback dialogues, which makes dialogic feedback another commonly addressed concept. Dialogic feedback is particularly significant when international postgraduates or L2 postgraduates become the research participants, adding the extra layers of language and culture to the complexity of feedback dialogues, which normally involves intercultural supervision or communication. In this case, dialogues between feedback providers and recipients, between two cultures and two languages, tend to be prominent research foci. In the following subsections, I will briefly discuss the main findings and controversies relating to three common issues raised in studies of written feedback on postgraduate writing.

Emotional impacts

Receiving feedback on writing can be highly emotional for students in either a positive or a negative way (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2011; Wang & Li, 2011), which consequently motivates or demotivates students in their responses to feedback.

Caffarella and Barnett (2000) discovered that strong emotions, frustration, for instance, affected doctoral students all the way through to the end of a scholarly writing project (16 weeks) when receiving critical feedback. The emotions were specifically heightened by conflicting feedback from two professors. A study carried out by Can and Walker (2010) revealed the feeling of embarrassment and the loss of confidence when the students receive negative/critical feedback, though this emotional response diminishes with experience. Wang and Li (2011) brought L2 doctoral students' culturally embedded emotional reactions to critical feedback into discussion. The findings highlighted the difficulties and challenges critical feedback brought to the international doctoral students and suggest that cultural diversities influence students' attitudes toward

negative comments and their feedback responses. Supervisors, as Wang and Li (2011) recommended, should adopt culturally sensitive feedback strategies.

Although negative feedback often results in unpleasant emotions for the students, this does not mean necessarily that negative feedback brings a destructive effect to the students' writing or learning. Research shows that negative feedback can be constructive and helpful in that it leads to revision and reflection (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). Compliments without explanation, however, are of less value to the students, who think that too many "empty good comments" call the credibility of the supervisor into question (Eyres et al., 2001, p. 151). Doctoral students, who experience the emotional ups and downs caused by receiving positive and/or negative feedback, prefer to have "balanced comments" that offer "positive reinforcement" along with a need for improvement (Eyres et al., 2001, p. 151).

These studies indicate that receiving critical and positive feedback both have emotional impacts on students. Yet, it may be too simplistic to dichotomise the feedback into positive and negative. As discussed earlier, scholars classify the feedback into more categories than just positive and negative (Basturkmen et al., 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Kumar & Stracke, 2007). Do other types of feedback provoke no emotional effects to the students at all? The literature does not provide the conclusive evidence needed to answer this question, but suggests the need to attend to the question. The discrepancy among the findings in these cited studies may be attributed to the diversity of the students being researched (e.g., discipline, ethnicity, level of study), the various research methods and the different research contexts. In my research I would like to bring to the fore the emotional impacts of supervisors' written feedback on Chinese international doctoral students, as I am curious whether it would be an issue for this cohort of students.

Supervisory relationship

Supervisory relationship or supervisor-student relationship is an issue detailed or mentioned in most postgraduate feedback studies. This is probably because feedback provision and responses manifest and influence, as well as construct, the supervisory relationship. Reciprocally, the supervisory relationship affects the provision and receiving of feedback. The main types of supervisory relationship discussed in the literature on postgraduate feedback are the apprenticeship model, with an unequal power

relation, and the cooperative or peer-to-peer model, with a relatively equal power relation. Some even propose to incorporate both, with either model playing a role in different stages.

The apprenticeship model of supervision is where the experienced supervisors scaffold the inexperienced students from dependence to independence and finally to the communities of practice (Hasrati, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the field of feedback to postgraduates, this model outlines an unequal power relationship between the supervisors and the supervisees and seems to receive more critique than other models with more egalitarian power. Knowles (1999) argues that passive attitude and uncritical acceptance prevail in students' receiving of feedback under the role of apprentice, as they seldom challenge the supervisor's authority. Alternatively, Knowles (1999) suggests a co-productive relationship and claims that the role of feedback in writing is to construct students' emerging identity as researchers. Furthermore, some scholars propose a peer-to-peer model which underscores equal power (Bitchener et al., 2010, East et al., 2012; Can & Walker, 2010; Eyres et al., 2001), considering the PhD student a 'practising academic' who shares ideas and negotiates meaning with the supervisor through feedback dialogues (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010). In addition, Li and Seale (2007) put forth a professional-client relationship which involves mutual exercise of power on the basis that the supervisor-student relationship is thesis-oriented and aims to achieve friendly and cooperative sociability.

It is sometimes not a simple matter of either unequal or equal power relations; rather, it can be a cooperation between both. As Wang and Li (2011) claim, at different phases of the doctoral journey, in early and late stages, for example, students should be fed with a different nature and amount of feedback. The apprenticeship model and mentor/peer-to-peer model should be implemented, therefore, in a sequence to meet students' developmental needs. Although this conclusion is based on data from L2 international doctoral students only, it implies the dialectic relationship between the two models and offers a developmental perspective of this issue.

The literature of postgraduate feedback overall highlights the comparatively flat or equal power relations in the forms of peer-to-peer or cooperative supervisory relationship to facilitate feedback dialogues. Therefore, closely related to the supervisory relationship,

the concept of dialogic feedback becomes a significant research focus in higher education, especially at undergraduate level.

Dialogical feedback

Feedback is a form of communication, preferably a two-way communication or dialogue (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, Salter, Yang & Lam, 2011; Kumar & Stracke, 2011; Nicol, 2010; Price, Handley, & Millar, 2011). Askew and Lodge (2000) regard "all dialogue to support learning in both formal and informal situations" (p. 1) as feedback. The notion of dialogic feedback originates from a social constructivist view, which believes feedback is a social act (Price, Handley, & Millar, 2011), with social and relational elements, involving the "learner, tutor (or peer, colleague, friend, etc.), context and relationship" (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017, p. 254), and can be interpreted in different ways (Carless, 2006). The dialogic feedback brings two dimensions into the centre of discussion: the students' voice and agency, and the feedback loop or circle.

Engaging students into feedback dialogues not as passive and powerless listeners but as active and powerful speakers has become a research focus for studies exploring the dialogical feedback. Price, Handley and Millar (2011) maintain that feedback engages all parties (e.g., students, staff) as a long-term dialogic process, and students need dialogue to "enable them to fully work with their feedback and to induct them into the disciplinary community" (p. 894). More than engagement, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) suggest that formative assessment and feedback help students take control of their own learning, which encourages the students to become proactive rather than reactive in generating and using feedback. Despite of the benefits of dialogic feedback, Nicol (2010) warns that "impoverished and fractured dialogue" leads to wide dissatisfaction towards written feedback from students and teachers, and Nicol (2010) suggests that feedback should be a dialogic and contingent two-way process that involves multiple interactions (e.g., teacher-student, peer-to-peer) (p. 503). The emphasis on the dialogical nature of feedback in feedback co-construction complements

the idea of sustainable assessment[4] (Boud, 2000; Boud & Molloy, 2013) and sustainable feedback[5] (Carless et al., 2011; Hounsell, 2007). In the tradition of student-centred learning, these studies all place the learners in the nucleus of learning and feedback generation.

Dialogic feedback challenges the traditional one-way transmission of information from teachers to students and encourages students' involvement. Instead of 'telling', which positions students as passive recipients, dialogic feedback recasts students as active learners and underscores students' engagement in feedback construction. Dialogic feedback is dialogue-oriented and open to discussion and negotiation, particularly from the students. This is why students' voices and agency is foregrounded. In this manner, both students and supervisors hold power and co-construct the feedback, which reaffirms the peer-to-peer or cooperative supervisory relationship. In a peer-to-peer or cooperative supervisory relationship, students, theoretically and ideally, would have an equal say with their supervisors in feedback interactions from the very start of generating the feedback. In reality, however, how much power students hold, or wish to hold, or are entitled to hold, is still in question. By reviewing this field of literature, personally, I do not think there is absolute symmetrical power between students and teachers. Neither do I think the symmetrical power is beneficial all the time. Power can be productive to supervision and feedback interaction, if "both supervisor and student have power to act on the actions of the other" (Grant, 2003, p. 188), allowing discussion, clarification and negotiation between the parties involved. This is dialogic feedback, a two-way feedback communication.

In addition to students' active engagement, some researchers conceptualise dialogic feedback as a feedback loop, made up of feedback provision and response, and with special interest in students' feedback responses (Sadler, 1989; Boud, 2000; Hattie, 2009; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). As Price et al. (2011) state, "feedback is a response to students' work and is almost always given with an expectation of a response from the

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[4] David Boud (2000) defines sustainable assessment as "assessment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of students to meet their own future learning needs" (p. 151). One of the identifying features of sustainable assessment relating to feedback is that "learners need not only to be recipients of feedbacks, but they need to be able to arrange it for themselves and know when it is complete" (p. 162).

[5] Sustainable feedback is introduced by Hounsell (2007) but defined by Carless et al. (2011) as the "dialogic processes and activities which can support and inform the student on the current task, whilst also developing the ability to self-regulate performance on future tasks" (p. 397).

student" (p. 880). Thus, supervisors' feedback is response-oriented in nature. Moreover, students' feedback responses are a pedagogically rich source from which the feedback providers can assess and reflect on their feedback effectiveness. Boud and Molloy (2013) stress the substantial importance of completing the feedback loop by suggesting that monitoring students' use of feedback informs teachers of the real feedback impact on students, which teachers can use to adjust their feedback actions. In a similar line of argument, Hattie (2009) claims that students' feedback responses serve as one type of feedback to teachers (supervisors), which makes the learning visible.

Feedback interaction can be understood as a series of ongoing dialogues, each seeking response. Feedback is the supervisors' responses to their students' writing. Students' revision or resubmission manifests their responses to the feedback, indicating their understanding and interpretation of the feedback, which initiates further responses from the supervisors. Through the feedback dialogues, information is exchanged, interpreted and transformed, rather than transmitted.

To summarise, the literature reveals that feedback is dialogic in two ways: students' participation in constructing the feedback with the supervisors, and the students' feedback responses embedded in their revised writing, which can embark iterative circles of feedback generation, application and reflection. Although dialogue has been brought to light by most postgraduate feedback studies as being one among several other vital elements of feedback, it has seldom been explored as the sole focus or as a theoretical tool. On the other hand, the research on dialogic feedback flourishes mostly at the undergraduate level. For these reasons, I would like to address the dialogic characteristic of feedback in my study and explore how dialogue has been carried out among all parties involved: Chinese international doctoral students, non-Chinese supervisors, the institution and possible others.

2.3. Intercultural doctoral supervision

Examining feedback, a social practice and form of dialogue, requires consideration of the context (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017). In this thesis the context is intercultural doctoral supervision, because my research features Chinese international doctoral students who are supervised by non-Chinese supervisors in a New Zealand university. The literature

about intercultural doctoral supervision is comparatively slim, in contrast to that for feedback.

I choose the term 'intercultural' instead of 'cross-cultural' for a reason. According to Gudykunst (2003), intercultural communication often refers to communication between people from different national cultures, involving all aspects of culture and communication. Cross-cultural communication, on the contrary, tends to be comparative and falls into the broad rubric of intercultural communication as one major area. Manathunga (2014) seems to apply this inclusive relationship to intercultural postgraduate supervision. She has noted the interactions across, between and within cultural differences in intercultural postgraduate supervision, which implies that in the 'tent' of intercultural supervision, communications happen across, between and within cultures. In this thesis the focus is the communication between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors who come from different national cultures. There are some comparative elements of cross-cultural communication, but comparison is not the key point. Rather, the effort of this study rests on offering some insight into intercultural doctoral supervision, particularly feedback interactions in intercultural doctoral supervision. At the same time, this study strives to promote cultural appreciation and make the most of the cultural differences in feedback dialogues and doctoral supervision.

2.3.1 Conceptualising doctoral supervision

What is doctoral supervision? This is a question with indefinite answers. Researchers theorise doctoral supervision in various ways. It is viewed as socialisation (Delamont, 2001), cognitive apprenticeship (Hasrati, 2005), a scaffolding procedure (Deuchar, 2008), personalised pedagogy (McWilliam & Palmer, 1995) and "a creative, challenging and empowering dialogue between the supervisors and students" (Wisker, 2012, p. 187). More comprehensively, Grant (2005) interprets graduate supervision in New Zealand in arts, humanities and social sciences as competing and contradictory social discourses: psychological, traditional-academic, techno-scientific and neo-liberal. Each type of discourse constitutes its typical mode of supervisor, student and power relations in-between. For instance, the neo-liberal discourse frames supervision as project management based on the consumer contract between the student and the

supervisor, while in psychological discourse, supervisor and student are more like therapist and client, where trust and respect are central (Grant, 2005).

From my personal experience of being a doctoral student, I agree with Grant's (2005) findings in several respects. Firstly, the multiple discourses/conceptualisations can co-exist in supervision, which makes this space a bit muddy but at the same time dynamic. Secondly, the discursive richness offers dangers but also pleasures, regarding possibilities and novel ways of making supervision workable for different individuals. In other words, these concepts of supervision could have their own time for manifestation at a certain stage and in a certain context, even for the same supervision pair of supervisor and student. For instance, to some supervision pairs, at some point, such as in the early stage, cognitive apprenticeship (Hasrati, 2005) probably is a more helpful supervision style than the others, while maybe in the later stage dialogic supervision is more workable. Personally, I work with my supervisor(s) with multiple modes at the same time, but in some situations, one mode is more predominant than others. The prevalent supervisory mode affects supervisory communication, including the feedback dialogues. As an uncertain practice, which Grant (2005) calls fantasies, fairytales, fictions and fallacies, supervision is complex, ambiguous and unpredictable.

2.3.2 When supervision meets cultural differences

The complexity of doctoral supervision escalates when it encounters cultural differences. Different cultures put up "extra layers of complexity and intellectual challenge" to supervision (Manathunga, 2011, p. 367).

How do people understand intercultural supervision? A traditional norm, according to Wisker (2012), is to "expect students from international contexts, who choose to study with us, to fit into the learning culture and practices of the host university, effectively becoming enculturated and assimilated into its beliefs and practices" (p. 286). This norm of supervision is also found in Manathunga's (2009, 2011, 2014, 2017) studies, in which she calls 'assimilation'[6] supervision pedagogies in order to distinguish it from its opposite, the 'transculturation'[7] supervision approaches. In these studies Manathunga

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[6] Manathunga (2011) applies assimilation to locate instances when supervisors ignore the students' prior knowledge and demand full conformity with Western/Northern research approaches.

[7] Manathunga (2007) defines transculturation as when "culturally diverse students may carefully select those parts of Western knowledge that they find useful and seek to blend them with their own knowledge and ways of thinking" (pp. 97-98).

applies post-colonial theory into intercultural supervision and appeals for a third space, a mid-space through transculturation, where supervisors and students can negotiate cultural differences and make the differences productive. Similarly, in a series of illuminating contributions, Singh (2009, 2011), with his colleague Chen (2012), challenge the traditional Western education by applying Rancière's (1991) concept of productive ignorance in supervisory pedagogies. This ignorance can make teachers acknowledge their inability to exhaust another's reality. According to Santos (2006) it can enable them "to have a much broader vision of what we do not know, as well as what we do know, and also to be aware that what we do not know is our own ignorance, not a general ignorance" (as cited in Singh, 2009, p. 188). Drawing upon this concept of ignorance, Singh and his colleagues argue for intellectual equality and urge international students, Chinese in particular, to draw upon their own theoretical tools in research. Supervising indigenous doctoral students is another strand of intercultural supervision research (Grant, 2010; Grant & McKinley, 2011; Middleton & McKinley, 2010), which involves colonisation, social and cultural preservation, conformation, regeneration or even transformation in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada and America.

Differences: Problematic or productive?

Two features characterise recent research into intercultural doctoral supervision. One is the perception that the cultural differences can be productive rather than being solely problematic in supervision. As Manathunga (2017) suggests, many existing studies on intercultural supervision take the form of practical guidebooks, in which researchers tend to problematise cultural differences with a deficit view and, therefore, offer solutions to the problems. In contrast, some researchers believe intercultural supervision is "a pedagogical site of rich possibility as well as, at times, a place of puzzling and confronting complexity" (Grant & Manathunga, 2011, p. 351) and, provides opportunities for supervisors and students to learn from each other (Trahar, 2011; Wisker, 2012).

In relation to the multiple and sometimes contradictory conceptualisations of supervision, the possibilities and pitfalls are precisely where the pleasure and danger of intercultural supervision lie, which in turn make intercultural supervision both exciting and caution-filled. Intercultural supervision can be problematic, leading to unhappy and difficult supervisory relationships if the supervisors and students close themselves in

their own cultural norms and values and resist communication and cultural appreciation. Otherwise, intercultural supervision offers space for those involved to learn from each other and to work innovatively. As Bakhtin (1981) asserts, individual consciousness and ideology develop when differentiated and even contradictory discourses start making dialogues.

Dialogic intercultural supervision

The other feature of the literature on intercultural supervision is the dialogic approach. The intercultural supervision is where "students, texts or cultures might come together in productive dialogue—without glossing over differences" (Kenway & Bullen, 2003, p. 10), or, in other words, both-ways intercultural supervision (Aspland, 1996). From reviewing the research from 1997 to 2011, Wisker (2012) concludes that facilitative and supervisory dialogues enable much developmental work with international students. Dialogue, consequently, contributes to successful intercultural supervision.

The dialogue in intercultural supervision is multi-dimensional. It is across cultures in the first place, across players among supervisors, students and possible others, such as peers, and more importantly, across knowledges between the acknowledged and the ignored, between Western and Eastern (e.g., Manathunga, 2017; Singh & Chen, 2012). The dialogue across knowledges is the most intricate, but also frequently neglected, as shown in the cited studies, or is avoided (Wisker, 2012). However, there is a need for negotiations between culturally inflected ways of constructing knowledge (Wisker, 2012) and what counts as knowledge globally (Manathunga, 2017), for breaking academic imperialism and for knowledge innovation and generation.

The dialogue in intercultural supervision is also alive, subject to dialogic circumstance and the interlocutors. Who speaks and under what concrete situation matters in order to understand and make sense of the dialogised discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). The same words can mean different things or hold different weight when spoken by a first-year student in small talk in the corridor or spoken by a prestigious professor in an international conference presentation. In addition, intercultural supervision dialogues take place in different forms (e.g., feedback interactions) and can be varied at different stages with different levels of engagement. The dynamic nature of intercultural supervision supports Gurr's (2001) and Wisker's (2012) arguments that supervisory dialogues need to be adjusted to different individuals at different times.

Unfavourable/dissatisfied international students

Some studies on intercultural supervision reveal unfavourable perceptions held by some Anglophone educators towards Asian international students, sometimes Chinese-specific perceptions, such as 'silent', 'quiet', 'non-participation' (Hsieh, 2007; Liu, 2000, 2002; Ping, 2010), 'uncritical', 'dependent' (Ballard & Clanchy, 1984; Ginsberg, 1992; Gieve & Clark, 2005). Regarding these negative perceptions towards Asian students, much of the literature seeks to explore the underlying reasons from the students' cultural heritage, such as Confucian ideology, to interpret the students' behaviours and try to find a solution (Littlewood, 1999; Mayuzumi, Motobayashi, Nagauama, & Takeuchi, 2007; Ping, 2010). Going further than explanation, some researchers (e.g., Biggs, 1996; Singh, 2009, 2011; Singh & Meng, 2013) justify, legitimise and equalise some learning strategies and knowledge construction of Chinese international students, such as the 'silence', which are disapproved of or misread by some Anglophone teachers and supervisors. The researchers also urge the use of Chinese theoretical tools, insisting that those perceived rote-based and low-level learning strategies are in fact deep approaches to learning in context (Biggs, 1996; Tang, 1996).

Being a Chinese international doctoral student myself, I know I am different in many ways from my peers and my supervisors who are of Anglophone origin. Among all the diversities, what matters most in determining my success in my PhD are the different learning strategies and knowledge construction, which unfortunately have been largely considered deficit. I do not intend to argue whether the Chinese way of doing research is productive or problematic in this study. Instead, my focus is to explore how the Chinese international doctoral students perceive and respond to the cultural differences through their personal experiences of written feedback responses and other significant interactions with their non-Chinese supervisors in intercultural supervision. The questions that fascinate me and move me to conduct this research are, for example, whether the students are completely obedient to the host culture willingly or by compulsion—as described by Manathunga as being assimilated. Or do they struggle to negotiate, or are they invited by their supervisors to negotiate between the differences?

2.4. Mapping the boundaries and designing a project

By reviewing several fields of the literature I sketched out the focus of my research: written feedback dynamics in intercultural doctoral supervision. Moreover, the literature review process helped refine my research questions; the boundary of each aspect has been drawn out and the general research foci and gaps have been identified.

The most researched issue in postgraduate feedback is students' feedback experiences, including their expectations, perceptions, preferences and so forth. Some studies cover a wider range to incorporate students' perception of feedback providers—the supervisors. Supervisors' feedback practices and their perceptions of the feedback are studied separately or in conjunction with that of the students. In these studies, although culture, language, emotion, dialogue, supervisory relationship and progression (of the feedback, the relationship, and the students' perception) emerge as issues of discussion, they are not scrutinised as fully as they could be. For instance, there are merely a few studies reporting the developmental trends of supervisors' feedback over time (e.g., Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Yu & Lee, 2013). The supervisor-supervisee relationship has been examined substantially in the literature, as mentioned, but there is no study which particularly focuses on the intercultural relationship between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors. Accordingly, feedback, as a socio-cultural embedded process, may be understood and implemented differently between these two groups. As a form of dialogue, few studies cover a full feedback loop of feedback provision and responses: feedback has not been examined holistically nor interrelatedly, but through two separate segments. In addition, intercultural doctoral supervision has rarely been discussed and understood within a theoretical framework in relation to the feedback interactions temporally and longitudinally.

With regard to methodology, most research collects the supervisors' and/or students' views of feedback via interviews and/or surveys. Some researchers apply text analysis or observations. Only very few studies (e.g., Yu & Lee, 2013) employ text analysis and self-reported data to examine supervisory written feedback dialogue.

Based on the literature review, I chose Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism as the theoretical tool, because dialogue is such a pivotal point for both feedback interactions and intercultural supervision. At the same time, I refined the research focus accordingly. I

determine to start with a snapshot of one episode of the feedback dialogues: the feedback provision and responses, respectively, from the feedback providers (non-Chinese supervisors) and the recipients (Chinese international doctoral students). I want to catch the snapshot as it is through the text analysis. After uncovering the dialogue of feedback provision and responses, I will then turn to students' perceptions of why they respond to the feedback in the way they did, by means of semi-structured interviews. Text analysis together with self-reported methods can, therefore, make the data rich and supplementary. To elaborate the 'why' question further, I will investigate how students' responses come into being as a result of their interactions with others: the 'becoming' of their voices. I frame and answer this question at one point of time (the time the students respond to the feedback), and in a timeframe of two and half years in a broader context, mostly within the intercultural doctoral supervision.

Linking back to the fields of literature (refer to Figure 2.1), the current study fits into the broad overview as shown in Figure 2.5, intersecting between intercultural doctoral supervision and postgraduate written feedback which is supplemented by second language writing and dialogues.

Figure 2.5 Location of the Study in Literature
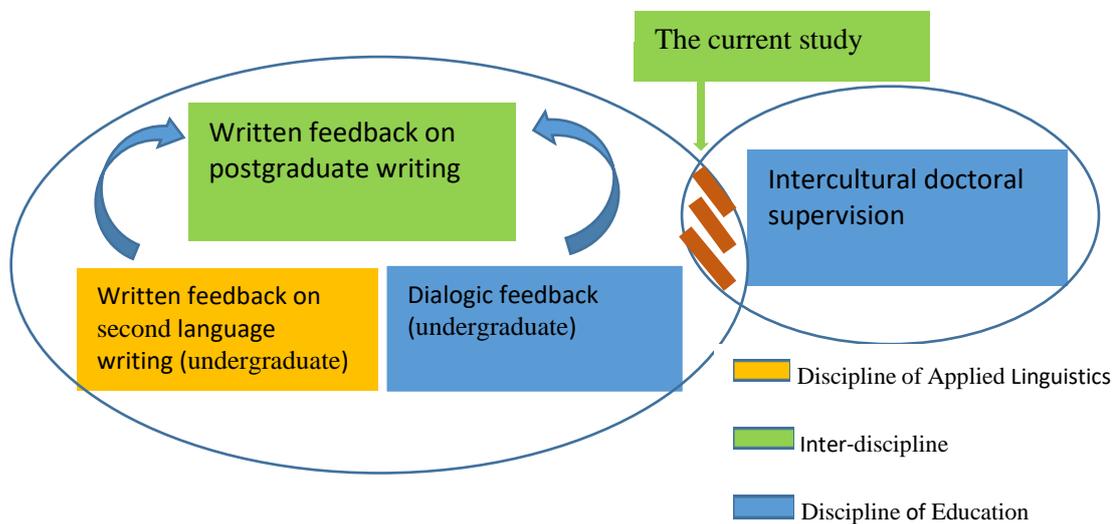
By zooming in on the location of the current study, with the layers of research as shown in Figure 2.6, we can see that intercultural doctoral supervision is the broad context within which Chinese international doctoral students interact with their non-Chinese supervisor(s) through written feedback provision and response. The inner core of students' feedback responses are the results of students interacting with others, their

supervisors for instance, within but also beyond feedback dialogues to the interplay within the wider intercultural doctoral supervision. The dashed lines are the imaginary boundaries. However, feedback interactions are part of intercultural doctoral supervision, and sometimes the two are intertwined and become inseparable. As indicated by the double-headed arrows, there is always dialogue or exchange existing within all layers.

Figure 2.6 Layers of the Study
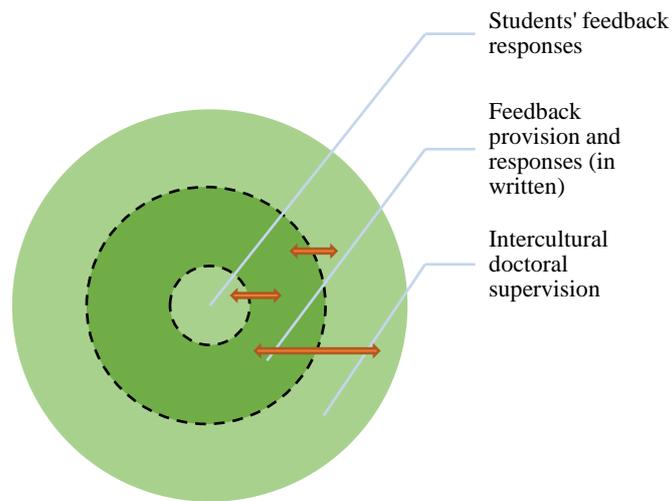
As has already been established, Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism is the theoretical framework for this study. The next chapter will introduce Bakhtin's dialogical world, with explanations of relevant concepts and their relationships to this study.

Chapter 3. Theoretical and analytical framework

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) is known to the world as a Russian literary critic and philosopher whose works have inspired scholars in disciplines as diverse as literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, psychology, education and linguistics. In this thesis his overarching theory of dialogism, in particular, concepts of heteroglossia, speaking person, voice and chronotope, provides a means of conceptualising the feedback dynamics between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors. More importantly, these concepts help to give a new perspective on the students' experience of interacting with their supervisors' feedback.

Why would one want, in the first place, to use Bakhtin's idea to conceptualise the feedback practice, especially the students' responses to the feedback? The following sections of this chapter begin with a brief explanation of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and how feedback is internally and externally dialogical. Next I elaborate, one at a time, some key concepts under the umbrella of dialogism, then address their relevance to this study holistically towards the later part of this chapter. At the end of this chapter, I unfold the dialogical framework of this research project.

3.1. Dialogism and feedback

Dialogic feedback has been given more importance in recent feedback research. Rather than being a monologue, feedback should be understood as a dialogical and contingent two-way process, involving teacher-student and student-student interactions, because the meaning of feedback comes into being through interaction and dialogue (Nicol, 2010). This conceptualisation of feedback fits Bakhtin's (1986) notion of meaning-making, which "happens through dialogic interaction, arising out of the creative differences of contrasting and supplementing voices" (as cited in Dysthe, 2011, p. 70). And there are studies, though only a few, that relate Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to meaning-making in feedback discourse (e.g., Morton, Storch, & Thompson, 2014; Sutton & Gill, 2010).

For Bakhtin, the dialogic is the characteristic of all meaning-making. Dialogical relationships, according to Bakhtin (1984), "are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life—in general, everything that has meaning and significance" (p. 40). Dialogism, as Bakhtin (1981) proposes, consists of the external components of dialogue and internal dialogism.

3.1.1 External dialogism

External dialogism refers to the external components that structure the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981). For example, an external dialogue takes place when one speaker raises a question and another speaker answers the question. Markova (2006), a researcher on language and communication, even suggests that external dialogue happens when people speak to others. In addition, linguistics can analyse the forms of external language through lexicology, grammar and phonetics, which is almost inapplicable to the analysis of internal dialogue (Voloshinov, 1986). Feedback, as a specialised form of meaning-making, is dialogic in terms of external dialogism, as it encloses the compositional forms of dialogue: the feedback provision and response. At the macro level, through providing feedback, supervisors on the one hand respond to students' writing which is the students' invitation to engage in dialogue; on the other hand, the feedback provided by supervisors initiates a continuing conversation with the students, and anticipates students' responses: "Every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280). The feedback provision and response comprise the external forms of dialogue, the dialogue in macro level.

3.1.2 Internal dialogism

There are two kinds of internal dialogism which look at dialogue in a micro level. The first kind is the dialogical relationship between the word and its object:

> Between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of others, alien words about the same object, the same theme …. Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or, on the contrary, by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is

entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents. The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276)

One object can be expressed by a range of different words with the same or varied views and judgements. The speaking subject has to negotiate with some of the views and judgements to make an utterance about the same object. The supervisor, for instance, is making dialogues with those already-existing views and judgements to decide the language forming the particular feedback, which can reinforce, overlap, merge, intersect with or contradict the previous evaluations. A simple example could be that the supervisor underlines a sentence, indicating a grammatical mistake. Before the underlining, the supervisor made dialogue with the already-existing judgement, the grammatical rules, to detect the mistake. Then the supervisor may make dialogue with some pedagogical views, agreeing to underline the whole problematic sentence rather than to circle the mistaken point, or to directly correct the mistake as some supervisors do. These dialogues are the "internal dialogism of the word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279), or the "inner speech" (Voloshinov, 1986, p. 38; Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 203) that shapes the semantic, syntactic and stylistic language. Feedback, therefore, is dialogic in that the word forming the feedback itself and its response is in a dialogic relationship with its object.

The second kind of internal dialogism refers to the dialogical relationship towards an alien word in the listener's response (Bakhtin, 1981). Alien, in the Bakhtinian sense, means otherness, others' points of view, for instance, to distinguish the selfness: "each of us has his or her own language, point of view, conceptual system that to all others is alien" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 423). The listener's response is what the dialogue aims for, as the response is inseparable from the understanding. Bakhtin (1981) explains the significance of response by proposing: "To some extent, primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response" (p. 282). The kind of understanding the speaker counts on is the one deep within the listener's conceptual system where interrelationships, consonances

and dissonances with the speaker's words can be established and new elements can be enriched. The speaker's orientation toward the listener is described by Bakhtin (1981) as

> an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social 'language' come to interact with one another (p. 282).

This internal dialogism, which occurs in the listener's subjective belief system, is differentiated from the internal dialogism in the word that the object serves as the arena for the encounter, although in practice they can be so intertwined as to be indistinguishable (Bakhtin, 1981).

Feedback, therefore, is dialogic in relation to the internal dialogism, which gives expression to the response and understanding. Student's feedback responses, in this case, are the result of internal dialogism. The supervisor's feedback (words) enters into the student's conceptual system and speaks for the supervisor. The student, as the feedback receiver, strives to understand the feedback (words) by assimilating it into the belief system with "specific objects and emotional expressions" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282). During this process, dialogic relationships are built up in the student's mind between the feedback (the views from the supervisor) and other relevant viewpoints from the student and/or other speaking persons. Finally, the student merges the understanding with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement (Bakhtin, 1981).

In summary, using Bakhtin's (1981) theory, feedback can be understood as dialogic both externally and internally. However, as Bakhtin (1981) critiques, "Dialogue is studied merely as a compositional form in the structuring of speech, but the internal dialogism of the word (which occurs in a monologic utterance as well in a rejoinder) … is almost entirely ignored" (p. 279). This neglect is evident in feedback research, where few studies have examined the internal dialogism that occurs in a rejoinder, that is, the feedback provision or the feedback responses. To address the issue, this study explores the external dialogues between feedback provision and feedback responses, and the internal dialogues between the students and other speaking persons (e.g., supervisors, peers) regarding the feedback responses. The importance attached to the response

(Bakhtin, 1981) is one of the main reasons driving me to investigate students' responses to their supervisors' feedback, apart from its significance in teaching and learning. Scholars who have theorised the feedback as dialogic highlight students' feedback responses as well. As Boud and Molloy (2013) claim, without monitoring students' responses to feedback to decide whether the feedback had an effect on what they did, teachers are blind to the consequences of their action, and students may not be reliably influenced. The feedback practice is therefore dialogic in nature and should be dialogic in its pedagogy. The remainder of this chapter will examine some critical constructs of Bakhtin's dialogism and their relevance to the study.

3.2. Key construct of dialogism: Heteroglossia

Heteroglossia is a fundamental concept of dialogism. For Bakhtin (1981), "dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia" (p. 426). The term was coined by Bakhtin, with its origin in two Greek words: *hetero*, meaning other and different, and *glossia*, meaning tongue and language (Norris, 2010). Heteroglossia is the English translation of the Russian term *raznorechie*, which means differentiated speech (Hayward, 2011), or the social diversity of speech types (Bailey, 2012, p. 499).

Bakhtin (1981, 1999) uses this concept to denote within both novels and national languages the stratification of different languages, discourse, voices and ideologies. For Bakhtin (1981), language is inherently ideological as it is "conceived as ideologically saturated, as a world view, even as a concrete opinion" (p. 271). Thus, language is stratified into linguistic dialects but more crucially into socio-ideological languages:

> social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles …—this internal stratification [is] present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 262-263)

Stratified languages do not merely co-exist, they interact with each other. They are buffeted by two contradicting forces or tendencies: centripetal and centrifugal. Centripetal force is a spinning-in, to unify and centralise towards a unitary 'official' or 'national' language, while the centrifugal force is a spinning-out, to decentralise and

stratify the 'national' language into subsets of languages used by different classes, professions, genders and generations. These two embattled forces govern the intersection and interaction of these subset languages in an uninterrupted and simultaneous way. As Bakhtin (1981) claims, "the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a 'unitary language', operate in the midst of heteroglossia" (p. 271). Driven by these two forces, stratified languages conflict with or supplement each other. They fight for being the "reigning language over the others", or make alliances with the "barbarians and lower social strata" in order to win or maintain the victory (1981, p. 271). It appears that dominant languages located higher in the socio-ideological pyramid try to strengthen their position, whereas those lower in the hierarchical chain endeavour to avoid being controlled by negotiation or combat. Agonism is, therefore, the fundamental attribute of heteroglossia.

The non-stop interactions of heteroglossia driven by the uninterrupted centripetal and centrifugal forces bring life to the language: "this stratification and heteroglossia, once realized, is not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). The stratification of heteroglossia is the fountain of youth for a language, keeping it alive and developing.

Heteroglossia is not only the reality and condition of language, but also the cradle of every utterance:

> The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heterglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272)

Thus, the concrete utterance itself comes out from the heteroglossia, but once it comes into being, it becomes part of the living heteroglossia. It is actively participating in the speech diversity of heteroglossia, which establishes its own linguistic style; and it is the bearer of centrifugal and centripetal forces (Bakhtin, 1981).

Heteroglossia is "the normal condition of existence" (Shields, 2007, p. 61): it is "the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428). The concept of heteroglossia delineates the presence and interactions of a diversity of discourses, voices and points of views in artistic works and in life.

3.3. Key constructs of dialogism: Speaking person and voice

Two key concepts relating to heteroglossia are the speaking person and his/her voice.

Bakhtin (1981) maintains that heteroglossia usually "enters the novel in person (so to speak) and assumes material form within it in the images of speaking persons" (p. 332). The speaking person in some cases is not a concrete person, but an imagined representation of an assembly of persons and interactions. As Bakhtin argues, a speaking person is the image that discourse can be fundamentally and organically fused with; for instance, the image of a preacher can vividly fuse with ethical discourse (1981). However, the speaking person can be concrete as well as abstract. For instance, the Confucian ideology of filial piety has been advocated for more than one thousand years in China by almost all Chinese people. The speaking person of filial piety can be specified as a moral teacher or parents; he/she can be abstracted as the image of Confucius, an artistic representation, which has fused with the discourse of filial piety.

Heteroglossia is interlocked with the voice or the discourse. As Shields (2007) defines, heteroglossia is the "presence of two or more voices or discourses, generally expressing alternative or conflicting perspectives" (p. 1). Before I expand the concept of voice, an account of its relevant notions (discourse, word and utterance) and their relationships should help in understanding and clarifying their meanings and boundaries.

3.3.1 Discourse, word, utterance and voice

Bakhtin rarely defines the terminologies he uses, which means those concepts have been interpreted in different ways. The English words 'discourse' and 'word' come from the same Russian word *slovo* in the works of Bakhtin. *Slovo* means 'word' in its most basic sense, but translators sometimes render it as 'discourse'. The most notable example is the title of one of Bakhtin's four essays: *Discourse in the Novel* (Bakhtin, 1981; Renfrew, 2015). Both word and discourse are ideological in that "every word/discourse betrays the ideology of its speaker" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 429). Ideology is a semiotic idea system which "involves the concrete exchange of signs in society and in history" (p. 429).

As explained in the glossary of *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981), Bakhtin uses discourse as "a way to refer to the subdivisions determined by social and ideological differences within a single language" (p. 427), such as the discourse of New Zealand

politics. However, "it is more often than not his more diffuse way of insisting on the primacy of speech, utterance, all in praesentia aspects of language" (p. 427). Therefore, the Bakhtinian discourse can be the stratified sub-language and the "living language, as opposed to the abstractions of linguistics" (Renfrew, 2015, p. 64).

Word, any word, as Bakhtin (1986) insists, exists in three aspects:

> as a neutral word of a language, belonging to nobody; as an *other's* word, which belongs to another person and is filled with echoes of the other's utterance; and, finally, as *my* word, for, since I am dealing with it in a particular situation, with a particular speech plan, it is already imbued with my expression. In both of the latter aspects, the word is expressive … originates at the point of contact between the word and the actual reality, under the conditions of that real situation articulated by the individual utterance. (p. 88)

The word, including the other's word and my word, when used to express the reality by speaking subjects, loses its neutrality and becomes utterance.

Utterance is the "speech act" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 433), "concrete discourse" (p. 276), "unit of speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 67), or the "speech performance" (Renfrew, 2015, p. 63). Shields (2007) further explains Bakhtin's utterance, as something which "can be a word, a phrase, or several sentences, but it represents a complete, finished thought" (p. 62). Thus, apart from the reality, utterance expresses the speaking persons' thoughts and views as well, and can cover a wide range of linguistic forms.

Voice, on the other hand, refers to dialogical discourse, the embodiment of the speaking subject: voice is the "speaking personality, the speaking consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 434). The individual consciousness is a fact of social ideology (Voloshinov, 1986); in this way, voice is not so much personal as socially ideological. Cazden (1993) explicates Bakhtin's idea of speaking consciousness as the person speaking or writing in a particular context to others. In other words, the voice is the articulated language, produced by the speaking person and addressed to others. The voice is, therefore, dialogical as well as ideological. Moreover, Emerson (1984) further explains that Bakhtin sees the voice as "not just words or ideas strung together: it is a 'semantic

position,' a point of view on the world, it is one personality orienting itself among other personalities within a limited field" (p. xxxvi).

In conclusion, discourse, word, utterance and voice cover varied but overlapping territories. Under certain situations, they mean the same thing. The word can be the utterance when it is used in speech communication, the word also can be the voice when it expresses individual consciousness, a point of view or ideology. The discourse can be the utterance when it is concrete. Finally, the voice can be word, discourse and utterance for the existence of the semantic position. This explanation helps distinguish as well as build up relationships among these concepts, and can, therefore, lead to an in-depth understanding of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. Moreover, due to the intersections of the terms, Bakhtin and some Bakhtin scholars sometimes use them interchangeably and to explain each other. In the following section and across my thesis, I will follow Bakhtin and use them interchangeably.

3.3.2 Double-voicedness

One main characteristic of Bakhtin's concept of voice is 'double-voicedness'. It means any voice "signals the frequent presence of (at least) two voices" (Renfrew, 2015, p. 85). This idea is embodied in the dialogic relationship between the word/discourse and its own object, which has been discussed in this chapter in relation to the internal dialogism. The key assumption of 'double-voicedness' is that the word is born in, is shaped and forms the concept of its own object in dialogues (Bakhtin, 1981). In dialogism, or in 'double-voicedness', there is no single voice/word without a ground. Others and others' voices are always dialogised. Taking students' feedback responses, for instance: they are students' voices which result from the students making dialogues with at least their supervisors' feedback—supervisors' views of their students' writing. Vice (1997) even suggests that Bakhtin's dialogism is 'double-voicedness'.

3.3.3 Authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse

Bakhtin (1981) divides discourse into authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. Authoritative discourse demands absolute allegiance from us, with the already acknowledged authority of traditions, political powers, institutions or persons. It "permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it … One must either

totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (p. 343). Internally persuasive discourse, on the other hand, is "affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with one's own word" and opens up "entirely different possibilities" (p. 345). The characteristics of the two kinds of discourses determine, to a large extent, that the voices dialogised and assimilated are internally persuasive discourses. This attribute of the internally persuasive discourse makes it significant in our everyday lives and our consciousness:

> In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345).

The internally persuasive discourses are components of the living heteroglossia, and one's own voices develop out of interacting with a diversity of other voices, which are the internally persuasive discourses of others.

Another property of importance is the varying degrees of authoritativeness and persuasiveness among the discourses. As Bakhtin (1981) asserts, within the categories of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, there are differences in terms of degrees of authoritativeness and persuasiveness. Explained from another perspective, discourse and voice are socio-ideological and are, therefore, hierarchical, which justifies why some discourses are more powerful than others even being all internally persuasive.

3.3.4 Relationship between the voice and the speaking person

The voice is the embodiment of the speaking subject. In *Problems of Dostoevesky's Poetics*, Bakhtin (1984) explains the significance of voice:

> What must be discovered and characterized here is not the specific existence of the hero, not his fixed image, but the sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero's final word on himself and on his world. (p. 48)

Therefore, the character/hero or the speaking person "is not an objectified image but an autonomous discourse, pure voice" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 53), which can be "about the hero himself, his immediate environment and about the world" (p. 78). In a sense, the

discourse and voice of a subject express or incarnate who the subject is, and others know the subject through his/her voice. In many occasions, what matters most is the voice which speaks of the speaking person. Moreover, the fact that the same voice can be spoken by a range of speaking persons, such as the mainstream discourse in a society, makes the concept of 'voice' more prominent and significant than that of the 'speaking person'. In some cases, the speaking persons of the same voice are too many to be identifiable.

The notions of 'speaking person' and 'voice' are crucial because the speaking person seeks to influence another individual's ideological becoming by his/her voice. Specifically, a speaking person plays a significant role in "ideological workings of our consciousness, in the process of assimilating our consciousness to the ideological world" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). The voice of another (a speaking person), as Bakhtin (1981) claims, "strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behaviour" (p. 342). Others' discourses shape and change our ideology and point of view and, therefore, affect our conduct. Heteroglossia provides the environment and conditions by allowing differentiated languages, voices and ideologies to co-exist and inter-animate.

3.4. Key construct of dialogism: Chronotope

Chronotope is another basic concept Bakhtin applies in analysing literary texts and in understanding the real life. Bakhtin borrows this term from Einstein's Theory of Relativity to indicate the inseparability of time and space, or the connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

The significance of the chronotope is that time and space are interwoven into a unity as indicators of a context and an event. Bakhtin (1981) maintains that the chronotope materialises time in space, making narrative events concrete and representable. Thus

chronotope is a matrix of situated meaning-making (Lorino, 2006), with time and space working together to form the context.

The chronotope can be an assemblage of various kinds of chronotopes and can be applied in literary/artistic forms as well as in real life. Bakhtin (1981) acknowledges the co-existence and complex interrelationships of multiple and diverse modes of chronotopes with different temporal and spatial features within the total literary output of a single author. In order to configure the different matrices of time and space, Bakhtin "presents a provisional typology of the different novelistic chronotopes" which evolved during the history of European literature (Renfrew, 2015, p. 114). For example, the chronotope of adventure time, of everyday life and of biographical time.

The "real-life chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 131) is the chronotope of biographical time, which means to live fully in the intersection of time and space. This chronotope is constituted by the "public square", in which "the individual is open on all sides" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 132): "the words, thoughts, and actions of those around him" (Shields, 2007, p. 14)—the real life. Bakhtin (1981) insists that a "real life chronotope of meeting is constantly present in organisations of social and governmental life" (p. 99). Hence, Shields (2007) urges people to understand school operation and educational reform through the lens of chronotope, the interplay of time (history and future) and space (schools, institutions). Time and space, therefore, are "forms of the most immediate reality" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85).

3.5. Relevance to the study

The theories and concepts outlined in the previous sections are of particular relevance to this study. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism serves as the theoretical framework or lens for the whole study, and some of its main constructs function as the analytical framework in the third and fourth phases.

The feedback dialogues in this study are explored through the framework of external and internal dialogism. The feedback and feedback response together compose the external formation of dialogue. The written feedback itself is the voice from the speaking person, the supervisor, used to speak to the student of his/her opinion on the student's writing. The feedback response is the voice from the student, speaking to the supervisor on how he/she interprets, understands and thinks about the feedback. Both

feedback and feedback response result from internal dialogues with others and others' voices. One's own discourse and voice are born of or dynamically stimulated by that of another, and one's ideological becoming is also the "process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341). Thus, the becoming of one's voice always involves interacting with and assimilating others' voices. In relation to the current study, students' feedback responses are conceived as their voices; and the process by which the students construct the responses is conceived as the becoming of the students' voices through making dialogues with others and selectively assimilating others' voices. Importantly, Bakhtin's 'selectively assimilating', which emphasises the listener's (in this study, the student's) agency and dynamic role of acting, distinguishes itself from Manathunga's (2011) notion of assimilation (see footnote 6).

Where do others' voices come from? Under the umbrella of Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, the heteroglossia is the "dialogized background" (p. 332), providing others' voices to the supervisors and students to make dialogues with, which brings about the feedback and feedback responses. The heteroglossia is the existence of the stratified languages, discourses and voices and their interactions. Therefore, both the feedback and feedback responses are the results of the heteroglossia and, once they are produced, they become part of the living heteroglossia. To elaborate further, thanks to the heteroglossia, supervisors/students can make dialogues with others and others' voices to generate feedback/feedback responses.

Contributing to the becoming of the students' own voices, the assimilation of others' voices is also related to time and space, which resonates with Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. As Bakhtin (1981) insists, "The living utterance, [has] taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment" (p. 276). In this study, the significant change of social, cultural and academic spaces triggers and permits Chinese international doctoral students to make dialogues with others' voices, especially those alien voices. Living and studying in a foreign country means there will be considerable opportunity for the students to encounter foreign voices with which they are in dialogical relationships. More importantly, discourse and voice are contextualised: their power and meaning are bonded to specific speaking situations and speaking persons (Bakhtin, 1981). Therefore, the change of the space—the speaking situation of the voices, from China to New Zealand—can destabilise the authority of the voices, even the authoritative discourses the students have already assimilated and been instilled

with in China. In leaving the original speaking environment, the authoritative discourse in China can lose its historical and cultural roots of authoritativeness and become internally persuasive and communicable in New Zealand.

On the other hand, given that the students are new to the host culture, the predominant voices in the host country have not established absolute authority over them. That is to say, the predominant voices, which may be the authoritative discourses locally, become internally persuasive and alien to the Chinese international students. Although there is a difference in the degree of persuasiveness (Bakhtin, 1981), the internal persuasiveness of the discourses from both home and host cultures makes the dialogues in-between possible. By means of various dialogues and interactions among the voices from home and host country, the central interlocutors, Chinese international doctoral students, can actively or passively assimilate the foreign voices while renovating their culturally enrooted voices. These broad dialogues taking place between the foreign and the enrooted voices set up the intercultural context for feedback and doctoral supervision.

Time, entangled with space, frames the becoming of the students' voices or their assimilation of others' voices. The voices come to the students at a different time and space. The voices which Chinese international doctoral students bring with them have been long assimilated and had become part of their own voices when they were in China, while the alien voices the students encounter in the host country are new to them. 'New' does not necessarily mean that the students hear the voices the first time. On the contrary, the students quite often know of these alien voices, but may understand them differently, or, these voices may have not yet entered into the students' ideological system. Moreover, the assimilation in this study indicates a process of accumulative effects in which time is the core. It is, however, more than a process. The assimilation as well as the development of the voices is an unfinished process, as dialogues and interactions continue, implying 'openness' and 'unfinishedness' (Bakhtin, 1981).

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and its main constructs not only provide me with the framework to understand the feedback interactions examined in this study, but also help me refine my research focus and questions. The concepts of external and internal feedback dialogues inspire me to think further regarding how the external feedback dialogues are conducted between the non-Chinese supervisors and Chinese international

doctoral students in relation to the feedback provision and responses; and how the internal feedback dialogues are conducted within the students' ideologies to generate their feedback responses. I am also interested in exploring the assimilation trajectory: how the voices develop in the students' ideology by assimilating others' voices in the matrix of time and space—the chronotope. These issues inform and are fused into my research questions as summarised in the introduction chapter to this thesis and are embodied in the following application of the dialogical framework.

3.6. Application of the dialogic framework

Feedback is dialogic in terms of both the external and internal dialogues in which the voices interact. I explore the feedback interactions within the broad dialogic framework shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Dialogic Framework of the Study
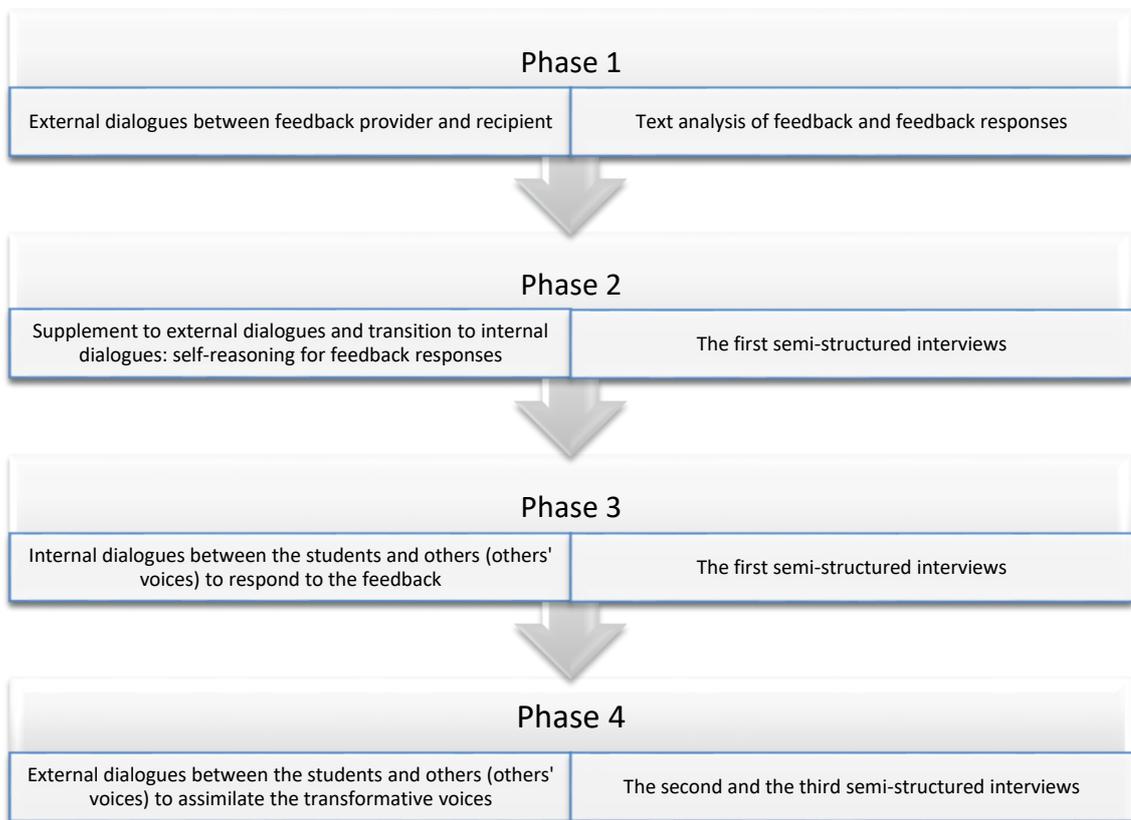
The exploration begins with the external dialogues between the supervisors and students enacted through feedback provision and response (phase 1). These dialogues happen

over time and space between the feedback provider and the receiver and are investigated in this study through text analysis of one instance of feedback provision and response. In phase 2 I strive to explore the students' self-reasoning around their feedback responses through interviews in which I make dialogues with them. The interviews aim to supplement the external dialogue of written feedback provision and response and also enable a transition to exploring the internal dialogue of feedback response. Phases 1 and 2 comprise the external examination of the feedback dialogues.

In phase 3 I seek to discover the internal dialogues in which the students interact with others and others' voices when responding to the feedback, which is the becoming of the students' own voices at the moment of responding. Hence, phase 3 approaches the feedback dialogues internally.

In phase 4 I endeavour to trace the developmental trajectory of the transformative voices which participate in the internal dialogues and are identified in phase 3 (the becoming of the voices in a longer process). I examine the processes and conditions through which the students assimilate the major alien voices and at the same time renovate the already assimilated, ingrained voices. Thus the research focus in phase 4 returns to the external aspect again, to the social interactions, in which the students engage with significant speaking person(s) and in which the students assimilate the voices. It examines the voices through longitudinal and holistic perspectives.

3.7. Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical framework this study builds upon by introducing Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, its main constructs and its relevance to the current study. The theoretical framework is the lens through which I understand the feedback dynamics, the research project and even the world. Theoretically, by carrying out the whole research project, I aim to gain some insight into both the external and internal dialogues this particular group of students make in responding to feedback. At the same time, I strive to understand the possible barriers and assistance in the process of the students assimilating the alien voices which contribute to the becoming of their own voices.

The following chapter details my philosophical assumptions and the methods I chose to conduct the research.

Chapter 4. Methodology

This chapter is a space for self-exploration and representation of my ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs and the corresponding methods I chose to conduct this research. In this chapter I also discuss my dual roles in research as the researcher and a participant. By writing this chapter, I strive to understand myself through reflexivity, "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 124). By unfolding myself critically, I hope to make myself understood in relation to my paradigm shift, the research questions I chose to investigate, the research design I developed to address the research questions and some emerging issues, as well as my collecting, analysing and interpreting the data.

As part of the reflexivity, I will delineate the development of my methodological underpinnings (philosophical assumptions/paradigms) and their influences on shaping the research design, especially the type of research questions I am interested to explore. As Usher (1996) maintains, paradigms guide the research by determining the problems and issues to be addressed and defining theories, methods and strategies to solve the problems. Thus, the philosophical assumptions decide the research questions and the research methodology. After introducing my methodological underpinnings and the development of the research design, I will detail how I carry out the research project, from recruiting the participants to the methods of data collection and analysis, in each of the four phases of the study. The methods I adopt to ensure the trustworthiness of this study will also be discussed, which will be followed by the section entitled 'Reflexivity and voices', where I deconstruct and reflect on myself and my voices. The last section of this chapter discusses ethical considerations, and I describe how I employ the three ethical principles of the *Belmont Report* (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979) to protect the participants' rights, apart from the practices outlined in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form approved by my university.

4.1. Methodological underpinnings and research design

The paradigm that initially guided the research design for this study was postpositivism. It then moved to pragmatism with an emphasis on postpositivist, but finally to

constructivist-oriented pragmatism. The research design has therefore developed accordingly.

4.1.1 Postpositivism

I was a postpositivist before I knew what postpositivism meant. I believed there existed a single, objective reality which could not be fully understood due to the lack of absolutes. This is how some methodologists define the ontology of postpositivism (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005, Lincoln et al., 2011; Merriam, 1991). Informed by this ontology, I had an epistemological and methodological orientation of approximating the reality with statistics, through scientific methods, and of minimising the subjectivity.

In response to the advice of Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Creswell (2013) that the research process should begin with the researcher's personal history and research tradition, I would like to reflect on my intellectual history as a postpositivist before the PhD. My postpositivist ontology comes in part from a strong research tradition of pursuing objectivity through scientific quantitative methods in China. Achieving maximum objectivity has been the main discourse in teaching undergraduates to write using academic English in China. I studied for my BA in English in China, where I was trained to be objective by using the third person instead of 'I', the passive tense, as well as being encouraged to use long and complicated sentences and big words. Consequently, the voice of objectivity has been imprinted in me. Then I studied my taught MA in the United Kingdom, where no course was offered specifically on methodology, so I followed my tradition in order to write my MA thesis by aiming for objectivity. But during my MA, as I read more, I was aware of the impossibility on the part of the researcher to include all variables in order to fully understand the reality. My educational background before the PhD established the foundation of my postpositivist ontology before I knew the term 'postpositivist'. The first time I encountered the terms 'paradigm' and 'philosophical assumptions' was three months after my PhD enrolment, in a methodology class, where I joyfully realised I was a postpositivist, even though I had practised this belief for a long time. I was quite satisfied to locate myself somewhere, which brought me a sense of belonging.

I had to admit that I was not a firm postpositivist, because it was a result of the way I was trained in the Chinese context where I came to believe that this was the only

legitimate way of thinking. This methodology class showed me the alternatives, the multiple ways of thinking and conducting research. Then I started to question myself: is postpositivism the best way to understand the world? Am I going to do my PhD research in a postpositivist way? I decided to search for the answer myself and be open and flexible to what made sense to me and to my research project. It was timely that one of my supervisors recommended Creswell to me, and his book *Research Design* (2014) became my reference point for methodology and forged the first turning point of my ontology and epistemology.

4.1.2 Postpositivist-oriented pragmatism

I determined to be a pragmatist and use sequential mixed methods to propose my research. I was very much convinced by the idea of 'what works' (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2013, 2014) and the emphasis on the research problems and using multiple approaches to understand the problems (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Wilson, 1985). Moreover, mixed methods can supplement and/or validate each other: "diverse types of data best provide a more complete understanding of a research problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 19). Furthermore, as a former postpositivist who believed that scientific methods can only approximate the reality for lack of absolutes in nature, I thought subjective knowledge could be a strong supplement to understanding the world. In other words, "reality is known through using many tools of research that reflect both deductive (objective) evidence and inductive (subjective) evidence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 37). In this manner, although I claimed myself to be a pragmatist and used both qualitative and quantitative methods and analysed both objective and subjective data, I privileged the postpositivist stance.

4.1.3 Research design under postpositivist-oriented pragmatism

Informed by this postpositivist-oriented pragmatism, I chose to design my research, as shown in Table 4.1, by focusing on the problems and solutions, using "multiphase mixed methods" (Creswell, 2014, p. 16) to supplement each phase and trying to ultimately approximate reality.

Table 4.1 The Research Design under Postpositivist-oriented Pragmatism

Phase	Research question	The researched	Research methods
Phase 1: postpositivism (what & how)	1: What written feedback is provided by the supervisors and how?	1. Supervisors' written feedback on the first draft of the six participants' proposals	1. Text analysis: 1.1. qualitative: categorisation of feedback and responses 1.2. quantitative: frequency distributions looking for prevalent patterns
	2: How do the PhD students respond to the written feedback?	2. Changes made by the six participants on the second revised drafts	
Phase 2: postpositivism (why)	3: Why do the students respond to the feedback in this way?	3. The feedback experience of the six participants	2. Semi-structured interviews: Thematic analysis

I started the research with something objective and solid: supervisors' written feedback provided on the first draft of the participants' PhD proposals and the participants' responses to the feedback reflected on the second revised drafts. The feedback dialogues, especially the students' feedback responses, are the places where the effort is focused, as the primacy of dialogues lies in the responses (Bakhtin, 1981). Since I cannot exhaust all the variables contributing to the students' responses, I planned to use semi-structured interviews with the students to complement the patterns and prevalence found in the text analysis of the feedback and feedback responses. This was the original design of my research, mostly within postpositivism, with the text analysis and interviews complementing each other. This design aims to locate the problems and offer solutions by exploring what feedback is provided and how, how the feedback is responded to, and most importantly, why the students respond to the feedback in this way with regard to the feedback provision and other possible reasons. Furthermore, this postpositivism-oriented pragmatism is also mirrored in my proposal writing: I wrote it in much the same way as a scientific report, with a traditional quantitative structure, as Creswell (2014) described, as well as the objective third-person style of writing.

4.1.4 Constructivist-oriented pragmatism

My move towards the direction of constructivism, with the belief of multiple realities constructed through individuals' lived experience and interactions (Creswell, 2013), comes as a long process. I joined in a discussion group with a professor and his doctoral students every Friday from my second year. This professor is a methodologist in social

constructivism (as claimed by himself and his students). He calls for democratic evaluation and research, naturalistic methods and vicarious experience, and claimed (in a seminar presentation) that realities, including culture, practice, policy, organisation, systems etc., are all mediated through individual experiences, or are understood through individual experiences. If Creswell provides me with the broad framework of multiple approaches of knowing the world, this professor then tries to lead and guide me as well as his other doctoral students to explore the reality in one particular approach: the constructivist approach. I would say this discussion group officially begins my journey in the subjective understanding of the world. Borrowing from Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and heteroglossia (1981), Creswell and this professor in particular are the major speaking persons whom I make dialogue with and whose voices I assimilate. Creswell's voices of pragmatism and mixed methods find their ground in my former unstable postpositivist position, so the transition is relatively smooth. Yet the process of assimilating the voice of constructivism has raised an internal philosophical 'riot' in me. I have gone through countless doubts and internal struggle, as well as face-to-face group discussions, arguments and debates. It still brings problems and questions, even now. All these difficulties will be explained in Section 4.1.7, 'Challenges and dilemmas'.

4.1.5 Refined research design under constructivist-oriented pragmatism

My transition towards the constructivist end of pragmatism influences my overall thinking around the research. The methodology a researcher applies to the research project is integrated with the researcher's ontology and epistemology: "There should always be a clear connection between the ontological and epistemological starting points and the practical research work" (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2002, p. 4). As a result, the design of my PhD research developed and the research emphasis swung from a kind of problem-to-solution style to the understanding of individuals' experiences.

My postpositivist orientation in pragmatism was shaken when I finished the initial data analysis as originally planned: text analysis of supervisors' feedback and the students' responses, and interviews with the students. The juncture came at the time when I was not satisfied with the thematic analysis of the first round of interview data (see Table 4.1). Right now, from a reflective stance, I can say this dissatisfaction and turning to Bakhtin were mainly driven by my gradual acceptance of the constructivist world view.

This shift is also the result of assimilating alien voices, as Bakhtin (1981) insists. Thus, I decided to rethink the feedback dialogues from Bakhtin's dialogical perspective and to rewrite, and to use 'dialogism' as the analytical framework in addition to the theoretical lens. The first round of interviews with the students were analysed a second time to look dynamically at the 'why' question from Bakhtin's (1981) unfinished dialogical relationship: the becoming of the students' voices in feedback dialogues, which explores the interactions of the voices (others' and the students') leading to the students' feedback responses. It became my third data analysis chapter residing on the constructivist side. The change of approach to investigating the feedback responses gave rise to the second and third round of interviews with the intention of exploring 'the becoming' longitudinally. In these interviews I sought to dig further into the developmental trace of the transformative voices dialogised in the students' feedback responses in a broader context.

Table 4.2 The Refined Research Design under Constructivism

Phase	Research question	The researched	Research methods
Phase 1: postpositivism (what & how)	1: What written feedback is provided by the supervisors and how?	1. Supervisors' written feedback on the first draft of the six participants' proposals	1. Text analysis: 1.1. qualitative: categorisation of feedback and responses 1.2. quantitative: frequency distributions looking for prevalent patterns
	2: How do the PhD students respond to the written feedback?	2. Changes made by the six participants on the second revised drafts	
Phase 2: postpositivism (why: students' self-reasoning)	3: Why do the students respond to the feedback in this way? 3.1. How do the students talk about their own reasoning about the responses?	3. The feedback experience of the six participants	2. Semi-structured interviews round 1: 2.1. Thematic analysis
Phase 3: constructivism (why: voices interactions when responding)	3.2. The becoming of the students' voices at the time of responding: how do their responses come into being as a result of their interacting with others' voices?	The same as above	2.2. Theory-driven analysis
Phase 4: constructivism (why: voices interactions longitudinally)	3.3. The becoming of the students' voices in a process: how do the students assimilate others' voices and renovate their enrooted voices?	4. The overall experience of the six participants	3. Semi-structured interviews round 2: Theory-driven analysis
		5. A single case study along with the researcher's reflections	4. Semi-structured interviews round 3: Thematic data analysis

Note: the shaded content identifies the new development from the original design.

To conclude, as shown in the refined research design (see Table 4.2 above), the text analysis of the feedback and responses in phase 1, together with the thematic analysis of the first round of interviews in phase 2, functions as a point of departure of the students' feedback experience, which unfolds to a more extensive degree in phase 3 and penetrated in phase 4. This research design is also a response to the theoretical framework of Bakhtin's external and internal dialogism, which has already been explained in Chapter 3.

4.1.6 Further thinking on paradigm

Although the world view shift was dramatic, it was still within my expectations, as the doctoral journey is supposed to be transformative (Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012). However, by taking the change for granted I was too naïve to think of its consequent impact on the whole organic thesis. Tension surfaced in my writing and called for my attention. My constructivist orientation influenced my later data analysis and chapter writing, which was different from how I wrote previously. My main supervisor, after reading my three-chapter data analysis, gave me feedback, stating: "there is something difficult going on here—some kind of struggle—from a methodological point of view". Later she explained that the first and second data analysis chapters were in the paradigm of postpositivism, while the third data analysis chapter resided in the paradigm of constructivism. The data analysis chapters were discrete and perhaps not coherent.

My main supervisor saw my transition from the postpositivism to the constructivism from my thesis. She considered this transition to be across paradigms, because she does not think the paradigms are commensurable: "their basic assumptions are contradictory". Her voice struck into my head like a hammer and stirred my ideological consciousness, as I believe in the paradigm pluralism that different paradigms can apply to different phases of a research design (Creswell, 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, 2011). I was caught up in the long-standing debate of paradigm pluralism.

I, myself, again, resonated deeply with what Bakhtin (1981) means by alien discourses awakening independent ideological consciousness. I have to say, as I exemplified several times in the data analysis chapters, that, as a Chinese student, I have an ingrained tendency of deference to teachers. The supervisors' voices held a lot of weight for me. However, at the same time, my doctoral training of critical thinking took effect in me,

too. Finally, I thought it would be better to hear the voices of some other speaking persons. I reread the literature of methodology, particularly about paradigms and mixed methods. After a series of chaotic dialogues with Creswell (2011, 2013, 2014), Guba and Lincoln (1989), Grant and Giddings (2002), Lincoln et al. (2011), Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) and so on, I found that the inclusion of fundamental paradigms differ with scholars, and scholars define specific paradigms differently. For instance, Lincoln et al. (2011) and some other methodologists define the ontology of postpositivism as a single reality which may not be fully understood "because of the hidden variables and a lack of absolutes in nature" (p. 102). On the other hand, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), some other postpositivists believe that there are multiple truths (as cited in Grant & Giddings, 2002). As to the compatibility of paradigms, some say 'yes', some say 'no', some say a cautious 'yes', suggesting that it is possible to blend positivism and postpositivism, or mix interpretivist/postmodern, critical theory, constructivist and participative inquiry (Lincoln et al., 2011). There is no consensus reached in the paradigm war. In addition, there is another stream of argument suggesting that the mixed methods are the mix of qualitative and quantitative strategies, rather than a mix of paradigms. Some scholars, therefore, argue that commensurability is impossible between positivism and constructivism, but it is possible to mix methodologies within each paradigm (Lincoln et al., 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1989, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This means the quantitative techniques are applicable beyond the positivist and postpositivist paradigms to the interpretivist paradigm.

A famous Chinese saying: 无知者无畏 (The ignorant are fearless) (Confucius, 1960), illustrates my early experience of paradigms. I feel how innocent and bold I was to rush to claim myself a postpositivist when just knowing of the paradigms and to locate myself in a pragmatist world view upon reading Creswell for the first time, and before obtaining enough information of the counter views. Now, with so many contradictory voices talking to me about the paradigms, I ask myself cautiously: what do I truly believe or choose to believe? What makes sense to me and helps me make sense of the world and reality?

I think I am still a pragmatist who believes in 'what works' (Creswell, 2013, 2014) and can be flexible between the paradigms. This self-recognition is an informed personal choice based on careful examination on the journey of inter-subjectivities, with

acknowledgement of both sides of arguments. However, I have experienced some transition within pragmatism as a result of doing this PhD project. I have shifted from prioritising objective realities to the subjective ones, from standing on the postpositivist stand and picking up useful elements in the constructivist regime to now the opposite, standing on the constructivist stand and picking up elements in the postpositivist regime. The transition is still going on as I continue to make dialogues with others and others' voices. One day I probably will become a pure constructivist, or shift to another paradigm. At this point, however, I define in general my research as a qualitative study, in the paradigm of constructivist-oriented pragmatism, embracing quantitative and postpositivist elements.

4.1.7 Challenges and dilemmas

I decided to keep some chapters of this thesis as they were when originally written, to signal my transition of thinking as part of my zigzag PhD journey, as well as one result of doing the PhD. Therefore, the first and the second data analysis chapters are written in a more postpositivist manner, focusing on what and how and separating the findings and discussion, while the rest is written more in the constructivist way, focusing on the becoming and integrating the findings and discussion.

The transition between the fundamental paradigms poses challenges and dilemmas. The first is the struggle of the voices, the representation of the selves of the researcher and the participants, including the writing styles and the way of theorising or proposing the argument. For instance, the balance of using the personalised 'I', such as I argue, I claim, I propose: I try not to use too many 'I's which may make the arguments too personal and subjective. The voices will be a subject of discussion in Section 4.5.3: 'Voices of representation'. Secondly, I have to familiarise myself with the terminologies in the constructivist paradigm, in which I write most of the thesis. For instance, the interpretivists use trustworthiness to discuss qualitative validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This language issue has been addressed by many mixed methods researchers who suggest using "bilingual language" which combines both quantitative and qualitative terms, or orienting towards either forms, or generating a new form of language (Creswell, 2011, p. 278; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, p. 291). Lastly, although I situate myself mainly in the constructivist end of pragmatism, the developed but still enrooted voice of postpositivism is also functioning at the same time, so I still have some

scientific structure (headings) of the thesis, which at present works better for me for clarity than any other methods of organisation.

In the following sections I will explain in detail how I carried out the research under the transition of the paradigms.

4.2. Participants

The participants are six Chinese international doctoral students who are supervised by non-Chinese supervisor(s). I assigned them these pseudonyms: Ann, Joy, Lee, Lily, Ryne and Sunny. The same six participants are the data sources from phase 1 to phase 4, except that in the last part of phase 4 one single case is constructed as a cameo to understand the individual's experience to a deeper level. The draft proposals of the six participants were analysed regarding feedback and feedback responses, and the six participants were interviewed. I, the researcher, am the sixth participant in the study. I included myself as one participant because I am one of the cohort of the researched. For the sake of reflexivity, being the researcher and the researched helps keep me conscious of the process and result of my interactions and dialogues with diverse speaking persons' voices in doing this PhD project. My dual role of being the researcher and the researched will be explained further in the sections of 'Researcher-and-participant' (4.3.3) and 'Reflexivity and voices' (4.5).

4.2.1 Sampling

I applied homogeneous sampling, one strategy of purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002), to recruit and select my participants. To serve the needs and the aim of the study (Morse, 1991) and to minimise the variables, such as discipline, gender, age and so on, I purposefully recruited participants in the Faculty of Education (now the Faculty of Education and Social Work) who are female, born in the 1980s in Mainland China and were at the time being supervised by non-Chinese supervisor(s). The homogeneous sampling is suitable to my research goal. I intend to "describe some particular subgroup", the Chinese international doctoral students, "in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 235). Although of similar background, the participants are still divergent in some aspects. The main differences are: (1) five participants have previous full-time working experience, excluding Lily; (2) in addition to PhD study, Joy has a full-time job, and Lee has a stable part-time job. The remaining four have casual work experience;

(3) three of the participants, Lee, Ryne and Sunny, have brought their children with them to New Zealand while they pursue their PhD.

After gaining some understandings of the participants' personal experiences, I employed intensity sampling (Patton, 2002), choosing the most information-rich participant out of the six to manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely in the last phase of the study.

4.2.2 Recruiting participants

I was so fortunate that even before I officially started to advertise for my potential participants, after gaining the approval of conducting the research from the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee, some students approached me and expressed their willingness and eagerness of being part of the research. Thus, I did not go through the process as I had planned in the Ethics approval application, which was to contact the Associate Dean (Postgraduate) in the Faculty of Education to obtain permission to circulate the participant advertisement with the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (PIS/CF) among the students. I found five Chinese international doctoral students who met the selection criteria in the Faculty of Education, by word of mouth or by hearing of this research project through casual discussion. Then I emailed their supervisor(s) the PIS/CF for permission to use their written feedback on the first draft of the students' PhD proposals. After gaining permission from both the students and the supervisors, I began my research process.

The recruiting process did not involve any coercion. Firstly, there was no conflict of interest between the researcher and the potential participants during the recruiting process. Secondly, the final decision of the participants to take part was fully voluntary and based on fully informed acknowledgement of what is involved in the research and participation.

4.3. Research process

This study consists of two parts: text analysis of the feedback and feedback responses, which is also phase 1 of the research, and three rounds of interviews with the participants, making phases 2, 3 and 4 of the study. The study commences with text analysis of the written feedback, mainly because sometimes what people do can reveal different information from what they say, and, therefore, text analysis together with the

self-reported methods can make the data rich and complementary. The general timelines of each phase are as follows. The collection of feedback took place at the end of the participants' provisional year, ranging from 10 to 15 months after their PhD enrolment; the first interview occurred approximately two or three months after their drafts had been collected, which means between their 13th to 17th month of PhD candidature; the second interview was carried out three to four months later (17th to 21st month); and the last interview with a single participant was conducted in the 28th month of her PhD journey, 10 months after the second interview.

In this chapter I do not include much detail of how I analyse specific data in each phase. This aspect is described in the corresponding data chapters, as the analysis is closely related to the findings and discussions of each phase of the study. In this section I describe the methods of collecting and analysing the data, and some examples are given for illustration purposes.

4.3.1 Text analysis

The feedback under investigation was provided by non-Chinese PhD supervisors on the first drafts of the six participants' PhD proposals (approximately 10,000 to 25,000 words). The text analysis of the supervisors' written feedback and the students' feedback responses is intended to explore this episode of dialogue conducted by the supervisors and the students in providing and responding to the feedback. It will allow me to answer the first two research questions in regard to what feedback is provided and how and how it is responded to. The methods of constant comparison, theory-based categorisation and descriptive data analysis are applied in order to analyse the feedback and feedback responses.

Constant comparison

The categorisation of the feedback focus (the aspects of writing that the feedback addresses) and the students' responses are not predetermined but emerged from the data through constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This method theorises the data by comparing incident to incident. It is, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008), crucial to all analysis for differentiating the categories/themes and identifying their properties and dimensions. I use constant comparison to develop an analytical framework (categories), not to generate theories at this point, and, therefore, I adopted the first two

stages of constant comparative method out of the four offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967):

1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category: coding each incident into as many categories as possible until categories emerge or data emerge that fit an existing category (p. 105).

2. Integrating categories and their properties: the comparison shifts from incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents, and the diverse properties begin to integrate (p. 109).

The details of how I apply this method to the text analysis of supervisors' feedback and students' responses are explained in the data analysis chapter (Chapter 5).

Theory-based categorisation

The categorisation of the feedback formulations is based on the theory of pragmatic functions of speech (Holmes, 2013), which agrees that referential (providing information), expressive (expressing speaker's feelings) and directive (attempting to get someone to do something) utterances are the most common speech functions. In addition, the current study also builds on the research which applies the theory of pragmatic functions of speech in feedback (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014; Kumar & Stracke, 2007). In a similar vein, the current study chooses referential, expressive and directive speech functions as the broad categories to bracket the non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback. However, the content or subcategories within each speech function are data driven. For example, under the 'directive', there emerge the subcategories of advisory and imperative.

Descriptive data analysis

Descriptive statistics describe the characteristics of the sample along with numerical and graphical techniques (Pallant, 2013; Thompson, 2009). I used frequency distribution, which is based on the count or the frequency of cases in each category, to measure the dispersion of the data (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). The frequency distributions in this study were of three kinds: univariate with one variable, such as feedback focus or feedback formulations; bivariate with two variables, relating the feedback foci to the

formulations; and multivariate with more than two variables, which cross-examines the feedback foci, formulations and the students' responses.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Each participant was interviewed two to three times with a different focus each time. The interview is valuable for drawing participants more fully into the research questions with its use of questions, prompts, other assisting tools and resources (Galletta, 2012). Moreover, interview method is particularly useful in exploring and probing about a person or situation, offering clues to the processes contributing to the situation (Krathwohl, 2009). Semi-structured interviews, particularly, allow in-depth explorations on a specific topic with a limited number of questions prepared in advance and follow-up questions on site (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). However, as a valuable tool, research interviewing can be an asset but can also be a problem because of its open structure (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this study I adopted Rubin and Rubin's (2012) "responsive interview" (p. 116) to communicate with my participants, allowing me to obtain rich data.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), responsive interviews,

> are built around main questions, follow-up questions, and probes that together elicit the rich data that speak to your research question. Main questions begin a discussion about each separate part of your research question. Follow-up questions seek detailed information on the themes, concepts, or events that the interviewee introduces, while probes help manage the conversation by keeping it on topic, signalling the desired level of depth, and asking for examples of clarification (p. 116).

Following Rubin and Rubin (2012), I adopted their five steps for conducting a responsive interview (pp. 107-114):

1. Introduce myself and the topic. I did this to build a rapport with the interviewees and to establish the interview setting.
2. Ask some easy questions, show empathy. Starting with easy questions which are central to the research but not threatening helps calm down the participants and enhance their confidence in responding. One opening question I asked, for example, was "How long have you been in New Zealand?"

3. Ask tough questions. I gradually increased the complexity of the interview questions from "How long…" to "How do you feel…" to "Why do you feel…". Once at this point I could then ask the main and follow-up questions and probe the responses to an in-depth level.

4. Tone down the emotional level. There were occasions when the participants became intellectually or emotionally high as they were trying to cope with stressful questions. Then I had to bring them down without losing the openness of the discussion, by returning to less stressful questions, for example.

5. Evaluate my interview. This was the self-evaluation step to ask myself several reflexive questions, such as whether I talked too much in the interview, or whether I have probed this information deep enough and so on. The self-evaluation helps improve my interview skills, which can be applied immediately in subsequent interviews.

The interviews were conducted at places convenient to the interviewees and of their choice. Each semi-structured interview lasted for about 60 minutes in the form of interactive conversations (the interviewer is one of the cohort), where the participants described and reflected on their feedback interactions with the supervisors.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and analysed by means of Nvivo 10.0 in order to work out and refine the main themes relating to the interviewees' reasoning of responses. To record my immediate and afterthoughts on certain points of the interview, I wrote memos during and immediately after each interview, which started the process of data analysis.

Memos and diagrams

Memos and diagrams are analytical tools to store the analytic ideas that the researchers can sort, order and retrieve later (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), and I have used memos and diagrams throughout most stages of data analysis.

My interview data analysis began with writing memos, the "written records of analysis" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 106), including "short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader" (Creswell, 2013, p. 183). I wrote the initial memos during the interviews, a kind of note to record my immediate thoughts and ideas from listening to the interviewees, including properties or dimensions of certain concepts, similarities or

difference with other interviewees and so on. These analytical insights, as Patton suggests (2002), may have gone forever if not captured in time, and the capturing of those ideas in data collection begins the data analysis. After the interview I summarised the key points mentioned by the interviewee via memos. I wrote memos during the transcribing and coding process too, with thicker, more complex and cumulative thinking around the data, such as summarising and making connections between findings, as well as recording my interpretations and questions on the extracts. The two ways of writing memos are in line with what Glesne (2014) maintains: "capture the thoughts when they occur" and "periodically, sit down to compose analytical memos" (p. 190).

Diagrams are "the visual devices that depict relationships between analytical concepts" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 106). They help conceptualise and organise the data and integrate my ideas, in addition to facilitating portrayal of the multiple interactions and relations. I drew several levels of diagrams when analysing the interactions of the voices: diagrams with neutral, supporting and opposing relationships among the voices in the respective area of the content and language; diagrams showing relationships among the voices when they interact across the boundary of the content and language. By drawing the diagrams, the thread of the data become distinct, and so do the intersections and boundaries within and among the data sets of the six participants.

In addition, thematic analysis and theory-driven analysis were also applied at the same and/or different stages of the research (as shown in Table 4.2).

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used in phase 2 and phase 4, either separately or along with the theory-driven analysis, as a method of analysing participants' talk about their experiences (Aronson, 1995). I took on board the six stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87) to guide my data analysis.

1. Familiarising yourself with your data: as suggested, I transcribed the interview myself, took notes of initial ideas when interviewing and when reading and rereading the data. This approach is consistent with 'immersion' (Tesch, 1990) which requires that the researcher knows the data very well.

2. Generating initial codes: I open coded the whole data set in a systematic way, with its characteristic features, and collated relevant data to each code. To analyse students' self-reasoning for their responses, for example, there were codes generated such as students' perception of language feedback, students' perception of content feedback.

3. Searching for themes: I collated relevant codes into potential themes by comparing their similarities and differences. For example, I collated the codes— students' perception of language feedback, students' perception of content feedback, etc.—into a potential theme of students' perception of feedback foci.

4. Reviewing themes: this stage of analysis checks if the themes are closely related to the codes as well as to the entire data set and generates a thematic 'map'. For instance, by reviewing the potential themes, I developed a thematic map by placing the two themes, students' perception of feedback foci and refined feedback formulations at the first level, and these were divided into several sub-themes.

5. Defining and naming themes: the purpose of this stage is to generate definitions and names of each theme by refining the specifics of each theme. I did this by relating the research questions, the data and all levels of themes to see whether they were consistent and whether they spoke to each other.

6. Producing the report: in the final stage of data analysis, the major task is to select and analyse the data extract in relation to the research questions and literature in order to produce a scholarly report.

Theory-based analysis

In a further record of analysis, informed by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, the data produced through interviews were examined through the dialogical constructs of voices, speaking persons and interactions among the voices. These concepts become the themes and lead the data analysis.

4.3.3 Researcher-and-participant

I am the researcher and, at the same time, one participant of this study. I have explained why I chose to become a participant in Section 4.2, 'Participants', and will explain how I reflected on my dual roles and dealt with the researcher's voice and participant's voice

in Section 4.5, 'Reflexivity and voices'. In this section I would like to make transparent how I collected and analysed my own data.

For the text analysis of supervisors' feedback and students' feedback responses, I made my own case the pilot study, which has been the subject of a published article (Xu, 2017). After I finished analysing the other five participants' textual data, which helped finalise the three analytical frameworks, I then re-analysed my own data to ensure the consistency of categorisation. For quantitative descriptive analysis, all data are mixed together without identification. With the same interview prompts for all participants, I interviewed myself, producing different voices for the interviewer and interviewee. I used the different voices in order to separate the roles of the researcher and the participant. To supplement the self-interview, I also asked one of my PhD colleagues to interview me, after explaining to her relevant information about the research and the interviews. I integrated the results from these two kinds of interviews to obtain the maximum information. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in the same way as I did for the other participants. I also gave myself a pseudonym and analysed my interview data the same as with the others. Rather than detaching myself from the role of researcher, as I did in the interviews, I made my dual roles prominent in the last phase with conscious self-reflections on making dialogue with the participant(s) and other significant speaking persons I encountered in doing this project.

4.4. Trustworthiness/rigour

Trustworthiness is of immense importance in judging the quality and credibility of the research. It "is about alertness to the quality and rigor of a study, about what sorts of criteria can be used to assess how well the research was carried out" (Glesne, 2014, p. 53). Strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry are proposed by many methodologists (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Guba, 1981; Lincoln, 1995; Maxwell, 2012; Shenton, 2004). Patton (2002) even develops sets of criteria based on different paradigms for judging the quality and credibility of qualitative inquiry. To ensure a trustworthy and rigourous study, I implemented the constructs mainly introduced by Patton (2002).

4.4.1 Integrity in analysis

According to Patton (2002), "one barrier to credible qualitative findings stems from the suspicion that the analyst has shaped findings according to predispositions and biases" (p. 553). I have tried to overcome this barrier by doing what Patton (2002) and Giddings and Grant (2009) suggest, acknowledging my philosophic orientations in the 'Methodological underpinnings and research design' (4.1) and critically reflecting on the self in 'Reflexivity and voices' (4.5). This strategy of clarifying the bias in self-reflection is also advocated by Creswell (2014), Glesne (2014) and Shenton (2004).

4.4.2 Negative cases

Negative cases are recommended by many (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Considering the cases that do not fit within the pattern and trends identified helps refine the hypotheses and conclusions (Denzin, 1989). The participant of the single case study in the last phase in the current study is a negative case. She responded to the supervisors' written feedback in a very different way to other participants, which made her a negative case. I had thought of dropping this part of her data as it was too difficult for me to match the feedback with her feedback responses. But bearing in mind the negative case strategy, I decided to include her feedback responses and made her a single case study in the end.

4.4.3 Triangulation

Triangulation helps researchers overcome the inherent bias stemming from a single method, single researcher and single theory (Denzin, 1989). By looking at the same phenomenon with diverse methods and perspectives, triangulation adds credibility to the conclusions the researchers draw (Patton, 2002). In this study, I tested the consistency of the results by means of triangulating the methods, the sources, the analysts and the theory.

Methods triangulation is another way of saying mixed methods. Triangulating the methods usually involves qualitative and quantitative data collection with the assumptions that two types of data can provide complementary information about the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2014). In this study I used qualitative and quantitative data to elucidate the feedback dialogues between the supervisors and the students.

The triangulation of data sources means cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times by different means within a qualitative method (Patton, 2002). What I did in this study was to compare and corroborate the written evidence (students' feedback responses) with the interviews to check whether what they say is consistent with what they do. I also checked for the consistency of what people say about the same thing over time in two or three interviews. The technique of cross-checking the same information with different informants (Shenton, 2004; Van Maanen, 1983) was also applied in this study. For example, I asked all the participants the same question on their opinions of their dependence upon their supervisors in two interviews, with approximately five to six months between each interview.

Analyst triangulation involves more than one analyst, observer or interviewer in order to reduce personal bias and to check consistency among the multiple analysts. I adopted this strategy by cooperating with my participants, making them part of the research team. I brought back the findings of the study and my interpretations to the participants to check for accuracy and completeness. This method of triangulation by participants is also called 'member checks' (checking) (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1991; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004), and is considered "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

Theory/perspective triangulation is to use multiple theories or perspectives to interpret the data. In this study, the first round of interviews were analysed through thematic analysis from the postpositivist perspective and through a theoretical framework from the constructivist perspective, respectively.

Apart from the tactics already mentioned, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) incorporate trustworthiness with aspects of reflexivity by posing four reflexive questions: What do you notice? Why do you notice what you notice? How can you interpret what you notice? How can you know that your interpretation is the "right one"? (p. 55). The answers to these questions rest in the strategies already discussed. But more importantly, reflexivity demands that the study should be a triangulated reflexive inquiry (Glesen, 2014; Patton, 2002).

4.5. Reflexivity and voices

Reflexivity is one integral part of research. It challenges the researchers to be more conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of the researched and the audience of the study (Hertz, 1997). The self or the subjectivity is the centre of reflexivity. As Bloor and Wood (2006) assert: "Reflexivity is an awareness of the self in the situation of action and of the role of the self in constructing that situation" (p. 145). Guba and Lincoln (1981) have a similar notion that reflexivity is the critical reflection on the self as the researcher, the human as instrument.

Methodologists conceptualise reflexivity in several ways. Patton (2002) perceives it through the triangulated reflexive inquiry, which includes "self-reflexivity, reflexivity about those studied and reflexivity about the audience" (p. 495). Glesen (2014) interprets reflexivity from the aspects of subjectivity, positionings and trustworthiness, which relates closely to triangulation. I would like to see reflexivity through Reinharz's (1997) two broad types of self: the selves brought to the field and the selves created in the field, which she further categorises into three groups as the "research-based selves, the brought selves and the situationally created selves" (p. 5).

4.5.1 The selves brought to the field

The brought selves are the identities and positions which were shaped before the research project by the researcher's history, culture, race and education. Glesne (2014) calls these 'inhabited positions', embracing the ascribed characteristics or personal aspects over which one has no or little control: nationality; achieved personal characteristics, such as the educational level; the subjective aspects of the life history and personal experiences that help form the values (Sunsten & Chiseri-Strater, 2002, as cited in Glesne, 2014, p. 150). The selves I brought to this research project are international student, feedback provider and receiver.

Being an international student and feedback provider

I am a female and Chinese, from mainland China. I travelled to the United Kingdom to pursue my postgraduate study in Intercultural Business Communication, where I became an international student and experienced communication difficulties arising from the English language as well as from cultural differences. After my graduation

from my postgraduate study I worked as a university lecturer in China, and one of my duties was to teach students to write in English. Having tried hard to give students quality written feedback, I felt a bit frustrated by the fact that the feedback, with my hard work and good will, had been ignored to various degrees. These comments had not functioned as they should have. It provoked me to think: what was the problem here which is hindering the effectiveness of written feedback, an opportunity for students to obtain individualised attention and guidance? How can I improve feedback efficacy and at the same time encourage students' agency to react to feedback?

Being an international student and feedback receiver

Now, I am an international student again, pursuing my PhD degree in a university of New Zealand, at which I receive written feedback from my non-Chinese supervisors. Up to this point, from my own experience and that of other Chinese international doctoral students, I have realised that various reasons lead to students' reluctance to respond to supervisors' feedback. For instance, students do not understand the feedback or do not agree with it, or do not know how to make changes accordingly. And all these are not just caused by language obstacles, if English is the second language, or the mastering of the subject knowledge. More often these problems are misunderstanding and misinterpretations due to failed intercultural communication. The complexities of language and culture again emerge, reminding me of being an international student in the United Kingdom.

Now that a more intact feedback circle has been structured, for my having been both feedback provider and receiver, I am determined to investigate students' perspectives as they have the agency to decide whether and/or to what extent and/or how to use the feedback. In addition, as the experience of being foreign in language and culture comes to the fore and complicates the situation, I resolved to focus on Chinese international doctoral students' feedback practice with their non-Chinese supervisors.

Summary

In summary, the salient selves I brought into the field were a university lecturer who provided feedback to students with unsatisfactory effect; a doctoral student who now receives non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback with difficulties in interpretation and application; an international Chinese doctoral student who had and now once again

has problems in research and academic writing, resulting from the English language and the diverse cultures of China and New Zealand.

These brought selves bring something significant in the before-field stage of the research project. The brought selves bring in a research tradition of postpositivism, in which I try to approximate the realities by using mixed methods and distance myself from the researched in order to achieve objectivity. It also brings in the intention to identify the problems of the feedback interaction between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisor(s), and to offer insightful solutions or suggestions to students and/or supervisors. Lastly, it brings in the presumption that language and culture could be the major problems. It should be noted that these brought selves are those I was aware of bringing to the field, and there are other selves I was not aware of, but they become prominent when I interact with the participants.

4.5.2 The selves created in the field

The selves created in the field are "a product of the norms of the social setting and the ways in which the 'research subjects' interact with the selves the researcher brings to the field" (Reinharz, 1997, p. 3). However, I argue that when entering the field to collect and analyse the data, the brought selves interact with the participants and the context, which can create new selves (interviewer, for instance) and, on the other hand, can create the developmental possibility for the brought selves. I call those brought selves that acquire new meanings in the field the 'developed brought selves'.

I have a strong sense of the second kind of created selves: the developed brought selves. For instance, one of my brought selves as a Chinese student being obedient to supervisors has been reconceptualised from unconditional dependence to conditional dependence, the dependence upon critical and independent thinking. This is the key of Bakhtin's dialogism (1981) that one's ideology progresses as a result of dialogising with others and others' ideologies. The development of brought selves through interacting with other subjects in the research is the main reason I chose to make myself a participant: because I want to participate consciously and creatively in the process of my own learning. Glesne (2014) states that one research project consists of two studies at the same time: "one into your topic and the other into you, your interactions, and the research process" (p. 145). I aim to make the two studies more distinct by taking

advantage of being one member of the research cohort: Chinese international doctoral students who are supervised by non-Chinese supervisors.

4.5.3 Voices of representation

Voices in this section are not ideologies in the Bakhtinian sense, but more of a representation of the researcher's self and the selves of the researched. Hertz (1997) describes the voice as

> a struggle to figure out how to present the author's self while simultaneously writing the respondents' accounts and representing their selves. Voice has multiple dimensions: First, there is the voice of the author. Second, there is presentation of the voices of one's respondents within the context. A third dimension appears when the self is the subject of the inquiry. (pp. xi-xii)

The current study engages with three dimensions of the voice: the voice of the researcher (I), the voice of the participant(s) (she or they), and the voice of the researcher as one of the participants (she).

There are two points worth mentioning regarding the voice in this study. Firstly, there is a shift in the voice of the researcher due to the transition of the paradigms. This voice is about the representation and writing, which is informed by the choice of research tradition, methodology and research questions (Hertz, 1997). The voice of the researcher is to a large extent absent in particularly the first, as well as the second, data analysis chapter under the postpositivist orientation, where the objective third-person and passive tenses prevail. In contrast, the rest of the chapters are mainly under the constructivist orientation, where the voice of the researcher, I, permeates. However, as I have already pointed out in this chapter, the transition of paradigms poses the dilemma of balancing the two kinds of voices and I am still practising and seeking out the 'right way'.

The second point demanding attention is the voice of the researcher as one of the participants. In most chapters I tried to distance the self of being the researcher and the self of being a participant, and I treat myself equally with other participants in data collection and analysis. I gave myself a pseudonym and retrieved the data through the same process as for the other participants. The only exception is in the section 'Transformative voices for one' (8.4) where I reflected my own transformative trajectory in carrying out this project. Making myself a researcher and a participant

means two conscious selves make dialogues from the very beginning and up to the writing-up stage, which ensures the reflexivity throughout the course of the research. The reflexivity, as Hertz (1997) contends, "permeates every aspect of the research process" (p. viii). Peshkin (1982, 1988), in the same vein, argues that researchers should seek out their subjectivity in the entire research process instead of only acknowledging subjectivity.

4.6. Ethical considerations

Approval to conduct this study has been obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee before contacting the potential participants. To protect participants' rights and respect their needs and values, this study employs the three ethical principles of the *Belmont Report* (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979): respect, beneficence and justice.

The principle of respect requires acknowledging an individual's autonomy and protecting those with diminished autonomy (United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979). I adopt this principle by ensuring that participation in the research rested on voluntary and informed consent (Glesne, 2014). Participants were fully informed several times of the research aims, methodologies and of their rights, for example, withdrawal from the study at any time. This information was given in the advertisement for recruiting participants and was mentioned again through telephone or face-to-face conversation in the initial contact. After the participants officially agreed to participate, they signed the Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form which includes details of relevant information.

Beneficence, according to the Belmont report, includes two basic rules: maximise possible benefits and minimise possible harms. Protecting the participants' privacy, as Glesne (2014) stresses, is the key to achieving beneficence. I developed a code list, which matches the interview recordings and the participants' identifying personal information that can only be accessed by the researcher. No identifying information will be disclosed to a third party. Moreover, to keep the data confidential, all hard copy data, such as samples of feedback and revisions, and notes, are securely stored in a locked cabinet, while electronic data such as interview recordings and transcripts are stored on

the researcher's computer, which is password protected. After six years, all hard copy data will be shredded and the digital information will be deleted.

The third principle, justice, focuses on equal share of the benefits and burdens (Belmont Report, 1979). To ensure fairness, I sent the findings and conclusions back to the participants to check the accuracy and appropriateness, and I will make the results of the research accessible to the participants.

4.7. Summary

This chapter has described my intellectual development of research paradigm, refinement of research designs under the influence of the transition of paradigms, the process of conducting the research and the strategies of ensuring its trustworthiness and ethnicity. The next four chapters will reveal the main findings and discussion of this study.

Chapter 5. Feedback provision and response

Drawing upon Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism and the results of the data analysis, the main argument in this chapter is that feedback provision and response compose the external dialogue, through which supervisors and students communicate explicit but also tacit information which are often neglected, such as the perceived and/or constructed supervisory relationship and the students' understanding of the feedback. The feedback process can inform the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of the feedback providers and receivers (Adcroft, 2011).

In this chapter I will explore the external feedback dialogue between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors through examining the feedback provision and response. The investigation of feedback dialogue in this chapter aims to find out what has been communicated and how, as well as the possible communication gap between the two interlocutors—Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors. In this manner, the speaking persons in the feedback dialogue, including but not limited to the students and supervisors, might better understand the nature of this gap and, further, how the gap might be closed. Thus, this chapter covers the first phase of the study and answers the first two research questions.

The data under investigation in this chapter include: (1) the first draft of six students' PhD proposals, from which their supervisors' handwritten (in five cases) and electronic (in one case) in-text feedback was analysed; (2) the second, revised draft of the PhD proposals, from which the revisions were examined. Both supervisors' feedback and the students' corresponding responses were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

5.1. Interacting with the data

I undertook the analysis on a participant-by-participant basis. The supervisors' in-text feedback and the students' feedback responses were categorised with regard to the feedback foci (aspects of writing the feedback addresses) and formulations (how feedback is linguistically formulated), as well as the types of change the students made. Then I explored through frequency distributions the prevalent patterns or tendencies of feedback provision and responses.

5.1.1 Categorisation: Developing an analytical framework

The purpose of categorising the feedback and the students' feedback responses is to develop analytical frameworks, which helps explore what and how feedback is delivered and how the feedback is responded to. As mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4), the analytical framework of feedback foci and the reversion ratings of the students' responses are generated from the data, whereas the framework of feedback formulations is built upon the pragmatic functions of speech (Holmes, 2013). To begin with, I numbered and transcribed all in-text feedback and revisions.

Symbols were used by some supervisors as one kind of feedback. Their meanings were clarified by the students before the analysis began. Some uncertain uses of symbols encountered in the analysis were brought back to the students to double-check. For instance, '?' stands for 'not clear to me'. There were some cases that one supervisor circled some words and phrases, which according to the student were reminders the supervisor made for herself.

Foci of the feedback

Constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) is the first method I used to categorise the feedback foci, that is, the aspects of writing it addresses. I picked out one proposal randomly and started to compare each piece of feedback in terms of its properties and dimensions for similarities and differences. Conceptually similar feedback was grouped together under a higher-level descriptive theme. I went through the same process on all six proposals. The higher-level descriptive themes of each proposal were again compared and conceptualised to generate the final four categories of the feedback focus, as shown in Table 5.1. They are (1) linguistic accuracy/acceptability (LAA) (about the English language, including grammar, choice of word, spelling and collocation), (2) content (ideas, arguments and evidence), (3) organisation (Org) (structure, logic, coherence and cohesion), and (4) appropriateness (App) (academic and discipline conventions).

Table 5.1 Foci of the Feedback (Categories)

Focus	Examples
• **Linguistic accuracy/acceptability (LAA)** (grammar, choice of words, spelling and collocation)	• '<u>researches</u>' – *research* • '… collaboration <u>with</u>…' – *between* • 'It seems that the studies <u>go</u> more penetrating' – *become*
• **Content** (ideas, arguments and evidence)	• *What has happened to cultural difference?* • *What's your overall point here?*
• **Organisation (Org)** (structure, logic, coherence and cohesion)	• *Good use of heading* • *Rearrange the order of two paraphrases (with arrow)*
• **Appropriateness (App)** (academic and discipline conventions)	• *APA? (Wells, cited in Ellis, 2010, p533)* • *Ref for focus group?*

In a few cases, feedback can fall into more than one category, so some feedback was double-coded. For instance, '*Ref for interviews?*' fulfils not only the category of appropriateness for academic conventions, but also that of the content, requiring evidence to support arguments.

Formulation of the feedback

Inspired by previous feedback research (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014; Kumar & Stracke, 2007), I analysed the formulations of the supervisors' feedback through the broad framework of pragmatic functions of speech: directive, expressive and referential (Holmes, 2013), but with subcategories corresponding to the feedback collected. Table 5.2 shows the details of the categorisation with examples.

Table 5.2 Formulation of the Feedback (Categories)

Pragmatic functions	Intentions	Linguistic features	Examples
Directive	• Append • Clarify • Confirm • Delete	• Imperative	• *come back to ZPD* • *take out, too much going on…*
		• Advisory (declarative & interrogative)	• *I suggest one stage 12-18 month – let's discuss* • 'alike' – *who are like them* • *communication: how does V understand communication?*
Expressive	• Praise	• Positive register	• ✓ • *clear* • *this list is looking very strong*
	• Criticise	• Negative register	• *What's your overall point here?* • *not clear in your design*
Referential	• Provide information	• Direct correction, add-on or/and cross-out	• 'Table of <u>content</u>' – *Table of contents* • '…inspect the supervisor-supervisee written feedback…' – *add Non-Chinese before supervisor and CID before supervisee*

Directive remarks command, tell, suggest or invite the student to do or not to do something (Holmes, 2013), such as deleting, appending, clarifying and/or confirming information. These intentions are voiced in imperative, declarative or interrogative form. Nevertheless, the absence of punctuation and incomplete sentences made it problematic to distinguish the declarative from interrogative, so 'advisory' was used to incorporate the two. Expressive feedback articulates the speakers' feelings (Holmes, 2013), including praise or criticism, which are registered as positive or negative comments. Referential utterances provide information (Holmes, 2013): feedback with a referential function could be direct corrections, add-ons and/or cross-outs.

It was sometimes difficult to classify feedback when it seemed to express two pragmatic functions, especially between directive and expressive (negative). This characteristic, in fact, reflects Holmes's (2013) notion that any utterance may communicate more than one function. Negative comments assume that something needs to be done (directive) to improve the writing. Likewise, directive comments, asking the student writer to do or not to do something about the text, offer remedies to the less than satisfactory text (negative). Therefore, a treatable plan or suggestion for revision becomes the key to distinguish the directives from the negatives. This method was first used by Hyland and

Hyland (2001) to differentiate suggestions from criticisms within feedback. For example, the feedback "not clear in your design" is a negative response to the student's writing, since if offers no solution, whereas the feedback "further unpack it: how do you understand this quote" provides a clue to revision, making it a directive comment. In a similar approach, the referential is separated from the directive on the basis of whether there is something about how to deal with this information (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Basturkmen et al., 2014). For example, the feedback "critical issue 1: communication between Chinese doc stu + non-Chinese supe." is regarded as referential as it offers information without any further explanation or application.

Students' responses to feedback

Each Chinese international doctoral student revised their PhD proposal based on the feedback. Those six revised papers make up the second half of the textual data. The revised drafts were read through in comparison with the first version to work out the students' responses to the feedback. Four types of response were discovered: (1) no change made despite feedback provided; (2) changes made exactly as the feedback directed; (3) changes inspired by the feedback; (4) changes made without any feedback. A typology of revision ratings has been developed accordingly: no change, change/directed, change/inspired, and change/additional.

The third type of revision (change/inspired) contained three scenarios. It could be the reaction to implicit feedback. For example, sometimes the feedback was only a "?" symbol, leaving plenty of room for the student writer to think and write. Or it could go beyond what the feedback suggested, such as the student rewriting the whole sentence while still following the feedback advice of "replacing 'small in number' with 'uncommon'" at the same time. Or the feedback evoked further change that may have nothing to do with the feedback. For instance, the student writer choosing to rewrite the whole sentence rather than adding the article "the" as the feedback informed.

This categorisation reveals the patterns of feedback provision and responses respectively. However, with regard to feedback foci and formulations, supervisors' tendencies in providing feedback and students' preferences in responding to feedback are still in question. In other words, each categorisation examines feedback dialogue from one split dimension; in the following analysis, I have sought to incorporate these dimensions to investigate the dialogue as an entirety. Special attention is given to the

questions of how students respond to the feedback with regard to what and how the feedback is provided, or whether students react more actively or more passively toward certain types of feedback. Quantitative analysis of the feedback and feedback response may shed some light on these questions.

5.1.2 Quantitative analysis: Tendency and prevalence

The quantitative analysis aims to discover the tendency and prevalence of supervisors' feedback provision and students' feedback responses. One variate, such as the feedback foci, feedback formulations or the students' feedback responses, was examined though univariate frequency distributions. Two variates, such as the relationship between the feedback foci and formulations, were examined through bivariate frequency distributions. Three variates, such as the students' feedback responses in relation to the feedback foci and formulations, were examined through multivariate frequency distributions.

Foci and formulations of the feedback

Table 5.3 shows the distribution of the feedback foci. Almost half of the feedback (46.7%) drew on the linguistic accuracy/acceptability, making it the most frequently addressed aspect of writing. Another stressed aspect was content, accounting for 34.4% of the total.

Table 5.3 Foci of the Feedback (Distribution)

Focus	No.	%
Linguistic accuracy/acceptability	436	46.7
Content	321	34.4
Appropriateness	122	13.1
Organisation	55	5.9
Total	934	100

Feedback formulations were also quantified as shown in Table 5.4. Referential feedback dominated, with almost two-thirds of all comments, followed by the directive and expressive. Among expressive feedback, positive comments occurred approximately three times more than negative comments. Imperative feedback of the directive type was the least prevalent among all formulations.

Table 5.4 Formulations of the Feedback (Distribution)

Formulation	No.	%
Referential	567	60.7
Directive	242 (imperative 91, advisory 151)	25.9 (imperative 9.7, advisory 16.2)
Expressive	125 (positive 76, negative 49)	13.3 (positive 8.1, negative 5.2)
Total	**934**	**100**

When the feedback foci and formulations were cross-referenced (see Table 5.5), the prevalence of referential feedback far exceeded that of the other two functions in linguistic accuracy/acceptability, organisation and appropriateness. However, the use of referential feedback fell to the lowest when the supervisor commented on the content, while the directive, in particular advisory comments, took the lead.

Table 5.5 Formulation of the Feedback in Relation to the Focus

		LAA		Content		Org		App		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Directive	Imperative	6	0.6	66	7.1	12	1.3	14	1.5	98	10.5
	Advisory	10	1.1	90	9.6	8	0.9	39	4.2	147	15.7
Expressive	Positive	2	0.2	61	6.5	8	0.9	5	0.5	76	8.1
	Negative	3	0.3	43	4.6	0		1	0.1	47	5.0
Referential		415	44.4	61	6.5	27	2.9	63	6.7	566	60.6
Total		436	46.7	321	34.4	55	5.9	122	13.1	934	100

Students' responses to feedback

Because in the text analysis stage there was no way to analyse how the students reacted to the 76 positive comments, 858 comments were left to be scrutinised.

Table 5.6 shows that 85.9% of the supervisors' feedback initiated student revision. Over half of the changes (55.4%) were made exactly as the comments requested, and the rest were changes inspired by the comments. Moreover, the students made 188 additional changes.

Table 5.6 Students' Responses to Feedback

Ratings	No.	% (*n*=858)
No change	121	14.1
Change/inspired	262	30.5
Change/directed	475	55.4
Total	858	100
Change/additional	188	

Table 5.7 shows the students' responses in relation to feedback foci and formulations. There were 121 comments to which the students did not make any revision, with the category of content being the most ignored (52.1%) and that of organisation the least (2.5%). Looking at prevalence, the analysis also reveals that the students replied to most of the negative (78.7%) and imperative (83.7%) feedback, but mainly left those with advisory language unattended (44.6%). Directed changes mainly happened in the referential function of feedback (93.9%), particularly in linguistic accuracy/acceptability (69.5%). Inspired changes were more evenly distributed across the categories of formulations, but over half were in content (51.1%). Additional changes were most clustered in content as well (41.0%), to add more details to illustrate, penetrate or expand. Additional changes were also found in three other feedback foci, but there was no significant difference in terms of the frequency of appearance.

Table 5.7 Student's Feedback Responses in Relation to Feedback Types

		LAA		Content		Org		App		Total	
No change (*n*=121)		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Directive	Imperative	2	1.7	11	9.1	1	0.8	2	1.7	16	13.2
	Advisory	2	1.7	40	33.1	2	1.7	10	8.3	54	44.6
Expressive	Negative			10	8.3					10	8.3
Referential		27	22.3	2	1.7			12	10.3	41	33.9
Total		31	25.6	63	52.1	3	2.5	24	20.5	121	100
Change/directed (*n*=475)											
Directive	Imperative	1	0.2	3	0.6	2	0.4	3	0.6	9	1.9
	Advisory	3	0.6	9	1.9	1	0.2	3	0.6	16	3.4
Expressive	Negative			4	0.8					4	0.8
Referential		330	69.5	47	9.9	22	4.6	47	9.9	446	93.9
Total		334	70.3	63	13.3	25	5.3	53	11.2	475	100
Change/inspired (*n*=262)											
Directive	Imperative	3	1.1	52	19.8	9	3.4	9	3.4	73	27.9
	Advisory	5	1.9	41	15.6	5	1.9	26	9.9	77	29.4
Expressive	Negative	3	1.1	29	11.1			1	0.4	33	12.6
Referential		58	22.1	12	4.6	5	1.9	4	1.5	79	30.2
Total		69	26.3	134	51.1	19	7.3	40	15.3	262	100
Total		434		260		47		117		858	
Change/additional (*n*=31)		39	20.7	77	41.0	41	21.8	31	16.5	188	100

In summary, the students tend to: ignore the feedback in the area of content when there is an advisory formulation; strictly follow the feedback in linguistic accuracy/acceptability with referential form; develop the feedback in content regardless

of the formulations; and also make additional revisions without any feedback in content. Compared with other feedback foci, content seems to be the most controversial area, as the students respond to feedback about content with the most 'no change', 'inspired change' and 'additional change'.

5.2. Interpretations and discussions

In the following sections, I relate the findings of the text analysis, regarding feedback foci and formulations, as well as the students' feedback responses, to the current literature and interpret and discuss their possible meanings and implications from Bakhtin's dialogic perspective.

5.2.1 Foci of the supervisors' feedback

With regard to what feedback the supervisors provide, linguistic accuracy/acceptability and content are the main areas commented upon, compared to organisation and appropriateness. This finding aligns with previous research done by Basturkmen and her colleagues (2014), who found language and content were more frequently commented on regardless of the discipline. This is probably because supervisors examine doctoral writing from an academic discourse community perspective, with similar criteria. Feedback, after all, is a discursive practice directed by community norms and values (Basturkmen et al., 2014). Thus, the supervisors' choices of feedback foci are, to some extent, convergent in the areas of critique and can therefore be representative, giving PhD students some indication of what is expected from their doctoral writing.

Also, aligning with previous studies (Basturkmen et al., 2014; Bitchener et al., 2010; Kumar & Stracke, 2007), the quantitative analysis found that supervisors commented a lot on language accuracy. Though no consensus is reached on whether it is the supervisors' responsibility to give language feedback, which usually refers to editing the writing, they do so, no matter whether they agree with this practice or not (Bitchener et al., 2010). In the present study, the supervisors provided a good deal of language feedback. A message was sent: accurate use of the English language is expected. Yet the largest amount of language feedback does not necessarily mean supervisors are most concerned with this aspect. Being native English speakers and academics, correction might be their habitual reaction to mistakes: "This is just what we (supervisors) do to make sense of what we are reading" (Bitchener et al., 2010, p. 92). Or the considerable

language feedback simply reflects the students' unsatisfactory English language proficiency.

If linguistic accuracy/acceptability is a basic expectation of supervisors for academic writing, content is a requirement of such writing at the advanced level. Hyland and Hyland (2006a) propose that "writing is a medium by which students are judged on what they know of specific subject knowledge" (p. 86). Writing here mainly refers to content-related elements, such as ideas and arguments, which manifests the student writers' knowledge of the discipline. Therefore, content is heavily addressed by supervisors as they can facilitate the development of the students' writing and promote learning by identifying gaps, posing questions or suggesting solutions through feedback.

Whatever aspect of the writing the feedback addresses, it initiates dialogues by communicating the gaps or room for improvement in the students' writing or thinking, and by expecting students' responses. Apart from the direct communication with the students, supervisors' feedback can also elicit students' dialogues with other speaking persons and their voices. For instance, one supervisor in this study made the comment, "communication: how does Vygotsky understand communication". This piece of feedback sketches a theory gap. The revised draft embeds a large chunk of words responding to this piece of feedback: "Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the importance of social interactions … On the other hand, some other scholars (e.g., Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Throne, 2006) who study and apply Vygotsky's ideas insists that communication/interaction plays vital role in students' learning …". This paragraph, added in revision, explains not only what Vygotsky's writings say about communication, but also provides opinions from some other Vygotsky scholars. It is, however, probably hard for the student to make revisions merely based on this single piece of feedback; it can provoke the student to engage in extra reading, theory synthesising, even discussion with supervisors or peers, etc., in order to answer this question. These possible follow-up actions triggered by the feedback, in turn, indicate the effectiveness of the feedback per se. This finding indicates that some comments generate more in-depth responses, so that it is advisable for supervisors to consider strategies for providing attainable and thought-provoking feedback, which requires knowledge on the part of the students and tactical formulation of the feedback.

5.2.2 Formulations of feedback in relation to the foci

The feedback formulations are supervisors' choices of words to form their utterance— the feedback—which reveals their opinions/voices on the students' writing. "The use of words in live speech communication is always individual and contextual in nature" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 88). Therefore, unlike the feedback foci which tend to be similar in their prevalence across several studies, the findings of feedback formulations in relation to the foci differ to some extent across studies. This study found 95% of linguistic feedback (415 out of 436) and nearly half of the feedback on organisation and appropriateness were referential, while content feedback was mostly directive and expressive.

These results are partly consistent with those of other studies (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Basturkmen et al., 2014). Their findings all indicate that referential feedback is the largest group of comments given by supervisors to deal with editorial matters, while the directive and expressive comments are prevailing in content related issues. Apart from the similarities, there exist differences in framing the other categories of feedback in these three studies. For instance, Kumar and Stracke (2007) found extensive use of referential feedback in 'organisation'; Basturkmen et al. (2014), contradictorily, discovered that most of the feedback in 'cohesion and coherence' (close to organisation) was directive, while my study showed a roughly even use of directive and referential in 'organisation'. In addition, Hyland and Hyland (2001) found extensive use of the praise, one component of expressive feedback, in undergraduate students' writing. One reason for the divergence of findings is that these studies categorise the feedback focus differently but with overlaps. For instance, I conceptualise the cohesion and coherence as part of organisation, whereas Basturkmen et al. (2014) use "cohesion and coherence" as one category of the feedback foci.

On the other hand, the variance of applying feedback formulation comes in part from its personalised nature, communicating the supervisory relationship from the supervisors' perception which is set or reflected by the feedback formulations. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is multi-levelled and dynamic (Grant, 2003), and this complex relationship can be traced through the formulations of feedback (Mutch, 2003). For the same point of writing, one supervisor may choose to praise first and to suggest with an advisory tone, like a reader with more equal power relations; or to suggest with the

imperative in a more authoritative manner. In this study I argue that referential comments which are straight cross-outs, replacements and add-ons, with no explanation or room for negotiation, suggest the authoritative/expert role the supervisors play. Apart from the referential feedback, there is a prevalent employment of advisory comments that are sometimes followed by mitigations like "let's discuss". This can be an indication of the supervisors' inclination towards a collaborative relationship and their acknowledgement of the students' intellectual autonomy. This intention is more evident in content, the area with the most advisory feedback (Table 5.5). Different from language or referencing style, there are no fixed rules applied to content, so that the supervisors are likely to suggest rather than command or correct directly. Furthermore, this might be the result of the mainstream philosophy of doctoral education in New Zealand, which is to encourage students' critical thinking as a main educational objective (Bensley, 2011). Expressive feedback, on the other hand, is more of an evaluation, through which the supervisors act as gatekeepers in order to evaluate the students' performance. Linking feedback formulations to feedback foci, it can be inferred from the data (Table 5.5) that supervisors lean towards being authoritative in language, organisation and appropriateness, reflected through the most referential feedback, but be more negotiable in content, reflecting through the most advisory feedback. In short, the supervisors' multiple roles in different facets are reflected through feedback formulations, and these roles can evolve and change over time as the students' writing and learning develop, which is indicated in later interviews. Yet, there emerges a question of whether the students agree with those roles in different facets. What if the students want more freedom in language and organisation and wish to receive more advisory feedback?

The process of constructing supervisory relationship through feedback is better to be dialogical, engaging the supervisors and the students. As Hyland and Hyland (2006b) argue, the teacher-student relationship reflected though feedback should be "structured and negotiated" (p. 207). From Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical perspective, the supervisors are encouraged to consciously project the students' possible reactions and attune the foci and formulations correspondingly to better evoke the students' thinking and responsiveness when giving feedback. Thus, theoretically and ideally, the supervisors' feedback provision might helpfully be dialogue-oriented at the very beginning.

Students, as the feedback recipients who are bound as the other side of the feedback relationship, in practice co-construct the relationship via their responses to the feedback. Gulfs and dissonance, however, normally exist between the feedback giver and receiver (Adcroft, 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As a consequence, some divergence might be expected in the students' responses between what the supervisors perceived when offering feedback and what the students actually did, and this was reflected in their revision. Thus, the investigation of the students' feedback responses in the next section provides an intact feedback dialogue loop.

5.2.3 Students' responses to feedback

The second research question the analysis addresses is how the students respond to the feedback. The students' responses prepare and create the ground of active and engaged understanding (Bakhtin, 1981). Analysis found an overall high respondent rate (85.9%). This finding suggests a positive dialogic relationship, as most of the feedback initiates responses. Meanwhile, the high respondent rate indicates the affirmative perception the students held towards the feedback and feedback provider: the feedback was generally regarded as important and constructive; the supervisors as the feedback provider were considered as the experts in the discipline, which gives the feedback more weight than that from peers (Paulus, 1999). Generally speaking, the students are willing to take the supervisor's feedback wholly or partially. The four types of the students' responses are no change, change/directed, change/inspired and change/additional, which support and extend Kulhavy's (1977) idea that the feedback can be rejected, accepted or modified by the students.

The analysis of the students' responses through frequency distributions reveals a close relationship between the students' feedback responses and the feedback foci and formulations. Firstly, they tend to leave the feedback on content unattended, notably those constructed in advisory forms. The underlying reason could be that the students interpret the message of negotiation and collaboration from the advisory form of feedback and, therefore, they make no response to show disagreement or argue for their own ideas indirectly and silently. This interpretation is supported by Hyatt's (2005) findings that language and tone affect the intention of feedback, that the imperative form of feedback expresses the idea of truth, rather than inviting and encouraging the students to dialogue.

Secondly, the students make inspired and additional changes in the area of content. One possible reason is that the feedback in content sometimes is less precise, for example, "It's not clear to me", "expand" and "clarify". Without specific suggestions, the students cannot revise as suggested, but only develop the feedback and respond as inspired change, or no change. Vague and ambiguous feedback often leads to students' sense of uncertainty (Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010). The other likely reason could be that in content, the ideas embody the students' understanding of the subject knowledge (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a), which can be individual. And this individuality of knowing entitles the students a certain degree of flexibility to respond to the content feedback. The change/additional in general signifies the students' self-regulated learning, which is characterised by the students' active involvement in their own learning process and learning by themselves (Zimmerman, 2001). Self-regulated learning is about how students become the master of their own learning (Zimmerman, 1990), which at the doctoral level becomes a main expectation.

Thirdly, in language issues, the students are more likely to make revisions exactly as the feedback recommended. Several possible explanations can be drawn from this finding. Most language problems have already been directly corrected by referential feedback, so following the feedback is the safest and fastest way to revise. At the same time, being second language learners, the students may be not confident enough in English language to disagree with the supervisors who are native English speakers and experienced writers. Nevertheless, there is no direct evidence to support these interpretations about the students' feedback responses. Therefore, these interpretations are to be further explored in the later phase of interviews, in which the students talk about their own reasoning around the responses. These different feedback responses indicate that the students take an active and responsive attitude towards supervisors' feedback that they "either agree or disagree with it (completely or partially), augment it, apply it, prepare for its execution, and so on…" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68).

5.3. Summary

This chapter centres on the questions of 'what' and 'how' in terms of feedback provision and responses in one episode of feedback dialogue. From Bakhtin's dialogic perspective, I have examined the feedback dynamics respectively from the two main interlocutors: the feedback providers and recipients. The main contributions in this

phase of study are two analytical frameworks, respectively, for feedback foci and formulations, and the rating scales of the students' feedback responses, which the supervisors and the students can use to examine their feedback dialogue as a whole and their own dialogical role as one interlocutor. Moreover, the tendencies of feedback provision regarding feedback foci and formulations communicate tacit information about the supervisors' expectations and evaluation criteria for doctoral writing, as well as their perceptions of how the supervisors should work. The tendencies of students' feedback responses, on the other hand, communicates tacit information of students' preferences for feedback provision.

Nevertheless, it opens up the feedback dialogue, by indicating some problematic areas but does not give the reasons for those problems. There lies a critical issue of 'why', which the text analysis cannot answer. For instance, why do the students tend to leave the feedback on content unattended, notably those constructed in advisory forms? Why do they like to make revisions exactly as the feedback recommended in language issues and make inspired and additional changes in the content area? All these questions will be explored through thematic analysis of the first round of semi-structured interviews in which the students talk about their own reasoning in relation to the responses.

Chapter 6. Feedback responses: Self-reasoning

Situated in the paradigm of postpositivist-oriented pragmatism, this second phase study aims to answer the research question of how the students talk about their own reasoning for the responses. This chapter focuses on the peripheries of both external and internal dialogues, investigating the response in particular. The response, being the primacy of the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981), is the students' responses to the feedback. This analysis aims to validate and supplement the findings of the text analysis of students' feedback responses in relation to feedback provision (external dialogue of feedback) with self-reported data from interviews which involves internal aspects of reflections. Therefore, by shifting the focus of analysis from the textual data towards the students' self-reasoning, this phase of study is a continuation of the external dialogue but also a transition to internal dialogue. At the same time, I try to make explicit some tacit information from the interviews, such as the students' perceptions of feedback foci.

6.1. Interacting with the data

In this second phase, I conducted the first round of semi-structured interviews with the same six students at a point between two or three months after their draft proposals had been collected and analysed. With the results of text analysis at hand, the students were asked to recall the reasons triggering their responses to the feedback. The exact interview questions are: 'why did you choose to ignore/strictly follow/develop this comment?' and 'why did you make this additional change without any feedback?' In relation to the findings of the text analysis in the previous chapter, I was particularly interested in finding out the reasons for the response of 'no change', as the seeming lack of students' engagement with and use of the feedback may indicate the ineffectiveness of the feedback (Mashburn, Winstone, Nash, Parker, & Rowntree, 2017). The responsiveness or the students' application of the feedback seemed to me a key issue for improving feedback efficacy. I was also keen to explore the reasons for change/directed, change/inspired and change/additional, as these three responses suggest the varied degrees of the students' internalisation of feedback and the degree of self-regulated learning.

I used thematic analysis to scrutinise the interview data, focusing on the students' answers to the interview questions regarding the reasons for their feedback responses in relation to different feedback foci and formulations. Thus, the initial themes were the students' reasoning around their responses to each category of feedback focus; for example, students' reasoning for responses in content, with sub-themes of (1) reasoning for 'no change' responses in content; (2) reasoning for 'change/directed' responses in content; (3) reasoning for 'change/inspired' responses in content and (4) reasoning for 'change/additional' responses in content. As the analysis proceeded, I realised that the students' perceptions of the feedback focus were determining their feedback responses, so I changed to using the 'Students' perceptions of feedback foci' as the first-level theme, with sub-themes of perceptions on each feedback focus (e.g., perceptions of language; perceptions of content and perceptions of other feedback foci). The other foci incorporated organisation and appropriateness. Due to the small amount of feedback provided, the students did not speak much about these two feedback foci. I had to combine the two under one sub-theme.

The other first-level theme is 'Refined feedback formulations'. The interview data reveals a framework of feedback formulations which the students are aware of and which is broader than the one used in the text analysis. The word 'refined', therefore, is used to distinguish the feedback formulation framework which emerged from the data from the one based on speech functions. I subdivided the theme into positive feedback and critical feedback and related them to the formulation framework drawn from speech functions. To conclude, the themes discussed in the sections that follow are loosely driven by the interview questions and are emergent from the interview data.

The findings from the thematic analysis of the first round of interviews uncover the students' perceptions of feedback foci and formulations, which confirm and refine the findings of the text analysis.

6.2. Students' perceptions of feedback foci

In accordance with the overall high response rate (85.9%) found in the text analysis, the students in their interviews talked about the supervisors' written feedback affirmatively and favourably: "Feedback is important in terms of broadening my horizon and

thinking" (Lily)[8]; "Feedback tells me how to improve my writing" (Anne); "Feedback sets the standards of what is good and expected, and what is defective" (Sunny).

I found the students' perceptions of particular feedback foci influenced their responses most, as well as other factors, such as time limitation. How they respond to certain types of feedback relates to how they perceive that feedback type. The students talked mostly about language and content feedback, partly due to the overwhelming amount of language and content feedback when compared with the amount of feedback on organisation and appropriateness. The analysis result suggests that another possible reason for the students' emphasis on the language and content feedback rests on the fact that the students perceive and respond to the two feedback foci in contrasting ways, which is demonstrated as follows.

6.2.1 Perceptions of language feedback

The students considered language feedback as essential in improving their writing, as they lack confidence in English language and feel reluctant to spot their own language mistakes. Five students out of the six stressed their identity as "being the second language learner" or "not native English speaker". This self-identification brings the students uncertainties in their writing: "being a second language student, I know there are language mistakes in my writing, but it's difficult for myself to find out my own mistakes" (Lee). Leki's (2006) study on L2 graduate students' feedback responses shows a similar concern from the students in expressing ideas in English and hence want more language feedback.

Furthermore, the students in the current study compared their self-conceived "low English language proficiency" with that of their supervisors, perceiving the supervisors being "native English speakers" and "expert writers". Given this fact, the students thought they did not have the expertise to challenge the authority (the supervisor) in the English language and to ignore or to develop the linguistic feedback: "The only secure method was to exactly follow the feedback [in language]" (Ryne).

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[8] Quotations from the participants are not edited.

For Chinese international doctoral students, the L2 and novice writer's lack of confidence in English language is compounded by the culturally established authority and high status of the teacher (the supervisor):

> I have been taught to listen to the teachers since I was little. There is no reason for not doing so when I perfectly know she is the expert and knows more and better than me. (Sunny)

Sunny's narrative reveals the vertical power relation between students and teachers in China, a country ranking high in overall power relations compared to New Zealand (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). This vertical power relation which the Chinese students conceive with the supervisors contributes to their deference to their supervisors. The data suggests that the deference has been magnified in the area of language because of the gap of expertise. The deference will be one focus of discussion in Chapter 7.

To summarise, the analysis indicates that the students' deficit view of their own English language competency, their perception of the supervisors' expertise as being native English speakers and proficient academic writers, and the culturally located perception of teachers/supervisors gives rise to the overwhelming prevalence of the 'change/directed' responses made in relation to language. The feedback dialogue in language is, therefore, direct and in the form of tell-and-accept.

6.2.2 Perceptions of content feedback

In contrast to the perceptions of language feedback, the students' reflections on their feedback responses suggest that they generally perceive the content as the site/place where they can engage in the academic conversation, where they can have their voices/ideas expressed and have more control. Hence, the students tend to develop or ignore the feedback after giving it serious consideration. Sunny commented,

> The content is my understanding and interpretation of my PhD project, so that it should be and also is expected to be, more in my control, and supervisors' feedback is the starting point of my thinking. (Sunny)

The idea of taking more control is echoed by the rest of the students with various reasons given. Firstly, there are many angles on what it is 'right' in the area of content so that there is more flexibility than with other aspects of writing. The flexibility of being 'right'

in content encourages the students to take more control and to move beyond the feedback. Ryne reflected that she had the idea from her supervisor that there was no standard answer in content, so that she felt fairly secure in trying her ideas. She further elaborated this point by mentioning the following:

> In China, there is always a standard answer, which every student is evaluated upon. Many students are likely to keep silent or follow the teacher in order to avoid making mistakes, but I don't have to worry about it now as my supervisor doesn't believe in the 'right answer'… [Laughter]. (Ryne)

The concept of being a 'right answer' or 'being right' discourages the students' attempts to share their ideas due to the threat of being wrong and losing face. Face, in Chinese culture, equals personal dignity, and it is vital to preserve face. In '赤壁之战' (The Battle of the Red Cliffs) at the end of the Han dynasty, the famous '西楚霸王' (King of Western Chu), Xiang Yu, killed himself with his own sword after his defeat, even though he had the chance to take the boat to retreat to his hometown where people still supported him. The last words of Xiang Yu, according to 《史记》 [*The Records of the Grand Historian*], (Sima, 2005), were: 且籍与江东子弟八千人渡江而西，今无一人还，纵江东父兄怜而王我，我何面目见之？ [None of the 8000 followers from Jiangdong survived; though people in Jiangdong still support me, I am too ashamed to return and see them]. The '面目' in the last part of the sentence is 'face'. '我何面目见之' literally means 'I don't have the face to meet them'. To Xiang Yu, his face weighs more than his life. Other proverbs, such as '人要脸，树要皮' [man's face is like the bark to the tree] emphasise the significance of face to Chinese people. Given the strong connection between face and personal dignity, it is understandable why students are not keen to voice their own ideas, in order to avoid losing face by making mistakes in front of the teachers and/or supervisors and fellow classmates.

The non-Chinese supervisors' expectation of the students to think critically about the feedback is another stimulus for the students to take control in writing content: "This [content] is the safe space for me to practice critical thinking" (Joy). Another student, Lily, described her first instinct on encountering content feedback: "Is it the best solution? Can I build upon it?" This idea of building upon feedback is in line with Sunny's view that "feedback is the starting point of my thinking", suggesting that she sees the

supervisors as facilitators. Lily also admitted that this 'thinking over' the feedback was one fundamental expectation of her supervisors. Supervisors are key figures in PhD supervision for their cultural high status and their functional role as gatekeepers with the authority to approve or disapprove of the students' work, and Chinese doctoral students try hard to satisfy them. Consequently, meeting the supervisors' expectations, for example in demonstrating critical thinking, is a major task for the students. The students then are caught in a dilemma of the supervisors' requirement of thinking critically and, at the same time, the collectivist culture of maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship by avoiding direct and face-to-face confrontation (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). The students thus have to find a point of balance following a careful cost-and-benefit evaluation. Lily mentioned how she handled this situation:

> I will not argue with my supervisors in the supervision meeting, as face-to-face confrontation is not my culture. Instead, I show my disagreement in writing. The disagreement is of course the result of my careful thinking of the feedback and my research. So I will not speak it out, but I will write what I think is proper by either developing or ignoring the feedback … (Lily)

For some students, the 'thinking over' the feedback can be difficult and tension-filled:

> I often wrestle with the decisions between being obedient and to listen to the supervisor and being critical and independent to do what I want to do, during which the benefits and costs of making changes based on feedback are weighed. The outcomes could be either a decision of making no change to show disagreement, or a decision of accepting the feedback and making changes as directed, or making in-depth changes which go further than the feedback. (Sunny)

In addition to the 'change/inspired', the 'no change' responses mainly in content can be the result of deep and critical thinking. This finding challenges the general interpretation of students' 'no change' as a response of failed understanding of supervisors/teachers' feedback (Ferris, 1997), or of the students being lazy.

The perceived flexibility of content and the practice of critical thinking urge the students to engage actively in content and respond to content feedback more with responses of no change, inspired change and additional change. The three types of response demonstrate the students' "agentic engagement" with the feedback in that they make

constructive contribution into the flow of the feedback they receive (Reeve & Tseng, 2011, p. 258). There are a few occasions when the students are forced to develop the feedback or leave the feedback unattended:

> I have to [develop the feedback], as there is no suggestion to follow, but only a question mark. (Sunny)

> I know there is a problem, as critiqued by the supervisor as "unclear". However, I have no idea what the exact problem is. To me, it is clear enough. But I am a good student [laughter], so I won't leave any mistake incorrect. The only way is to rewrite the whole sentence. (Lily)

> I don't know how to revise based on this feedback [have a clear conclusion]. There is no information of how to make it clear, and I don't know what clear means. To be honest, I feel it is clear already. (Lee)

As discussed in Chapter 5, ambiguous feedback without details of how to improve may lead to responses of inspired change or no change. Meanwhile, this reasoning about no change and change/inspired responses to some extent indicates the communication gaps between the feedback provider and receiver. These gaps make the feedback dialogues less effective in that the students cannot actually apply the feedback, but have to make a detour to respond or make no response. The obscurity of feedback and its effects on the students' responses result in the students' preference for detailed feedback, which will be discussed specifically in Section 6.3.2.

To summarise, the responses of inspired change, no change and additional change, which happen frequently in the students' responses to content feedback, indicate the students' agency and engagement in feedback dialogues where diverse national and academic cultures are entangled. Sometimes however, the response of no change and inspired change can be indicative of failed feedback communication. The feedback dialogues in content are, therefore, complex, multi-layered and negotiated.

6.2.3 Perceptions of other feedback foci

Some students perceived the critical feedback on organisation as the sign of "vital drawback in writing" (Lily), or "big problems" (Ryne), and one student regarded the feedback on organisation as "the most crucial" (Joy). They therefore wanted to follow

the feedback strictly in order to fix the organisational problems, and this tendency has been confirmed by the fact that the students responded to 53 organisational comments out 55 (94.5%) (See Table 5.7). Because there are comparatively fewer comments in organisation (47 out of 858), and the students did not discuss them as much as the other categories of feedback, I do not have sufficient data to draw further conclusions in this aspect. The current study is not the only one discovering a low rate of comment in the area of organisation. Basturkmen and her colleagues (2014) found in their study that supervisors commented the least in the field of cohesion/coherence, the "links between and order of information and ideas" (p. 436), which is close to the concept of organisation (structure, logic, coherence and cohesion).

The students perceived two aspects of significance in feedback on appropriateness, which gave rise to two different feedback responses. One related to APA formatting of references, which all six students conceived as "have-to-obey rules" (Sunny). They simply followed the feedback with directed changes. However, the students responded differently when the feedback demanded "authority, evidence or references" to support certain ideas. They still thought this kind feedback was important to strengthen the argument, but many of them questioned the value of revision against the time and energy spent: "It [the literature] may be invalid later" (Joy). The developmental nature of the research means that some of the ideas may be trimmed later, making the feedback on this point no longer of use. As Ryne commented,

> I don't have enough time to look for and read all these [recommended references]. There are more important and urgent comments I need to deal with. Moreover, some of the literature will become irrelevant later when I polish my research focus and purpose. (Ryne)

I conclude that the students are very pragmatic in their responses to the feedback on appropriateness, considering the balance of overall time allocation between study, family, work and leisure, in deciding how much time and energy they can invest in something which may be discarded in the near future. If they choose to ignore the feedback or fail to find the reference at some point, they would either delete this point (change/inspired) or leave it with no change.

To sum up, the students perceive the feedback foci differently in relation to its importance as well as in the degree of agency they can exert, which influences their

feedback responses. For the areas where regulations or rules apply, such as grammar and referencing style, the students are more inclined to follow the feedback as deferent learners; for areas where there are no fixed rules but apparent flexibility, they would like to have more say in developing or disagreeing with the feedback as more agentic speakers in dialogue. Hence, in some instances, no response is a response, as a result of the students' disagreement or their 'cost-benefit' evaluation. The findings also suggest that the students interact with feedback from a multiplicity of perspectives, identities and approaches, which conforms to Bakhtin's (1981) idea of heteroglossia, in which speaking subjects are embedded in multiple voices.

6.3. Refined feedback formulations

The non-Chinese supervisors choose different words, phrases or sentences to formulate the feedback—their voices, and the students may respond to those voices differently. For instance, the students may be more sensitive to the "selection of harsher (or, conversely, milder) expressions, a contentious (or, conversely, conciliatory) tone, and so forth" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 92). The categories of the feedback formulations that arise in the interviews are different from those drawn from speech functions and applied in the text analysis, as shown in Table 5.2. However, the interviews bring the students' perspective to the forefront, which sheds some light on their choices of feedback responses, indicating their active engagement in the feedback dialogues (Bakhtin, 1986).

The interview data shows that the students are conscious of certain feedback formulations, and they have preferences for particular formulations in relation to the feedback focus. These are all summarised in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Refined Feedback Formulations
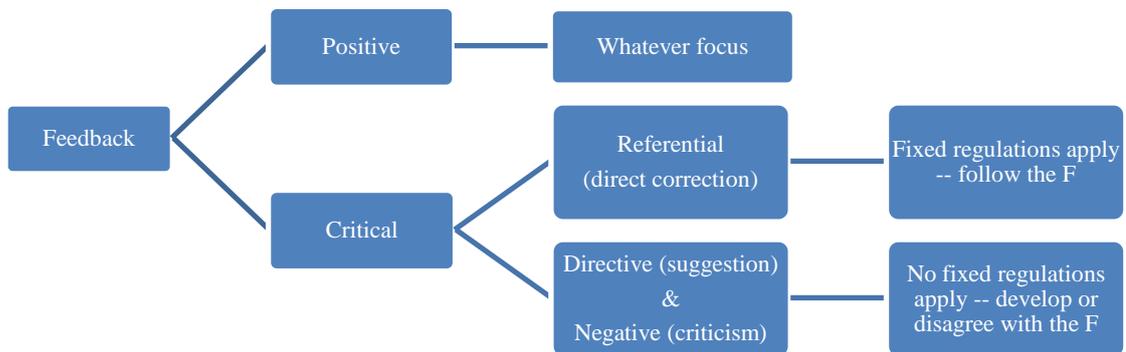
Positive and critical feedback are the two kinds of formulations the students are aware of. Although the students have ambivalent feelings towards positive feedback, it is generally welcomed regardless of feedback focus. However, under critical feedback, they prefer the fixed regulations (grammar, spelling, APA) in referential form (direct correction) which they are likely to follow strictly. Otherwise, they favour directive (suggestion) or negative (criticism) feedback, which is worded in a way that entitles more freedom for them to choose to follow, develop or disagree.

This classification of feedback by the students is more general than, but still fall into, the categories of speech functions (referential, directive and expressive) used in the text analysis. Their relationships will be explained in detail in the following two sections. However, the students do not distinguish the advisory from the imperative form of feedback, although the two do make a difference in their feedback responses as found in the text analysis. Nevertheless, the students' responses to the positive feedback, which cannot be examined in the text analysis, have now been revealed by means of the interviews.

6.3.1 Positive feedback

The students had mixed feelings towards the positive feedback. They thought it was necessary, regardless of its focus (language, content, organisation or appropriateness), as a sign of meeting the standards and, therefore, enhances their confidence. Nevertheless, they considered positive feedback without any explanation of what is

good to be not very helpful and constructive in terms of developing the writing and thinking.

Positive feedback is of importance to doctoral students as a source of encouragement (Eyres et al., 2001; Yu & Lee, 2013). Researchers have found that receiving feedback on writing can be highly emotional for students, either positively or negatively (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2010; Wang & Li, 2011). Praise is a kind of assurance from the supervisors, which boosts the students' confidence and settles down their nerves. Kumar (2007) reflects that positive feedback encouraged him and gave him much-needed confidence. The students of this study talked about praise as follows:

> My supervisor praised a lot. It's important for building my confidence in writing and in content knowledge. (Lee)

> My main supervisor praises a lot. She said I should not only look at those critical comments, but also those 'ticks', which mean good. And sometimes she will repeat the praise several times, both in written and oral, to make me believe she really means it rather than just being polite. This may be due to my lack of confidence [laughing]. (Lily)

> Given the status as the first-year international PhD student, assurance that you are on the right track from the supervisor perhaps is the best morale and confidence booster. (Ryne)

Ryne's idea of praise confirms Eyres and her colleagues' finding (2001) that the support and encouragement from the teachers and supervisors are especially important for those new to the doctoral programme. In addition, supervisors' affirmation and confirmation in the form of positive feedback not only enhance the students' confidence, but can also enable the students to develop their autonomy to challenge their supervisors' feedback. One student (Anne) reflected that the accumulated confidence gained from her supervisor's affirmation made her gradually become brave enough to sometimes argue for her own ideas:

> Because my ideas are always valued and affirmed by them [the supervisors] through written or oral feedback, I feel I am able to make reasonable judgement. And my supervisors are quite happy with me having my own voices. (Anne)

This finding from the interview data extends the literature by showing how the confidence gained from supervisors' positive feedback can further affect the student's interactions, including feedback interactions with their supervisors, in relation to critical and independent thinking.

Apart from the constructive perception, some students also mentioned their critical opinions on empty positive feedback—praise without specifying the good qualities:

> Positive feedback is often very short, such as the symbol of a 'tick', or words like 'good' or 'very good'. But the thing is that in most cases, I don't know what goodness the feedback refers to, which means I may not duplicate the goodness in future writing. So, it would be more helpful if there can be some explanation of what I have done well followed by the comment of good. (Sunny)

Sunny's advice for positive feedback supports the finding from another study that complimentary comment should link to a clue regarding what was good or why it was good to make it instructive valuable (Eyres et al., 2001). Therefore, the data suggests that the students perceive positive feedback on two levels: it is helpful in showing the supervisors' approval and improving the students' confidence in writing; it is not very helpful in improving writing unless what is 'good' has been explained, therefore, and can be further applied.

6.3.2 Critical feedback

Critical feedback does not necessarily mean to criticise. Rather, the students take this concept as an assemblage of all non-positive feedback, including referential, directive and negative feedback, with the intention of pointing out and/or bridging the 'gap'. Pointing out the gap means to state the problem, whereas bridging the gap underscores the solution to the problem provided through feedback.

Constructive critical feedback

The findings suggest that the students hold a confirmatory perception towards critical feedback. This positive perception of critical feedback is in agreement with the findings of some studies (e.g., Eyres et al., 2001; Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Yu & Lee, 2013), indicating that critical feedback is constructive and positive to students, leading to revision and reflection. The students believe that critical feedback is more effective in

improving their writing and thinking by diagnosing and/or treating the problems: "Positive feedback is the sign that I am doing good and right, but it cannot help me to improve, or do it better, while the critical feedback can" (Sunny). The students know that their proposal drafts are far from perfect, with gaps and holes which need to be identified by the experienced supervisors through their critical feedback. Applying and responding to these comments provides one route to filling in these gaps and holes:

> This [critical feedback] is what I look for in feedback. I certainly know this work is not good enough, and one of the supervisors' jobs is to help me to spot the weakness of my thinking and writing. I would be worried and don't know what to do with my writing if there is no critical feedback. (Anne)

Thus, critical feedback is expected and welcomed by the students, which, as a result, does not cause as much emotional turmoil to the receivers (students) as some literature suggests (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). On the contrary, the critical feedback may reassure the students by showing the direction of the next move and indicating that the supervisor is doing a good job. As Eyres et al. (2001) conclude in their study, although not with Chinese students, that "critique = care, and conversely, lack of critique = the teacher doesn't care" (p. 151).

There is a cultural contribution in the students' positive attitude towards critical feedback. Critical feedback in Chinese can be interpreted as '忠言', the sincere advice which is harsh to the ear. As the old Chinese saying posits, 良药苦口利于病，忠言逆耳利于行 [bitter medicine cures sickness, and unpalatable advice benefits conduct][9]. Overall, this well-known saying aims to encourage people to take criticism (Li & Li, 1991). Furthermore, 'severity' is also highly appreciated by Chinese Confucian culture, especially in education, which in return downplays praise. 《三字经》 [*The Three Character Classic*] (Wang, 2007), one of the classics in ancient Chinese and the most popular initiatory textbook for children, states: 教不严，师之惰 [if the teacher is not strict in teaching, he/she is playing idling]. Other well-known proverbs, for instance, 严家出好儿 [strict families produce good sons], 严师出高徒 [strict teachers produce outstanding students], 严父出孝子 [strict fathers produce dutiful sons], emphasise

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[9] This Chinese saying comes from 《孔子家语》 [*The School Sayings of Confucius*] (Wang, 2007), translated by Kramers (1950).

strictness and its benefits. When being strict, praise is downplayed and critical comments are valued. This is a possible explanation of why the Chinese international students take positive feedback for emotional needs but critical feedback as practical and constructive remedies to problems.

I like the feedback to be provided…

In the interviews, the students further classified critical feedback into: (1) referential (which they call direct correction), primarily in relation to language accuracy and acceptability, with which the supervisors label or/and correct the error; (2) directive (which they call suggestion); and (3) negative (which they call criticism). Therefore, the sub-categories under critical feedback in the students' perceptions can fall into the categories based on speech functions (Holmes, 2013).

In relation to the findings earlier drawn from the feedback focus in Section 6.2, the students preferred referential feedback (direct correction) in areas where rules or regulations applied, for example, language and referencing style. Joy explained,

> I like direct correction in language and APA referencing style. I mean there is no room for me to develop as they are regulated by certain rules. And my supervisors know those rules better than me. (Joy)

In contrast, they wish to receive feedback showing more flexibility in other aspects, such as content, in forms of suggestions or criticisms, or in linguistic terms, the directive or the negative under the category of expressive form. These non-referential forms of feedback give them more room to conceive and reflect. This finding matches that found in the previous section about students' perceptions of content feedback, where they want more control. The students' preferences for feedback provision in a sense support previous research by East et al. (2011) which shows that both L1 and L2 students appreciate direct feedback on language and organisation and indirect prompting that promotes their thinking.

Moreover, the students preferred more detailed critical feedback. This is the third time I have come across this point: once in text analysis, again in the perceptions of content feedback, and again here. The students' longing for detailed feedback has been found in various studies (Can & Walker, 2011; Eyres et al., 2001; Leki, 2006). In this study, the students prefer suggestions, which normally come with an implementable plan for

revision. Offering a remedy to problems is what Hyland and Hyland (2001) use to distinguish suggestion from criticism. For the students, suggestion and criticism work the same in spotting the holes and inspiring thinking. Yet, as Anne commented, "the feedback is much more workable when it contains details of what's going wrong and how to improve". Therefore, the ideal feedback should comprise the identification of the gap as well as strategies for bridging the gap. This concept of feedback matches how some scholars define feedback as being information about the gap between the actual and the potential level that can be used to close the gap (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Ramaprasad, 1983).

6.4. Summary

As a further exploration of the students' feedback responses to particular feedback foci and formulations, the findings from interview data substantiate, develop and refine the results of text analysis in the previous phase. Therefore, taking into consideration the findings of the first two phases, it was found that the students appear to perceive a similar approach with their supervisors in providing language feedback in referential form and content feedback in either directive (suggestion) or expressive (positive and negative) form. What the study found that extends existing literature is that the students like to make directed changes in the language area but want to have more control in content to make inspired and additional changes, and even no changes. This tendency may be something that supervisors are not aware of. Overall, the results suggest that the students' perceptions of the feedback as well as the feedback foci and formulations affect their feedback responses. At the same time, this study provides an alternative interpretation of the 'no change' or 'no response' as being active engagement in the feedback dialogue, which involves careful evaluation. Therefore, it is important to distinguish students' active inaction from passive resistance to the feedback.

In addition, the findings show an individuality of the Chinese international doctoral students' perceptions of feedback focus and formulations, which are, to some extent, divergent from that of their non-Chinese supervisors and other non-Chinese students. Thus, consistent with the literature reviewed, the findings suggest that feedback might best start with co-construction and be dialogically oriented, in order to encourage the feedback response. However, it is more than the literal co-construction of involving the students' ideas of feedback provision, as most literature suggests. More importantly, the

results indicate the significance of supervisors envisaging the students' feedback responses in relation to their level, language and cultural background when designing feedback regarding 'what' and 'how'. As Bakhtin (1986) writes,

> When speaking I always take into account the apperceptive background of the addressee's perception of my speech: the extent to which he is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies—because all this will determine his active responsive understanding of my utterance. (pp. 95-96)

Through this process of supervisors' internal co-construction of feedback with the students, feedback might be more accessible and responsive, and can, therefore, better facilitate feedback dialogues between supervisors and students.

Chapter 7. Feedback responses: Multi-layered interactions/dialogues of voices

In the previous chapter, I thematically analysed the first round of interviews with the students to explore their self-reasoning about their feedback responses. In this chapter, the same interview data will be re-examined, drawing on concepts from Bakhtin. I will further explore why the students respond to the feedback in this way, by asking how the responses come into being as a result of the students' interactions with others' voices. These internal dialogues that happen in the students' subjective belief system indicate possible "active and engaged understanding" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282).

The 'why' question will be investigated in a different paradigm and from a different analytical perspective in this chapter, compared with Chapter 6. This chapter resides in the paradigm of constructivist-oriented pragmatism, in which I look at the constructing moments of feedback responses. I conceptualise these moments as the becoming of the students' voices at the time of responding. Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism works as both a theoretical and an analytical framework in this chapter. His overarching theory of dialogism—in particular, concepts of voice and herteroglossia—provides a means of conceptualising the students' experience of engaging with their supervisors' feedback. More importantly, these concepts help explain more about students' experience with their supervisors' feedback: What voices and whose voices are interacting inside this box labelled 'students' responses to feedback? How do these voices interweave with each other (e.g., buffeting, aligning, reconciling) and lead to these responses?

By looking at the feedback through Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, I argue that feedback provision and response construct one episode of dialogue out of a chain of dialogues on feedback. Specifically, students' responses, at the outset, complete the dialogue initiated by the supervisors through providing feedback and, at the same time, orienting towards future responses/evaluations/feedback from the supervisors, thereby launching another round of dialogue. I also argue that students' responses to the feedback are the products of a series of complex and multi-layered dialogues that the students engage in with supervisors and others; the responses are students' voices developed out of engaging

with many others' voices. According to Bakhtin's (1981) idea of 'unfinishedness', the becoming of the students' voices is an unfinished open process, as dialogues and interactions still continue. It makes sense, therefore, to study the becoming of the students' voices by capturing a snapshot of its representations or fragments, as found in the feedback responses.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the active voices and, most importantly, their interactions.

7.1. Revisiting the theory

To identify the active voices and their interactions leading to the students' feedback responses, I have applied Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical constructs of voices and heteroglossia as the theoretical and analytical lens.

Within Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, voice is the "speaking personality" (p. 434) which is ideological and dialogical. Voice is ideological because it is a "semantic position" (Emerson, 1984, p. xxxvi), expressing a point of view and opinion. Voice is dialogical because of the 'double-voicedness' which draws attention to the dialogue between the self and others, since one's voices were born of, stimulated by or overlain with those of others (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, there exist others' voices for the development of one's own. So to speak, behind every single piece of voice spoken by any single speaking person, there stand many others and others' voices. This self-other relationship in dialogism legitimises and sets the parameters for this phase of study, allowing us to see feedback and feedback responses as involving the interactions of voices between self and others.

Interactions bring self and others' voices into dialogical relationships, which are driven by the centripetal and centrifugal forces of herteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981). The centripetal force leads to unifications and alliances, whereas centrifugal force results in stratifications and struggles (Bakhtin, 1981). I strive to zoom in from this point, to get a snapshot of the becoming of the student's own voices developed by dialogising with others' voices in responding to general or specific aspects of feedback.

The methods and process of analysis in relation to identifying the active voices and interactions are outlined in the following sections.

7.2. Interacting with the data

In order to identify the voices, I started with one student's interview transcript, coded it line by line, wrote memos and drew diagrams, as described in the methodology chapter. Here are some examples and principles of how I identify the voices and related information, such as the speaking person(s).

One student, Lily, said, "For grammar, I usually revise loyally upon the grammatical feedback, because I am a second language learner". At this point, the feedback is the voice of the supervisor, and I located the student's voice as: English is my second language. Later, Lily explained one prevailing reason for her "revising loyally" by mentioning her embedded reverence towards the teacher and her educational experience of doing what the teacher tells her to do. Then I pinpointed the voice of deference or dependence from the very deep root of Confucian culture, which is deeply implanted in the Chinese educational system and in Chinese philosophy. Also, she talked about seeking further assistance or advice from other non-supervisor resources, such as a language advisor, colleagues, the internet and so on, when she had difficulties in applying indirect language feedback (e.g., highlighting). Some 'others', therefore, other than the supervisors, were identified as offering ideas for the students in relation to their revision.

To provide a more holistic picture of the analytic process, I would like to illustrate with an excerpt of one student's interview data within the context.

Supervisor' feedback: How does Vygotsky understand communication?

Student's response: No change

Student's reasoning: This feedback is important... However, I don't really think I can cover this without far exceeding the word limit and deadline. Most importantly, this is only the proposal which will be developed to a large extent, and I may not use the Vygotsky theory at all later, so I didn't make any revision [exercising *critical thinking and independence*]. I explained this to my supervisor and she accepted [*deference/dependence*].

Interviewer's question: What if your supervisor did not accept your justification?

Student's reply: Well, she [the supervisor] normally encourages my <u>critical and independent thinking</u>, and will not be strongly against my ideas. To her, even making mistakes is the process of learning. But if she really insists, <u>I will follow</u> [*deference/dependence*].

Interviewer's reflection: The voices of *word limit, deadline* and *developmental nature of research* are evident in this narrative. However, I can still sense some implicit voices, those within square brackets and in italics: *critical thinking, independence and deference/dependence*. These three voices were confirmed by the student later when I probed this issue further by asking about alternatives.

I identified the active voices and the speaking person in this way and validated the findings following the method as described in the methodology chapter. In particular, I brought the result of my analysis to the students to check the accuracy and completeness of the data and my interpretations. Four diagrams were sketched, refined and summarised, featuring the voices, the ideologies and the typical speaking persons in dialogues of responding respectively to the feedback on language accuracy/acceptability (see Table 7.1), content (see Table 7.2), appropriateness (see Table 7.3), as well as general feedback (see Table 7.4).

As shown in Table 7.1, I found 12 voices active in feedback dialogues when the students respond to language feedback. They are: *English is my second language; listening to the supervisor(s)/following the feedback/deference/dependence; what counts as good quality academic writing; meeting the deadline/meeting the deadlines; cutting the words/word limit; editing is not my job; independence; critical thinking; responding to the most important feedback first/prioritisation; overlook* and *I don't know*[10]. All these voices were directly or indirectly mentioned by the students and were grouped in the first column under the title of 'The voice of …'. To deepen the understanding of these voices, I made a second column, 'The voice about …', showing the ideologies and viewpoints the voices embody, although sometimes they overlap.

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[10] To differentiate the voices in the text, I often italicise the voices the first and the second time they appear in this chapter.

Table 7.1 Voices, Ideologies and Typical Speaking Persons—LAA

The voice of…	The voice about… (Ideologies, viewpoints)	Typical speaking person(s)
1. English is my second language	• Lack of confidence in English language for being a second language learner	• The student
2. Listening to the supervisor(s)/following the feedback/deference/ dependence	• Deference/dependence/ obedience to the authority	• The Confucian culture embedded in formal and informal education in China
3. What counts as good quality academic writing?	• Discrepancies in instructing academic English writing between the supervisors and former English teachers	• Bachelor education in English writing • Master's education in English writing • Doctoral education in English writing
4. Meeting the deadline/ meeting multiple deadlines	• Submitting on time • Managing the time effectively	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
5. Cutting the words/word limit	• Meeting the word limit of 10,000	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
6. Editing is not my job	• The students, rather than the supervisors, should deal with their language issues.	• The supervisor(s) • Others
7. Independence	• Self-regulated learning • Independent thinking	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
8. Critical thinking	• Thinking with reasons • Challenging the authority	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
9. Responding to the most important feedback first/ prioritisation	• Prioritise the feedback	• The student • Others
10. Others' voices on feedback responses	• Seeking assistance from other sources apart from the supervisors	• Non-supervisor others: peers, books, articles, internet, etc.
11. Overlook	• Carelessness	• The student
12. I don't know	• Cannot answer the question raised by feedback with current knowledge base. • It's not worthwhile of spending much time in solving this problem	• The student

There is the third column headed 'Typical speaking person(s)'. This term refers to those most significant figure(s) who speak a particular voice, such as Confucius for Confucian philosophies, and/or the closest figure(s) to the students, who directly speak to the

students, such as their supervisors. I applied the 'Typical speaking person(s)' to help the voices and their interactions to materialise, as they are the research focus of this phase. As mentioned earlier, one's own voice is always half that of others' (Bakhtin, 1981). There can be endless others in one voice if tracing back its development history. Furthermore, speaking person can be as specific as an individual, but also can be as indefinite as representations or an assemblage of individuals (Bakhtin, 1981). In addition, what matters in most cases is the voice because the voice speaks of and embodies the speaking person (Bakhtin, 1981). I decided, therefore, to highlight the voice but downplay the speaking persons in this stage because there is no way to exhaust all the speaking persons of a certain voice.

Table 7.2 shows the voices, ideologies and typical speaking person(s) identified in the students' responses to the content feedback.

Table 7.2 Voices, Ideologies and Typical Speaking Persons—Content

The voice of…	The voice about… (Ideologies, viewpoints)	Typical speaking person(s)
1. It's not my field	• The knowledge gap (supervisors cannot know everything)	• The supervisor(s)
2. I don't know	• Cannot answer the question raised by feedback with current knowledge base. • It's not worthwhile spending much time in solving this problem	• The student
3. It (the proposal/ research) is developing, I don't know until I go to the field/later when analysing the data	• The developing nature of research and knowledge acquisition.	• The student • The supervisor(s)
4. Responding to the most important feedback first/ prioritisation	• Prioritise the feedback	• The student • Others
5. Meeting the deadline/ meeting multiple deadlines	• Submitting on time • Managing the time effectively	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
6. Cutting the words/word limit	• Meeting the word limit of 10,000	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
7. Independence	• Self-regulated learning • Independent thinking	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
8. Critical thinking	• Thinking with reasons • Challenging the authority	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
9. Listening to the supervisor(s)/following the feedback/deference/ dependence	• Deference/dependence/ obedience to the authority	• The Confucian culture embedded in formal and informal education in China
10. Others' voices on feedback responses	• Seeking assistance from other sources apart from the supervisors	• Non-supervisor others: peers, books, articles, internet, etc.

I identified ten voices, of which two function specifically in responding to the content feedback, including: *It's not my field* and *It (the proposal/research) is developing, I don't know until I go to the field/later when analysing the data*. The other eight voices, such as critical thinking, cutting the words/word limit, have been mentioned already in the students' responses to the language feedback.

Five voices were identified, as shown in Table 7.3, as contributing to the students' responses to feedback on appropriateness, which refers to academic and discipline conventions. Nonetheless, only one new voice emerged in the data analysis in this field: *I cannot find the reference*.

Table 7.3 Voices, Ideologies and Typical Speaking Persons—Appropriateness

The voice of…	The voice about… (Ideologies, viewpoints)	Typical speaking person(s)
1. I cannot find the reference	• Cannot answer the question raised by feedback with current knowledge base. • It's not worthwhile spending much time in solving this problem	• The student
2. Meeting the deadline/ meeting multiple deadlines	• Submitting on time • Managing the time effectively	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
3. Independence	• Self-regulated learning • Independent thinking	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
4. Critical thinking	• Thinking with reasons • Challenging the authority	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
5. Listening to the supervisor(s)/following the feedback/deference/ dependence	• Deference/dependence/ obedience to the authority	• The Confucian culture embedded in formal and informal education in China

As shown in Table 7.1, Table 7.2 and Table 7.3, some voices are active across the feedback foci. These common voices were again found in the students' interview data when they spoke "in general" or "in conclusion". I therefore built up a table (Table 7.4) to display the eight voices and the relevant aspects from the students' general feedback responses. General feedback refers to the feedback with no regard to specific foci. At this point, I did not bring up the voices in responding to the feedback on organisation, due to the sparsity of organisational feedback (47 out of 851) which led to very little response from the students in the interviews.

Table 7.4 Voices Ideologies and Typical Speaking Persons—General Feedback

The voice of…	The voice about… (Ideologies, viewpoints)	Typical speaking person(s)
1. I don't know	• Cannot answer the question raised by feedback with current knowledge base. • It's not worthwhile spending much time in solving this problem	• The student
2. Responding to the most important feedback first/ prioritisation	• Prioritise the feedback	• The student • Others
3. Meeting the deadline/ meeting multiple deadlines	• Submitting on time • Managing the time effectively	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
4. Cutting the words/word limit	• Meeting the word limit of 10,000	• Institution • The supervisor(s) • The student
5. Independence	• Self-regulated learning • Independent thinking	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
6. Critical thinking	• Thinking with reasons • Challenging the authority	• Supervisor(s) • Institution • The student
7. Listening to the supervisor(s)/following the feedback/deference/ dependence	• Deference/dependence/ obedience to the authority	• The Confucian culture embedded in formal and informal education in China
8. Others' voices on feedback responses	• Seeking assistance from other sources apart from the supervisors	• Non-supervisor others: peers, books, articles, internet, etc.

All the voices identified in the four tables were mentioned by at least two students. I did not include in these tables the voices mentioned by an individual student. However, later in this chapter I discuss some voices that are active in one student's narrative if the voice is transformative to the particular student, such as the voice of *direct communication* for Joy. Moreover, as one can see in these tables, there are other speaking persons apart from the students. I identified other speaking persons and their voices through analysing the students' narratives of their feedback experiences, in which the students restated or repeated others' voices/opinions. For example, the voice of *editing is not my job* actually comes from the supervisors as the typical speaking persons, but is rephrased by some students: "my co-supervisor thinks it is the students not the supervisors who are responsible for the language issues" (Ryne).

After identifying the active voices and typical speaking persons, I re-listened to the interviews and reread the transcripts several times in order to explore the interactions of the voices through another level of coding with particular use of diagrams. The interactions of the voices can be revealed from the students' narratives explaining their reasoning for the response to one particular piece of feedback. But links between the voices were also apparent from looking across the transcript, so that reading through the whole transcript is necessary to locate the interactions of the voices. The details of how voices interact with each other to contribute to the students' responses (voices) will be presented in Sections 7.4 to 7.6.

7.3. Active voices and primary voices

Two types of voices are identified in relation to their functional periphery, which refers to the scope the voice functions as an active participant in the dialogue. Some voices are context specific, active in one feedback focus, while some function across several feedback foci. For instance, the voices *English is my second language* from the students and *editing is not my job* from the supervisors, are functional solely in the language area. The voice *I cannot find the reference*, from the students, participates only in the dialogue which responds to feedback in the area of appropriateness. On the contrary, voices such as independence, critical thinking, meeting the deadline/meeting the deadline(s), cutting the words/word limit, deference/dependence, function actively across all categories of feedback foci (language, content and appropriateness). The students later readdressed these voices when discussing the general feedback. As shown in Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4, there are many voices being dialogised and it is beyond my reach to deliberate over every voice. Therefore, I only explicate three primary voices which function across feedback foci and which are identified by most of the students as being the most influential but controversial. They are the voices of independence, critical thinking and deference.

The voices of independence and critical thinking come directly from the students' narratives. Students mentioned these two voices as being general requirements for PhD study in their current university and in the Western academic world. However, the students also talked a lot about being dependent on, listening to, obeying, or/and following the supervisors, and I use the term deference or dependence to embrace these ideas.

7.3.1 Independence

What does the voice of independence mean? What are the characteristics of being independent? Based on the interview data, the voice of independence seems to relate to being in charge of one's own study, being active in seeking supervisors' support and knowing the supervisors' roles as facilitators:

> It is me who requests meetings or discussions with the supervisors. I don't really expect the supervisors to chase or want to meet me. It's my study anyway. (Lily)

> The non-Chinese supervisor is only assisting and supporting. This is how they do it here. (Lee)

> I have to take the lead. You cannot wait for the supervisors to tell you what to do and how to do it. It's not gonna happen. (Sunny)

The postgraduate supervision guidelines of the university (University of Auckland, 2016) emphasise this kind of independence. The 11 responsibilities of the PhD candidates outlined in the guidelines feature verbs and verbal phrases such as "take the initiative" (appears twice), "take responsibility", "decide", "discuss", "maintain" (appears three times). In addition, the guidelines state that the primary responsibility of the supervisors is to provide academic advice and support. Thus, the voice of independence in this context underpins a supervisory relationship in which students take control of their PhD study under their supervisors' support. However, the students should not wait to be supported, but should take the initiative. As the guidelines assert, the students should "take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, including difficulties with accessing sources or resources"; "take the initiative in organising supervisory meetings according to the agreed schedule, and take and circulate notes from meetings" (University of Auckland, 2016).

Relating to Bakhtin's dialogical perspective, the voice of independence from the local academic environment can be conceptualised as being proactive in order to initiate dialogues with supervisors and others, for instance, "accessing sources or resources" (University of Auckland, 2016). For Bakhtin (1981), the essence of dialogism is the existence of others and others' voices in the development of one's own voices. The voice of independence hence does not require students to be completely free from supervisors' scaffolding, but to be actively involved in the supervision process. This idea is consistent

with the theory of self-regulated leaning, where learners actively participate in and become masters of their own learning process (Zimmerman, 2001). Highly self-regulated learners are more likely to actively seek external support than those less regulated learners (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). I include, therefore, 'self-regulated learning' as one main ideology which the voice of independence embraces in the context in which the study is carried out.

7.3.2 Critical thinking

Critical thinking is another powerful voice identified in the interviews with the students. This voice is emphasised in the local academic context by speaking persons such as the supervisors. It is considered to be of "the first importance in the conception and organisation of educational activities" (Scheffler, 1973, p. 1), "a fundamental aim and an overriding ideal for education" (Bailin & Siegel, 2003, p. 188). The words 'first' and 'fundamental' demonstrate the significance of the voice of critical thinking in contemporary Western education, which explains its powerfulness in the dialogues of feedback responses in the current study.

As important as critical thinking is, what does it mean? In the university where the students are doing their PhD, critical thinking is listed as one of the eight general study skills, which involves "questioning and evaluating everything that you hear, see, think, read and write" (University of Auckland, 2014). In a more specific manner, Moore (2013) identified seven definitional strands of critical thinking: judgement, scepticism, a simple originality, sensitive readings, rationality, an activist engagement with knowledge, and self-reflexivity. Although to date no consensus has been reached in defining critical thinking, most scholars generally agree that critical thinking is good thinking that draws on rationality (Bailin, 1996; Bensley, 2011).

The students, nevertheless, appear to simplify critical thinking as being critical and negative. The phrases "to challenge the supervisor" and "to disagree with the supervisor" frequently come out of those students' accounts of their feedback experience associated with critical thinking. Moreover, the students regard the voice of critical thinking as a kind of compulsory requirement of their supervisors and the institution, which they struggle with to some extent:

I think the Chinese students usually struggle with so-called 'critical thinking' at least at the very beginning. But this concept is kind of principle for education in NZ, even for primary school kids. (Anne)

It [critical thinking] is not what I was taught before and it is kind of against my culture. (Lee)

The voices of critical thinking and independence are interrelated to some extent. According to Bailin and Siegel (2003), the aim of fostering critical thinking in education is to promote "independent thinking, personal autonomy, and reasoned judgement in thought and action" (p. 189). Independence is one subset of the disposition of critical thinking. However, in the Bakhtinian sense, critical thinking and independence are two voices which have allied with each other. These two voices come from similar speaking persons, such as the supervisors and institutions, since they are both main educational goals in this university as reflected in the cited university documents. These two voices are also known to some students as implicit rules:

Critical thinking and independence are the basic requirements for the doctoral students. Everyone, teachers, students think so. It is an intangible but taken-for-granted rule. (Sunny)

7.3.3 Deference

In contrast to the voices of independence and critical thinking, which are the dominant voices in New Zealand academic institutions, deference is the voice most Chinese international students brought with them when they landed in this foreign country:

In China, they [the supervisors] are, by all means, very tall, very tall. I look up to them. All I learned in my past education in China is to respect the teacher, 听老师的话 [listen to the teacher]. It is difficult for me to challenge and question them. (Lily)

In this study, the voice of deference is embodied as "following the supervisors' feedback" (Sunny), or, more generally, as "listening to the supervisor" (Lily). This voice has deep socio-historical roots in China and is powerful to Chinese international doctoral students. In Chinese traditional culture, the teacher enjoys high status which is equal to the emperor and the father, according to 《国语》 *[The Discourses of the States]* (Zuo,

2000), the earliest historical record of the states in China from 990 B.C. to 453 B.C. Later, Xun Kuang (313-238 B.C.), one of the most influential representatives of Confucianism, proposed that heaven, earth, sovereign, parent and teacher were the most important for etiquette. This philosophy was officially acknowledged, explained and implemented in the name of the Emperor Yongzheng (1678-1735) in the Qing dynasty, in which the role of the teacher had been particularly emphasised (Xu, 2006).

Lily shared her story of encountering another newly arrived Chinese international doctoral student, David, who asked her how to address the supervisor in email. The following are the dialogues conducted between Lily and David, as told by Lily:

David: Hi Lily, how do you usually address your supervisor in email?

Lily: Well, just say, 'Hi, plus the first name'.

David: Just that [with a very astonished tone]? I usually write: 'Dear Mr or Professor' plus surname.

Lily: The supervisors here may feel that's a bit too formal.

David: But I have to do it in a formal way; otherwise, I feel it's very impolite and I will be very stressful.

Lily did not delineate her own problems with her supervisor regarding high power distance, probably because she had already confronted this issue and found a way around it in her master's education in the United Kingdom. But this story illustrates that there is an unequal power relation between the students and the teachers in China, which has been accepted and assimilated by most of the Chinese students.

At the lower end of the power relationship, the students who challenge the teacher and the teacher's authority are actually challenging the main discourse of the society, which is regarded as rebellious and disrespectful. People in lower status questioning the one in higher status also breaks down the harmonious interpersonal relationship, an ideal which has low tolerance for face-to-face confrontations, since the down-to-top questioning causes losing face for the one at the top (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2003). Thus, in contemporary China, 尊师重道 [honouring the teacher and respecting the teaching] is the main discourse which is supposed to be practised by all Chinese people as a moral code. In family and school education, this philosophy is more

commonly explained and exercised as students' deference, dependence or even obedience to the teachers. The authority of the teacher passes down to their words, and the voice; 'listening to the teacher' has been spoken from ancient to modern times, by Chinese educationalists, philosophers, emperors, parents and so forth. This voice has probably already become part of the students' own voice, as it has reached the Chinese students thousands of times from various speaking persons, whom I fuse with the image of the Confucius.

After explaining the three primary voices, I notice a paradox created by the voice of deference interacting with that of critical thinking. The voice of deference demands students' obedience to their supervisors, which in Chinese is 听老师的话, or listen to the teachers (supervisors). However, in the New Zealand context, the supervisors speak loudly with the voice of critical thinking. Thus, paradoxically, listening to the teachers/supervisors' voice of critical thinking now means for the students, to some extent, not listening to the teacher/supervisors. Thus, struggles, tensions and reconciliations are predictable in the interactions of the three primary voices along with other voices arise. As Holquist (1990), a Bakhtinian scholar, claims, "meaning is achieved by struggle" (p. 39) in heteroglossia.

7.4. From voices to interactions/dialogues

Having identified the voices, the next step is to examine the interactions of these voices, namely, the dialogues. The dialogue is the interaction between at least two people or two voices (Bakhtin, 1984; Shields, 2007).

Dialogues are significant for the becoming of the students' own voices. Dialogue, as Shields (2007) suggests, "allows one to remain open to the Other, to difference, and to the possibility of new understandings" (p. 63). At the same time, "dialogue is both the source of meaningful life and an orientation that permeates one's external responses to others as well as one's self-consciousness; it is inherent in both the written and spoken word, in inner and outer consciousness, and in action" (p. 65). In the feedback context, a variety of views, values and approaches enter into inter-animating relationships by means of speaking persons' voices in order to generate new ideas.

I will analyse two layers of dialogues/interactions: one is the general tendency of interactions; the other is the interactions in context, which contribute to the becoming

of the students' voices, reflected as the four different kinds of feedback response (no change, change/directed, change/inspired and change/additional).

7.5. Tendency of interaction

The students' ideological development is realised in the process of the intense struggle among the voices for the hegemony (Bakhtin, 1981). The struggle to be the dominant voice has laid the fundamental tone for the interactions between/among the voices. It is driven by the centripetal force of unification and centralisation and the centrifugal force of disunification and decentralisation. These two forces intertwine so that "every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). The centripetal force gives rise to the victory, the hegemonic voice; while the centrifugal force brings in the competing voices which try all means to supplant, which brings in struggles and dynamics as a result. For this study, I found voices interacting horizontally and vertically in the students' feedback responses.

7.5.1 Horizontal interactions

Looking horizontally at the diverse voices engaged in the students' feedback responses, I found that the voices were not fighting with each other in a chaotic and indiscriminate way. Instead, voices made alliance to form 'camps', based on their commonality and compatibility. This was particularly true for those less powerful voices which normally stand back to support and fortify the force of their camp. Bakhtin (1981) explains this situation when he depicts the operation of centripetal force in sociolinguistic and ideological life: "The victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others, the supplanting of languages, their enslavement … the incorporation of barbarians and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth, the canonization of ideological systems…" (p. 271). Thus, the centripetal force unites some voices to some degree.

One extract from Joy's interview may help visualise this battle-fighting metaphor:

> I didn't revise. Because <u>I don't really think</u> it is important at this stage, especially comparing to those I revised. I mean the feedback is useful that <u>I should use</u>, but concerning about the <u>time</u>, I have to <u>make choices</u> [on what to respond to]. (Joy)

From Joy's narrative, I could see that the voice of independence (taking control and making independent decisions around feedback response) and time (which is the voice of meeting the deadline) become allies to defeat the voice of deference. The voice of critical thinking can ally with the voice of independence as well, not in a way of questioning, but reasoning, to rationalise the response of no change: "I didn't revise" (Joy). Therefore, horizontally, the camp led by powerful voice(s) with its allies, the less powerful ones, fights against the rival camp. These horizontal interactions will be more fully discussed in Section 7.6.

7.5.2 Vertical interactions

Looking at the interplay between/among the voices vertically and in a three-dimensional way, I contend that there are background and foreground interactions. The background interactions refer to those embedded in almost the whole process of feedback responses, but very often in an imperceptible manner. A typical example is the interactions among the voices of independence, critical thinking and deference. Students usually speak of them in their responses to general feedback (see Table 7.4), rather than mentioning them explicitly in every feedback response. For instance, the following summary-like account by Sunny reveals the prevailing background interactions of the voices in her feedback responses:

> Generally speaking, I value and tend to reply to every piece of feedback. They are critical to my learning. However, I know I should also respond to the feedback critically, which means I can disagree or develop the feedback. In the end, I respond to most of the feedback. Of course, there are other restraints such as word limit, time, or I simply don't know… But I will bring some difficult feedback back to the supervisors for further discussion. (Sunny)

The first two sentences of the extract show Sunny's dependence on the feedback. The disagreement with the feedback demonstrates her critical thinking. The independent decision making and seeking of further discussion imply her independence. There are other voices functioning as well (e.g., word limit, time, or I don't know), but not all the time, and their interactions are foregrounded. Apart from the three primary voices, other voices, such as meeting multiple deadlines, which is about managing time effectively, can also be part of the background interactions for some students, such as Lee. Lee strongly emphasises this voice (as fully discussed in Chapter 8), which seems to function

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all the way through her feedback responses, making it part of the background interactions.

Upon this background layer of interactions, other voices join in this ongoing dialogue of feedback responses at certain constructing moments in specific contexts, which I call foreground voices. Unlike the background voices subtly operating all the way through the dialogue, these foreground voices have their own moment(s) of participation in feedback dialogues, after which they would remain inactive until the context provides another opportunity. An example is found in the voice of cutting the words/word limit, which has been mentioned by all six students, but only on several occasions.

The image of vertical and the horizontal interactions are used as perspectives to depict the interactions between/among the voices in order to obtain an overall understanding of the becoming of the students' voices.

After abstracting the various types of interactions between/among the voices, the next step is to examine the becoming of the students' voices at the moment of responding by placing these voices and their interactions back into their contexts. Nevertheless, how do the three primary voices interact with each other? Do two of them ally to suppress the third? How do other voices take their chance and stand on one side against the other? Is the alliance or rivalry static or strategic? All these questions should only and can only be answered in each voice's specific context.

7.6. Interactions in context: The becoming of the students' voices

The interactions between/among the identified voices in feedback responses are not quite as linear and definitive as one might think; instead, they are contextually constructed and extremely complex. However, it is impossible to trace every possibility of the interactions between/among the voices in each context, particularly in content, as there was so much happening there. Furthermore, I can neither read the human mind as a written book, nor witness every social encounter the student experienced with others. What I can do is to delineate the most likely mode of the interactions in general through analysing what the students do in actual responses and say in interviews. Thus, the findings of the text analysis and interviews will be discussed holistically, to triangulate and validate each other. Attention will be paid to the three types of feedback responses (change/directed, change/inspired and no change) in language and content, since the

results of the previous two phases underscored the significance of mainly these two areas. Moreover, I will discuss the response of change/additional across the feedback foci.

Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia, together with centripetal and centrifugal forces, will guide the exploration of the interactions in context, contributing to the students' voices through the overall voice and the strategic alliance of the voices. Reverberating with the centripetal force of centralisation, there comes about, out of fighting and struggling between/among the voices in a certain context, the "reigning voice" (p. 271). As described in the discussion on the horizontal interactions of the voices, voices with compatibility and commonality made coalitions in order to battle with their common enemies, namely, the conflicting coalition. As a result, there would be other less powerful voices following the reigning voice and together they might defeat their rivals. However, I would say at this point that in the context defined by the feedback focus and formulations the alliance of voices is strategic and flexible.

7.6.1 The becoming of the students' voices in language

Students' overall voice

The students' overall voice in language is the 'reigning voice' of following the feedback or deference, which leads to the prevalent responses of directed changes. Results of the text analysis show that students tend to follow the language feedback precisely, with 77% feedback responses being directed changes, 7.1% being no change and 15.9% being inspired changes. This finding confirms the overall voice or the general rule that the students apply to respond to the language feedback. The students choose to follow the feedback especially when the supervisors have corrected the improper use of English language through direct feedback (referential formulation). When the supervisors provide indirect feedback, such as symbols (e.g., underlining, highlighting) or open-ended comment (e.g., have a strong opening), the students either respond to it with inspired change upon their knowledge base and/or the advice from others except the supervisors. Or the students may leave it and do not make any change if they cannot figure out how to respond. Thus, the voice of deference wins most of the time in language, defeating its rival of independence.

The reigning voice is the outcome of the interactions among the voices and is driven by the centripetal force. I now leave centripetal force in order to turn to its concomitant centrifugal force and study the process of the interactions among the voices.

Strategic alliance leading to directed changes

The overall voice of deference, with its alliance, as discussed, leads to the most directed changes in language (77%). Firstly, compared with other types of feedback, language feedback, with prevailing referential formulation which offers direct correction by the supervisors, is easier for the students to follow and make directed changes. In addition, the students' choice of making directed changes in language is understandable if looking at the alliance of the camp led by deference.

The most influential ally of deference is the students' voice of 'English is my second language'. This voice is emphasised and illustrated by all students:

> Generally speaking, I apply language feedback faithfully. You know, they are native speakers. (Lee)
>
> I am second language user. Language problem is beyond my reach. (Ryne)
>
> I have no confidence in grammar. The supervisors are English speakers and expert writers, so I do what they say. (Lily)

This voice comes from the students, showing their uncertainty with grammar, punctuation and choice of words. Due to this voice, the students are less confident in expressing ideas in English and more dependent on the supervisors, who are "the native speakers and experienced writers" (Sunny). The contrast between the supervisors' expertise in English language and academic writing and the students' English language incompetency and being a novice researcher, amplifies the authority of supervisors' language feedback. The students' incompetency in English language often is self-conceived, but sometimes is recognised through supervisors' critical feedback: "You need to be careful about your grammar. I suggest to get your work proofread – your English is amazing but there is always sentence or two that need some work." (Ryne's supervisor). Consequently, in language, the voice of following this feedback/deference sounds the loudest.

This camp becomes more persuasive by adding another to their company, the voice of "what counts as good quality academic writing?" (Lily), implying the different and confusing standards of good academic English writing. This voice comes about as a result of the students comparing the criteria of good English writing between what they were taught before and what is expected of them now in this New Zealand institution:

> The writing style my supervisor expects is different. His writing doesn't need structure. (Ryne)

> Some of the grammatical rules are different from what I was taught in China, like the use of which and that. It means what you see as right and have been writing for years now is wrong, and you don't know it's wrong until someone points out. It's confusing and dangerous. (Sunny)

> One of my master's teachers in the UK once said my writing has the 'beauty of simplicity'. I seriously doubt whether it was a compliment or an irony. Cos I thought, well, as an international student, my language capability did not allow me to write complicatedly. Here [NZ], a prestigious professor who is an expert in academic writing also mentioned the importance of simplicity. Then I start to wonder: is the simplicity one criterion of high level writing rather than writing long and complex sentences as we were encouraged in undergraduate in China? (Lily)

The new concept of good English writing is emerging and is not finite, causing confusions, uncertainties and self-doubts. Fortunately, there are direct remedies to the problem: the referential language feedback, provided by the respectful and authoritative supervisors. What a quick and easy solution!

Moreover, the voice of meeting the deadline puts additional weight on this camp. This voice reflects the viewpoints of submitting on time, or in deeper awareness, managing time effectively. It is, in fact, a voice emerging out of negotiation between the institution, the supervisor and the student. The institution has a regulation of a 13-month provisional stage in which the PhD proposal has to be submitted. However, the institution's voice is guidance, which can be flexibly shifted through negotiation between the speaking persons of the institution, the supervisors and the students. None of my participants went over the 13-month limit, but as Lily said, "My supervisor told me not to worry about the

provisional year. It can be postponed." Furthermore, the supervisor and the student work out the deadline for every draft. To meet the negotiated deadline for the writing, the student needs to negotiate further with possible others (boss, child, friends), in terms of the time allocation of all tasks occurring in their lives:

> At the end of the meeting, my supervisor will check with me how long I need to write this bit. And I normally give her a date after thinking over the already scheduled tasks. (Sunny)

Meeting the deadline is more challenging for those who deal with multiple tasks in addition to the PhD. For example, Joy has to allocate significant amount of time to her job, while Lee has to look after her two children, apart from doing her PhD and her part-time job. These two tend to address the voice in a deeper sense as meaning to meet multiple deadlines. The response of directed change consequently becomes the easiest and most secure way of dealing with language problems, because the students believe they cannot offer a better solution.

When the feedback is in the form of a cross-out, such as "This section is good but be more economical on words" (Joy's supervisor), the voice of cutting the words/word limit joins in and enhances the effects of deference or dependence as to follow the feedback and listen to the supervisor. The voice of cutting the words mostly comes from the institution through making the regulation of a 10,000-word limit for the PhD proposal. Like the voice of meeting the deadline, this voice is also negotiated, as all the students successfully get their proposals approved, with one writing more than 15,000 words, one around 12,000 words and the rest under 10,000 words.

This is why I call it a strategic alliance: the backbone members are fixed, but the supporting allies can be flexible and only functional in certain settings, the speaking context in Bakhtin's notion (1981). In this study, to respond to the language feedback, the backbone voices of the winning camp are deference and English is my second language; while the supporting voices can be cutting the words or different and confusing good English writing standards (What counts as good quality academic writing?) or some other voices, depending on the situation. The defeated rival voice in language can be inferred as the voice of independence.

It is contestable, however, whether the voice of critical thinking allies with independence or the deference in this case. I argue that it is with the voice of deference, because this deference is based on rationality and reason, the broad agreement reached on critical thinking in its fundamental attribute (Chambliss, 1996; Bensley, 2011). As disclosed in the data, the students did not just follow the feedback or the supervisors, but followed after careful thinking, evaluating and assessing of those voices. Regarding the university's requirement of critical thinking which engages questioning and evaluating (University of Auckland, 2014), these internal dialogues of reasoning resonate with the evaluating part, at least. At this point, the voice of critical thinking goes through these dialogues and stands with the deference in a tacit manner. The fact is that the students may not realise they think critically in responding to language feedback. It can be concluded that the students are less independent due to their perceived insufficient knowledge of English language, but they were practising a form of critical thinking.

To sum up, the change/directed decisions are made through dialogues in which the students are in a dialogic relationship with many others. For the directed changes happening in language with feedback of direct correction, the wider alliance which shapes the students' overall voices are led by the voices of deference, English is my second language, and critical thinking. Others' voices, such as meeting the deadline/meeting multiple deadlines, weave in and out of complex interrelationships, merge with or recoil from the three leading voices (Bakhtin, 1981), making this league more mighty and persuasive in supressing the voice of independence. This resonates with the horizontal and vertical interactions of voices discussed earlier.

Strategic alliance leading to inspired changes

There are 69 inspired changes made by the students, accounting for 15.9% of the total responses to language feedback. The development of the feedback (change/inspired) seems to indicate the slender triumph of the voices of independence and critical thinking over that of deference. However, it would be too naïve to believe that the students' internal dialogues would be that simple.

I found that 19 inspired changes were to delete the whole sentence, responding even to referential feedback of direct correction. The students' responses of deletion involve deep thinking, with complex interactions of voices. The main functional voice is the

word limit or cutting the words. The results of text analysis and the interview data show the supervisors' and the students' awareness of this voice, which leads to the most deletions:

> I have to reduce the words substantially due to the word limit as my supervisors highlighted in feedback as 'cutting the words'. So even though there is the direct correction here, I delete the whole sentence to save the words. (Lee)

The voice of word limit appears to operate on a higher level as a leading voice with flexible participation in the dialogue of feedback responses. Lee's accounts reveal the inter-animation among the voices of deference, critical thinking, independence and world limit together in one camp. The voice of deference drives Lee to follow her supervisors' feedback of cutting the words, under which, the voices of critical thinking and independence take effect too, making Lee develop the feedback of direct correction by deleting the whole sentence. The students' simple response to direct language feedback with deletion reflects, therefore, complex internal dialogues. There is another voice functioning as well: responding to the most important feedback first, which expresses the ideology of prioritisation.

The ideology of prioritisation presents itself as a leading voice in the students' narratives of responding to the feedback in general (regardless of feedback foci), with responses, typically, of inspired change and no change. Joy has emphasised this voice several times to help justify most of her responses of no change: "I respond to the most important feedback first". Ryne and Lee also mentioned this ideology in their interviews, and it came across as a powerful voice in the dialogues of their feedback responses.

In the field of language, the voice of prioritisation produces the most inspired changes by specifically prioritising the voice of cutting the words to delete, as previously noted. Another scenario for the students making inspired changes in language is that the students prioritise the feedback foci and its corresponding revision:

> When the feedback in language overlay with that in content or organisation, I will respond to the content and organisation feedback first. Thus, the language feedback may be no use or the responses to this language feedback may not be reflected, as I may rewrite, delete or move the whole section that the sentence with this language feedback was deleted or rewritten, or merged with other. (Ryne)

After receiving their feedback, I definitely want to revise the writing to a higher level. To do so, I have to consider overall feedback and revision apart from suggestions on specifics. So the language feedback in one paragraph may be not useful anymore, as I rewrite or delete the whole paragraph. (Lily)

The response of inspired change in language due to the voice of prioritisation reveals the tacit background interactions which function constantly. The voices of critical thinking and independence are active regarding reasoning and independent decision making as shown in Lily and Ryne's narratives. The voice of deference is active as well, for the students listen to their supervisors' voices by all means: the voices of cutting the words, critical thinking, or independence, which come from the supervisors in various forms and contribute to generating inspired changes in language. Thus, the students prioritise their supervisors' voices and follow the voices they perceive to be the most important.

The last situation in which inspired change can happen is when the language feedback becomes indirect: only stating the problem, but without 'how-to' advice. The students then have to think of the solution themselves, which usually results in the response of inspired change. This situation has been discussed in previous chapters, but to extend the finding, ambiguous feedback can sometimes be productive, provided that the students are highly independent and self-regulated:

My main supervisor used to only highlight the grammatical mistakes with yellow and expect me to find out the answer. I know the highlighting signifies a grammatical problem, but sometimes I just don't know what's wrong with it, let alone to revise it. But it is not my style to leave the problem unsolved. Therefore, I have to seek advice from native speaking colleagues or the internet. If I still don't get it, I rewrite the whole sentence, not using the highlighted phrase or words, and see how the supervisors reply. (Lily)

Lily's narrative shows that ambiguous feedback creates the space for the student or forces the student to make dialogue with others, such as their peers. Therefore, the student's consciousness can be awakened to a larger extent, by being surrounded by more others' voices (Bakhtin, 1981). Nevertheless, if the student is not autonomous enough, he/she may respond to this feedback with no change, instead of enlarging the dialogue by including more interlocutors.

The responses of inspired change to language feedback show the complexity of internal dialogues between different voices. Albeit that all are inspired changes made to language feedback, the dialogised voices and interactions can differ, and the meaning and the influence of the voices on the student's feedback responses can differ too.

Strategic alliance leading to no change

Text analysis indicates that 31 pieces of language feedback do not incur any responses, which accounts for 27.4% of responses as no change, even though 26 pieces are direct corrections. 'Overlook' is the major voice leading to the no change responses. "I definitely revise the grammar", said Lee, affirmatively. When pointed to one 'no change' site, she checked it again and again, and finally admitted "I should have changed it. I must have forgotten".

> I revise all the language feedback. If not, it must have been overlooked. (Joy)

> If I didn't change, it is because I overlooked it. (Ryne)

There are some other voices initiating the response of no change apart from overlook. When the feedback becomes open-ended, though it is uncommon in the language field in this study, the students either make inspired changes if they can work out a way to improve, or make no change under the voice of 'I don't know' if they cannot solve the problem or think it's not worthwhile of spending much time in solving this problem. In two cases, the students said they did not know how to revise due to their limited knowledge and vague feedback, such as "strong opening".

Ambivalence and ambiguity

It seems that the students have ambivalent feelings towards language feedback. On one hand, they kept emphasising their incompetency and lack of confidence in English language as L2 students, and they, therefore, follow their supervisors' feedback loyally (change/directed). On the other hand, when they were asked if they would go back to the supervisors for further clarification on language problems or difficult language feedback, they all said "no". This is mainly due to the implanted supervisors' voice of *editing is not my job*. For instance, Ryne said, "No. Because my co-supervisor thinks it is the students not the supervisors who are responsible for the language issues. I understand his stance". "How about your main supervisor?", I continued to ask. She

replied, "He has not said it to me, but it seems like a hidden rule". This voice seems to be the mainstream belief in doctoral supervision. However, the fact is that all the supervisors of the students in this study give language feedback, and the amount far exceeds other categories of feedback. The language feedback Ryne has received accounts for approximately 60% of the total. Another student, Lily, mentioned that her supervisors give a large amount of language feedback, so much so that they are, in effect, doing the editing for her. However, she still hesitates in seeking assistance from her supervisors over language difficulties:

> I dare not to ask them [language issues], because many supervisors said editing is not what they should do. My supervisors do not say so to me, but many others do, in seminar, in workshop, so I dare not. I feel gratitude for what they have already done and dare not ask for more. (Lily)

The reason for the students' ambivalent feelings towards language feedback is largely due to the contradicting voices from different speaking persons, sometimes even between what the supervisor claims and what he/she does, about whether or not to correct students' language mistakes. To a certain degree the contradicting voices on providing language feedback prevent the students seeking further assistance from their supervisors.

The supervisors' perceptions of language feedback are indirectly obtained through the amount and content of their language feedback, as well as through the students' reflections. All supervisors whose feedback has been analysed provide feedback on language more than any other foci. However, there are some comments which can bring to light some supervisors' ambiguous views on language feedback: "I suggest to get your work proofread"; "As usual, I only edit part of the work. And I stop correcting here". In addition, as already mentioned, Ryne's co-supervisor has made this specific point verbally.

Speaking from the dialogic point of view (Bakhtin, 1981), there is a breakdown of dialogue between most supervisory pairs in relation to whether and to what extent the students can expect from the supervisors the language feedback or assistance in language issues. Or if not, who else can be included in this dialogue, such as a language advisor, and how? The purpose of this study is not to answer these questions, but to

propose them for dialogues, which may allow clarification of the contradicting voices to occur, or expand the dialogue by involving more others and others' voices.

7.6.2 The becoming of the students' voices in content

Students' overall voice

The students' overall voice in responding to content feedback can be concluded as 'I am in charge', under mostly the influence of the mainstream academic voices of critical thinking and independence.

Students clearly distinguish the content from the language. They tend to consider writing this part as a means to test their own ideas and argumentations, as well as showing disagreement with their supervisors, which they may not dare to do face-to-face. Text analysis shows that the students respond to content feedback with the most no change (55.8% no change), the most inspired changes (51.1% change/inspired) and the least directed changes (13.2% change/directed). This finding, however, comes in part from the often indirect and open-ended formulation of content feedback; it still leaves a preliminary impression that the voices of independence and critical thinking incorporate to defeat that of deference. The interview data seems to validate this background inter-relationship of these three primary voices. The students talked about how they affirmatively assimilated and practised the voices of independence and critical thinking:

> Supervisor only suggests adding, but I made the final decision of what and how much to revise. (Lee)

> I really feel I don't have the authority to revise language problems by myself, but in terms of content, sometimes I found it is better shifting to another mentality after reading more than just do what they suggested. I feel not natural. Because the questions they [supervisors] raised may never occur to me. And I would have new ideas after reading, the result of my digestion of the new stuff, which will be more consistent with the rest of the content. To put this new idea into operation, I have to develop the feedback sometimes, or I may need to make some major adjustment, thus some feedback designated to some details may not be able to be replied or reflected. (Lily)

> I like to try my ideas. It is my own PhD anyway. (Sunny)

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These direct quotes from the students show their perceptions of the content, a space for the interplay of critical thinking and independence. However, it does not mean that the voice of deference loses the battle completely. The result is, in fact, quite the opposite.

Framework of interaction

When I analysed the interview data further, I realised that I only got to hold the tip of the iceberg, but failed to notice the intangible part underneath. I found that in content the supervisors acted as gatekeeper, and the students exercised independence and critical thinking in the framework of deference: "as long as the supervisors do not oppose my idea too strongly. If so, I will still follow" (Lily). The complexity of the interactions originates from the hierarchy of the persuasiveness in that even with all internally persuasive discourses, they may vary in the degree of persuasiveness (Bakhtin, 1981). This dialectic relationship among the voices of independence, critical thinking and deference shows the layers of interactions and how fragile the students' defence wall is.

This claim is based on the fact that no matter how independent or critical the students are, they all rest on supervisors' legitimation of their ideas or voices. Students gain supervisors' legitimation in two ways. One is through face-to-face discussion after receiving feedback, but before revision, like a pre-approval. For instance,

> I attend to every piece of feedback, except the ones I discussed with my supervisor. (Anne)

> We [the student and her supervisors] discuss almost every piece of feedback. (Ryne)

> I discuss all the feedback and the possible revisions with my supervisor. So the no changes are mostly the result of the discussion. (Lee)

The other way to obtain supervisors' legitimation is through afterwards confirmation of the revised writing, with the idea of "it [the revision] may be acceptable for the supervisors" (Joy).

> I will revise those I can and send them to the supervisors, and see how the supervisors respond. (Joy)

Two other students (Sunny and Lily) use both strategies of pre- and post-approvals. However, there are more messages delivered in their narratives:

> I will discuss the arguable feedback with my supervisors. If my supervisor insists, I will normally follow. But if I do disagree, I probably will not say so in meeting, but write in revision and see whether the supervisor pick it up negatively again. (Sunny)

> I trust and depend on them [the supervisors]. In discussion, I always say yes, but in writing, I write what I want to write, especially those I feel uncomfortable to say in discussion, and see how the supervisors respond. Sometimes, I disagree with their feedback and do not revise. But if they persist, I will revise. (Lily)

Drawing from these quotes, the students all show various degrees of deference to their supervisors. Sunny and Lily seem to push the boundaries further than other students in terms of exercising critical thinking and independence within the agreed or negotiated periphery of action guarded by the voice of deference. This finding supports Bakhtin's (1981) claim that the enslaved voices uninterruptedly strive to liberate themselves under the centrifugal force. In Sunny and Lily's cases, the voices of critical thinking and independence constantly strive to liberate themselves from the voice of deference. One unique attribute disclosed here may be that some Chinese international students, like Joy, Sunny and Lily, prefer indirect written communications or delayed dialogues (e.g., wait and see how supervisors react) to soften the possible confrontation.

The confined voices of critical thinking and independence can be a phenomenon for all students, not just for Chinese international students. The reasons for students' deference to supervisors lie in the unequal power relations, mainly caused by their unequal expertise in subject knowledge and experience of doing research. In this regard, deference to supervisors is not peculiar to Chinese international doctoral students. Their New Zealand or Western counterparts are more or less caught up in this tension, at least at the early stage of the doctoral trajectory. The power relations between the supervisors and the students is always there, since the goal of supervision is that the supervisor, as an authoritative knowing, teaches the students something (Grant, 2010). However, the degree of the deference resulting from the unequal power relations can alter, when the students gradually reach maturity and become self-regulated in their mid or late doctoral candidature (Gurr, 2001; Wisker, 2012).

To sum up, in content the students assimilate the voices of critical thinking and independence while still holding on to the voice of deference to a certain degree. The bottom line of exercising the voices of critical thinking and independence is that the supervisors do not oppose too much. The students' endeavour of keeping a dialectical balance among the voices embodies the Confucian philosophy of 中庸 [The Doctrine of the Mean], originally from《论语》[*Analects*] (Confucius, 1960), but explored in detail by Zisi (483-402 B.C.), which underscores the balance and harmony between two or more sides (voices) (Zishi, 2014).

The interplay of the three primary voices in content can help explain the students' response of inspired change and to rationalise the response of no change, as a result of conditionally absorbing the voices of independence and critical thinking. Apart from this guiding principle of responding, other foreground voices participate in the dialogues as well. For instance, the voices of prioritisation and developing nature of research and knowledge acquisition step into the dialogues and influence the students' responses under the centrifugal force.

Strategic alliance leading to directed changes

Directed changes occur the least in content, partly because of the least referential feedback provided. Among all the directed changes, those happening in content only constituted 13.2%. The leading voice for the successful camp is deference in this situation. The negotiating voice of meeting the deadline can be its partner, as explained previously, competing with the voice of independence. But it is hard to identify any other supporting or opposing voices in interviews, because there are so few directed changes made in content.

Strategic alliance leading to no change and inspired changes

Apart from a few voices which specifically result in the no change responses in content, often the voices leading to the responses of no change and inspired change overlap. The distinctive voices identified which give rise to the no change are the developing nature of research and knowledge acquisition and meeting the deadline.

The voice that initiates the most no change responses in content is about the developing nature of research and knowledge acquisition:

This research is emic centred, or progressive focusing. In proposal stage, I cannot decide what to do with these comments and questions. I mean they are all provisional and cannot be detailed. This whole part may not appear in my thesis later. Besides, there is the deadline. (Ryne)

I cannot answer this question in this provisional period as I haven't practised it. The only thing I can know is from the literature…I didn't revise. My supervisor wants to me to define this word, but this is a question, I can only find the answer in data analysis. (Lee)

I don't know how to change at that time. My thing is very scattered, not systematic. I know what the feedback means, but I haven't got the result of data analysis yet, so I don't know how to write. Also, the proposal has been revised many times, many drafts. You cannot revise all in once. I revise what I can and think some questions can be solved later as your knowledge of the content has been built up. I can't write by guessing.' (Joy)

This is a new theory raised by the feedback for later use. It is unrealistic to apply this new thing immediately in the second draft [of the proposal]. I mean it is a process, you cannot have the thesis done in one night. And probably I won't use it anyway if I find it is not that relevant after I understand my area more.' (Sunny)

The voice about *developing nature of research and knowledge acquisition* legitimates the voice of *I don't know* in some occasions and, recognises that the research and knowledge acquisition are processes and ongoing journeys. Locating specific speaking person(s) of this voice can be difficult. It is more like a taken-for-granted ideology for many people. The students who mentioned this voice seem to have already assimilated this voice into their own, but none of them can point out who they have assimilated this voice from. "Nobody tells me, but it is a fact", Ryne said. "How do you know it is a fact?" I kept chasing. She (Ryne) thought for a while, and said, "This is my own learning journey, and this idea is embedded everywhere, like the idea of life-long learning." This point of view or this voice is the embodiment of Bakhtin's (1981) notion of unfinishedness, which suggests that the semantic structure of voice is "not finite, it is open" (p. 346). The words 'developing' or 'dynamic' may characterise this and other voices because of ongoing dialogues and interactions in the Bakhtinian sense.

Another significant supplementing voice contributing to the response of no change is meeting the deadline, or meeting multiple deadlines for Lee and Joy, which is about managing time effectively. The impact of this voice is more substantial in content for Joy and Lee, who study full-time towards their PhDs and have full-time or equal-to-full-time jobs. The multiple tasks and responsibilities make this voice stand out and evident. Thus, the voice of meeting the deadline(s) either becomes the last straw that breaks the camel's back for the no change response, or obliges the students to be more strategic in responding to the feedback, for example, prioritising feedback:

> I prioritise the feedback and make selective changes. I revise those I can revise and leave aside those I cannot, sorting them out into three categories: those need to discuss with the supervisors, those can be solved later and those I don't know how to revise but think it is not that important. (Joy)

The voice of prioritisation joins in the foreground interactions, as some students, due to their concerns about time, respond to the feedback selectively after prioritising the feedback, and leave a few so-called small problems unchanged. Students have their own idea of 'small problems'. The common feature is that they cannot solve this problem with their current knowledge base, but think it is not so important to discuss with the supervisors; or to solve it will take much time and energy, which the students do not think worthwhile. Therefore, there is a shadowing voice of *I don't know*. At the same time, it seems that the voices of meeting the deadline(s) and prioritisation often function together. Some students' narratives may exemplify this point:

> The reason of no change is firstly the time issue. The other is I don't think it is very important comparing those I changed. I will prioritise the feedback and make selective changes, because personally, I am short of time … I have my own situation, comparing to other full time student. If I don't have a full-time job, I will certainly do a better job. (Joy)

> I am in a different situation. There is always a deadline for the things I do. My work is time specific, which I have to follow. And I have kids, and household chores. My time goes to kids most, then works, last is study. I know it's unreasonable. But I have less and less time in study so I have to focus on the most important feedback first. (Lee)

Ryne, who took her nine-year-old son with her to New Zealand, also mentioned "I don't have time to consider, as I need to solve the more severe problems raised by the feedback".

Resonating with the discussion on interactions of voices in the context of language and content, the voice of prioritisation works within and across the feedback foci, as an overall voice riding above most of the supervisors' voices embedded as specific written feedback. Prioritisation is, in a sense, "selectively assimilating the words of others" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 341), out of the students' agency and situations, which largely affects their feedback responses.

Some other voices in content are specific to certain students, making the responses of no change possible. For example, Ryne admitted that laziness sometimes influences her feedback response:

> We [supervisors and me] discuss major problems, but for this one [the feedback without response], I was probably lazy at that moment and didn't want to revise. (Ryne)

Apart from the voices which lead to the responses of no change in particular, there are voices resulting in both no change and inspired change. For instance, others' (non-supervisor) voices on feedback responses can lead to either no change or inspired change, a decision the students made under the primary voices of independence and critical thinking. Likewise, the supervisors' voice of *it's not my field* lifts the authority away from supervisors' feedback, thus consolidating the students' own voices of feedback responses to make no change or inspired change out of independence and critical thinking. For example, Lee mentioned three times in the first round of interview that "It's about … [the software/SPSS], which my supervisors do not know well". Joy, another student, said, "Like this 'link', I will not ask the supervisor. And I don't think the supervisor can give me the answer either. It is not his field". Finally, the voice of word limit usually brings about a no change response, serving to avoid more words of illustration in order to respond to feedback, or leads to inspired change by deletion and content reconstruction.

7.6.3 Across the feedback foci: Voices leading to response of additional change

The feedback response of additional change is better discussed across the context, as the interview data suggests that this type of response is generally the result of assimilating and reapplying others' voices, mainly the supervisors' feedback.

The additional changes mostly come about in content, due to further dialogues with others through "reading the literature" (Anne), "discussing with supervisors and peers" (Ryne), "listening to people in workshop and lecture" (Lily). Some feedback, though specific to one problem spotted in this or that line of the writing, could be applied to the rest of the writing. If the students assimilate this voice and apply it in the rest of the writing, the response of additional change can take place. The feedback comments, for example, "sentence too long", "transition before the paragraph" and "one idea one paragraph", are applicable to the whole draft. The students did so to a certain extent, mostly under the appeal of independence (self-regulated learning). This is one main reason for the additional changes the students made without any feedback. The students had heard this voice before, agreed with it, and thus assimilated it, making it part of their own voice to regulate their later writing and learning. When revising the draft, the students came across the same problem, which may not be picked up by the supervisor via feedback, but they still can revise it, making additional changes as a result of self-regulated learning. However, it is hard to measure the degree of the students' assimilation of the voice of independence regarding self-regulated learning. It is also hard to tell whether the student will make or recognise the same mistake after the assimilation of a certain voice. The point here is to acknowledge the fact that the supervisors' feedback can have an effect beyond the current context when it interacts with others' voices, like independence. The response of additional change shows a certain degree of assimilation and application of others' voices, which in the Bakhtinian sense is the result of making the others' voice ourselves (Bakhtin, 1981).

7.7. Summary

In this chapter I have explored how the students' feedback responses come into being, resulting from the students interacting with others and others' voices. In detail, I have identified the voices (students' and others') participating in the dialogues of feedback response, their interactions in general (horizontal and vertical) and in context (language and content), by which the students' voices are shaping and developing.

Overall, this analysis reveals the complexity of the internal dialogues of feedback response: multi-layered and entangled. The interactions are best described by Bakhtin (1981): "the word…enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group" (p. 276). It also affirms the significance of context, as Bakhtin (1981) suggests, in understanding the meaning of the voices and their interactions.

At the same time, by analysing the voices participating in the dialogue of feedback response, I have come to realise that students' responding to the feedback brings relevant voices together and provides them a space in which to dialogue. However, before this dialogue happens in the space of feedback response, the students may have already interacted with or even assimilated some of the voices (e.g., negotiating the voices about the deadline and word limit). Or they keep interacting with some voices regardless of time and space (e.g., the voices of critical thinking, independence and deference). The becoming of the students' voices in this chapter is, therefore, confined within the time and space defined by responding to the particular set of feedback. In the next chapter, the analysis will proceed to a wider context, with several spaces intersecting, in which the students interact with and assimilate some transformative voices which they further apply in the dialogue of feedback response. The research focus thus shifts to the process of the students' assimilation of the transformative voices identified in the feedback response through their interactions with the main speaker persons—namely, the becoming of the students' voices in a contextualised process.

Chapter 8. Feedback responses: Assimilating and renovating voices

In this chapter, I argue that students' voices can develop and are developing in the process of the students interacting with various speaking persons in varied contexts. I also argue that the development of the voices is the result of the students assimilating the alien voices of the host country and, at the same, renovating the already assimilated or enrooted voices of their home country. Therefore, the voices can be strengthened, weakened or given new meaning during these interactions. The development of the voices can lead to transformations in the students' way of thinking, which is embodied in their interactions with others, for instance, their feedback responses. Moreover, the development of the voices indicates the dynamic nature of the becoming of the students' voices

This chapter is a further exploration of why the students respond to the feedback in the way they do. I will continue exploring the becoming of the students' voices, not as the result of internal dialogues the students make in responding to the feedback, but as a longer process of engaging with a range of external social interactions in which the students assimilate others' voices and renovate their enrooted voices. The main purpose, therefore, is to trace in these external social interactions the developmental trajectory of the transformative voices identified in the students' feedback responses. The transformative voices refer to the voices which give rise to the students' ideological development. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to trace the development of every single piece of voice identified in the previous chapter or, in other words, the development of the students' ideologies in every aspect. What I seek to achieve is to grasp the development of those transformative voices that have brought or are bringing in-depth transformation towards the students' ideologies. The students have confirmed the transformative effects of those voices discussed in this chapter at the point when the findings and interpretations were brought back to them for validation.

Several significant facets demand further examination in order to understand the development of the voices and to retrieve the true meaning of the voice: the

transformative voices involved, the relevant interactions which engage key elements of speaking persons and speaking context (Bakhtin, 1981). Although the transformative voices were identified in the students' responses to the feedback provided on their draft PhD proposals, the discussion of these voices in this chapter moves from this fixed time and space to a wider context with several spaces intersecting and with a longer time frame. Examining the development of the transformative voices from the feedback responses also responds to the call to look more widely to the feedback as a long-term dialogical process with all parties engaged (Price et al., 2011).

In this chapter I will revisit some theoretical constructs introduced in Chapter 3, in particular, the notion of chronotope. I use the data from a second round of interviews with the six students, which leads to a third interview for a single student, resulting in a single case study. Supplemented by the researcher's reflection, this single case study delineates, to some extent, a holistic picture of how the transformative voices develop in one student, and therefore, becomes the core of this chapter.

8.1. Revisiting the theory

It is necessary to examine the development of the transformative voices in order to understand the becoming of the students' voices longitudinally as a process under Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism. Apart from the usual dialogical constructs of heteroglossia, voice and speaking person, a further concept under Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism applied in this chapter is chronotope.

In various contexts, the students consciously or unconsciously engage with others' voices, during which they gradually acknowledge and assimilate some others' voices to varying degrees, making the voices or part of the voices their own. This is how the students' voices develop through interacting with others' voices. According to Bakhtin (1981), "one's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated" (p. 345). Therefore, assimilation is the key in this phase of study. To understand the real meaning of the voice requires the voice to be related to its speaking person(s) and speaking context. As Bakhtin (1981) explains, "In order to assess and divine the real meaning of others' words in everyday life, the following questions are surely of decisive significance: who precisely is speaking, and under what concrete circumstances?" (p. 340). Thus, after identifying the transformative

voices, the investigation will move to their speaking persons and speaking circumstances.

Due to the engagement of the concepts of time and space in analysing the elements of transformative voice, speaking person and speaking context, Bakhtin's (1981) notion of chronotope is more saliently applied in this chapter as a perspective for examining the development of the voices. Chronotope is a rich and complicated concept. Nevertheless, in this study, I focus only on its main feature of the inseparability of time and space, within which the students develop their voices.

Bakhtin perceives time and space with openness. He acknowledges the multiple modes of chronotope in that individuals live with time and space differently (1981). Although "Bakhtin's chronotope is future oriented", its boundaries are permeable, with the past, present and future influencing and connecting to each other (Shields, 2007, p. 25). Therefore, to be open in time and space is vital in order to understand the concept of chronotope. The interconnections among the past, present and future of chronotope remind me of Manathunga's (2017) concept of time as being "both religious and secular, mythical and rational and eternal, cyclical and linear" (p. 115).

Space itself is a broad and complex concept that can be defined in many ways. Bakhtin does not define space or differentiate it from the place or context. Space can be a physical place, such as the doctoral hub and a supervisor's office. It also can be virtual as an online or telephone supervision meeting. More importantly, it can be inner or internal, such as one's subjective belief system. Massey (2005) suggests in her book that space is "open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming" (p. 59). These characteristics of space help me understand this notion in a broader perspective with infinite possibilities and dynamics. Furthermore, Massey's definition of space matches with the core attributes of Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism regarding the openness, unfinishness, double or multi-voicedness and relationship. Therefore, I see space more from the dialogical perspective and consider the presence of internal or external dialogue/interaction the central constituent of space. This perception of space emphasises the close relationship between dialogical voices and space that is exhibited in the current study. Employing Massey's (1993) notion of space "as constructed out of interrelations" (p. 153), I define space in this study as the constructed site and context where various voices intersect and interact.

8.2. Interacting with the data

The data sources for this discussion include the second round of interviews with the same six students, and a third round of interview with one single student among the six. This single case study is supplemented by my reflections as the researcher and as a participant.

When I finished analysing the data from the first round of interviews, I found that many voices had dialogised in the students' feedback responses. I became curious about how voices such as *critical thinking*[11] become influential in the students' feedback responses. Thus, I decided to emphasise in the second interview and the following analysis the development of the most influential voices, those that bring transformative changes to the students' ideologies, which I call transformative voices.

The initial findings about the development of voices that were revealed through analysing the data from the second round of interviews made me hesitate to write and demanded a re-thinking of the research design. I found similarities in the transformative voices among the six students, but more often the findings indicate divergences. In addition, even the overlapping voices which function for all students, such as the *independence, critical thinking and deference*, mean different things and have different degrees of importance for individuals, and their paths of development differ too. In the Bakhtinian sense, this means each student has her own individualised chronotope regarding the development of the voices (Bakhtin, 1981). The initial findings made me think about the individuality of the students and their different paths in life.

I resolved to explore in detail one student's experience with regard to the development of the transformative voices within her. This decision was based on the divergences and the individuality found in the second round of interviews. There was also the consideration of the qualitative nature of looking into the complexity of social interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and the aim of this study of offering profound insight into the individual's experiences. I then carried out the third interview with this single student, trying to gain a longitudinal understanding of her experience and the developing path of the transformative voices. Investigation of this research focus can

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[11] To differentiate the voices in the text, I often italicise the voices the first and the second time they appear in this chapter.

shed some light on the last research question of how this student assimilates others' voices and renovates her enrooted voices.

As the researcher and as a participant of this project, I am also an interlocutor who makes dialogues with the other students when interviewing them and analysing their data. This role is even more intense when I pay all my attention to a single participant. Building on this experience, I would like to take the advantage of acting on multiple roles to reflect on my own 'path of development'.

Discussion of the findings in this chapter comprises three aspects: (1) the foundation—the transformative voices of all the students in terms of the homogeneity and variety; (2) the main focus—the assimilation of transformative voices in one single student, offering a kind of holistic picture of the development trajectory of the voices; and (3) the supplement—my reflections on my own path of assimilating the voices in doing this research as a living example of making dialogues in heteroglossia. The voices under discussion in this phase all participated in the dialogue of feedback responses.

8.3. Transformative voices for all

The following analysis and discussion draws upon the six students' interview data, with respect to the transformative voices developed and their relationship to the students' perception of time and space. I try to understand these issues by bringing together the similarities and the diversities of the students as a cultural group, as well as in relation to individuals.

8.3.1 The second interview: Talking to all

In the second interviews I aimed to capture as much information as possible about the transformative voices that functioned in the students' responses to their non-Chinese supervisors' feedback. The interviews are about the students' overall experiences of being an international doctoral student, including but not confined to their everyday life, their academic, professional and social interactions, supervision, and feedback experiences. The interviews were conducted largely in the middle of the students' second year, ranging from 17 to 21 months into their PhD candidature. It was a good time for the students to compare their experiences in the early stage to those in the current middle stage, and to reflect on any changes or progression they had experienced.

The interview questions focused on any major transformations, changes, and/or difficulties the students had gone through since starting their PhD in New Zealand.

Under the umbrella of Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism, I analysed the second interview data by looking for the transformative voices (functioning in feedback responses and leading to ideological transformation), their development and the related interactions. The analysis was case by case for an overall understanding of each student's experience. Apart from memos, I found that diagrams were particularly helpful in making connections between the voices, the speaking persons and the context. After analysing all six students' interview data, I compared for similarities and differences regarding the three key concepts from Bakhtin (1981): the transformative voice(s), their speaking person(s) and speaking context. The analysing questions, for instance, were: What are the transformative voices? Who are the main speaking persons? What are the speaking context? And how does the assimilation of the voice in certain space influence the students' thinking and behaviours in other spaces? The next section will provide details of the findings and interpretations.

8.3.2 Different but overlapping transformative voices

The data suggest that the transformative voices the students assimilated were slightly different, but overlaid. The overlapping voices are varied degrees of deference, critical thinking and independence, while the other voices are *meeting multiple deadlines,* which is about managing the time effectively, and *direct communication,* which is about communicating explicitly and to the point.

The intersection of the voices is the result of the students' exposure to similar spaces. The six students are all full-time PhD students. They all, as PhD students, engage in the local academic space in which the voices of critical thinking and independence are emphasised. Furthermore, in the supervision space, the non-Chinese supervisors keep reminding the students of these two alien voices through written feedback and face-to-face supervision meetings (see data discussed in Chapter 7). On the other hand, the voice of deference to those more experienced and authoritative, such as the supervisors or the boss in workplace, finds its origin mainly in the students' Confucian heritage, one mainstream ideology in China, as discussed in previous chapters. Chinese international doctoral students have assimilated this voice long before coming to New Zealand, and this ingrained voice actively engages in the interactions the students make with others

in this wide New Zealand context. For some Chinese students, the voice of deference/dependence is an authoritative discourse and cannot be challenged. One student, Sunny, shared the story of her colleague, another Chinese international doctoral student:

> She has problems with her non-Chinese supervisor. She keeps complaining about her supervisor being irresponsible for not initiating the supervision meeting, not telling her what and how to do next. She feels upset and doesn't know what do to except waiting for her supervisor's call. Then I told her she should manage her supervisor rather than depend on her completely. And she gave me an expression like I am talking nonsense. (Sunny)

The assimilation of the other two transformative voices for some students is due to their notable engagement in the professional space. Although the six students all work to varying degrees at the same time as doing their PhD projects, only two of them (Lee and Joy) recognise and assimilate voices from the professional space. Four other students have or had a casual job in the campus where they study, but they did not mention any of their working experience in the interviews. The absence of the data indicates that these students' interactions in the professional space do not bring transformative voices, which means there is no major alien voice trying to cut into the ideological conversation. A possible reason for this could be that their workmates are mostly the students and staff in the university, the same type of people they interact with in the academic space, or that their involvement in the professional space is too limited to affect the development of the voices in a significant or conscious way. In contrast, the two other students work outside the university context: Joy has a full-time job, and Lee works part time with a regular 20- to 30-hour workload. Joy and Lee are immersed into a completely different professional space with different others and voices, which they spoke about a lot in their interviews. For example, Lee said, "time management is the biggest lesson I learned from my work, which influences my whole life". Meeting multiple deadlines (managing time effectively) and direct communication are the voices Lee and Joy, respectively, assimilated in their working environment, which will be discussed in this chapter.

The findings of different but overlapping transformative voices implies that exposure to new spaces forces the students to interact with additional others' voices which may influence the feedback dialogue as a whole. Furthermore, the students' interactions with

different voices in different spaces suggest that the students are making dialogues with the stratified languages in heteroglossia, where language is stratified into social dialects, languages of generations, age groups, professions and so forth (Bakhtin, 1981). Therefore, in this study, most students make dialogues in the stratification of academic language; a few (Lee and Joy) make dialogues in the stratification of both academic and professional languages.

After identifying the transformative voices being developed, the next task is to investigate a possible explanation for why it is these voices, and not others that bring about ideological changes to the students.

8.3.3 Voice and space

The students prioritise the spaces they are exposed into, and the voices in a higher-ranking space are likely to be more powerful and transformative than those in a lower-ranking space. The importance the students attach to a particular space thus determines to a large extent how influential the voices in this space are. That is why, even though the students can simultaneously assimilate several voices, they are not equal in status. Albeit in the same space, there exist the mainstream voices and marginal voices due to the centripetal and centrifugal forces of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981). Meanwhile, among all the voices in one space, the more alien the voice is (against the cultural enrooted voices), the more transformative it is likely to be, for alien voices wake up the individual's consciousness. As Bakhtin (1984) insists, "an idea begins to live, i.e., to take shape, to develop, to find and renew ideas only when it enters into genuine dialogical relationships with other, foreign, ideas" (p. 88). The interview data suggest that the first-ranking space is either the supervision space or the professional space, although all the students engage in both.

Lee and Joy prioritise the professional space most, and consequently some voices from this space are reported as most transformative. Lee, who works 20 more hours a week, stated very decisively that time management was the biggest lesson she learned from her job and that influences her lifestyle outside her job:

> My job is very time specific that I have to meet the deadline for every task. Also, time is the key measurement of my job for payment. I have to be very careful in time management to finish my job on time with certain quality. It was not easy at

the beginning. I had been caught up in the amount of time spent in the job, the quality and the payment… So I learned to plan my time wisely in this job and found it also useful for my study and for balancing my work and life. Right now, the job fills into my schedule first, then my kids and household chores. The last is my study. My life is divided into a series of time segments. (Lee)

To Lee, the priority lies in the professional space, but with the condition that "if it doesn't seriously clash with the kids' interests, such as illness". The transformative voice Lee assimilates in the professional space is, in her words, "time management". But in my interpretation, it is the voice of meeting multiple deadlines, as she deals with multiple tasks. The ideology behind this is to manage time effectively in order to meet multiple deadlines. This voice in her professional space supresses other voices in other spaces, such as critical thinking in the supervision space. Some other students mentioned the voice of *meeting the deadline* as influencing their responses to their supervisors' feedback in the first interview. Nonetheless, the voice of making the deadline does not bring profound changes to these students when compared to Lee, who changes her way of doing things and applies this voice later to organise her life.

Later I asked her how this voice of time management influences her responses to her supervisors' written feedback. She replied,

> After I receive the feedback from the supervisors, I give myself a certain amount of time to respond to the feedback and do the revision. Therefore, I have to be very strategic: to go over the feedback first and decide the big issues demanding the immediate attentions and the less urgent issues which can be put aside a bit. Even with the urgent problems, I only allow myself a limited time to ensure not going beyond the total amount of time I allocated to this revision task as a whole. (Lee)

This narrative from Lee shows that the voice of meeting multiple deadlines, along with the voice of prioritisation, contributes to her feedback responses. Lee's application of this transformative voice about effective time management in feedback response, in return, demonstrates the transformative-ness of this voice with a far-reaching effect in other spaces, in addition to the professional space.

Joy is a full-time PhD student and a full-time professional assistant. It seems that her job is competing with her PhD study constantly, and her job wins.

> I have great pressure. I know the supervisors are not satisfied, as I didn't do as they told me to do. But I have tried my best. I cannot make myself as A student; B or C student is what I am aiming for. I have my own situation, comparing to other full-time students. I can only write and read outside of the office hours. If I don't have a full-time job, I will certainly do a better job. (Joy)

Prioritisation of the professional space is evident in Joy's account of the time allocation and for the lowered target of her PhD study. In this first-ranking professional space, she acknowledged that the chief voice bringing her difficulties is the direct form of communication with colleagues and clients.

> We Chinese communicate indirectly to avoid being offensive and losing face. Thus, a lot is said to pave the way before the key points. Sometimes, even the point itself is vaguely expressed. This indirect way of communication doesn't work here. My colleagues normally go to the point first, and this is also the way they communicate with the clients: concise and to the point. I have to adopt myself to talk and think this way as being part of this community, and it's urgent and hard. (Joy)

It is hard because it is against her already established ideology regarding communication, which entangles with conflicts, tensions and concessions between the past and present, the Eastern and Western voices. It is evident that Joy gives most of her time to her profession and prioritises her PhD study second. Consequently, the voices from the professional space are more powerful and invasive. However, others' voices enter the dialogue as "chemical union (on the semantic and emotionally expressive level)" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 340), which influences students' cultural and ideological repertoire as a whole. The voice of direct communication in the professional space seems to disturb the tranquillity of Joy's ideological world most and imposes a profound impact on other aspects of her life. When asked how this direct form of communication affected her responses to the supervisors' feedback, she thought for a while, and said,

> Well, I think I am now more directly raise my concerns, doubts and disagreement towards the feedback to the supervisors, not as hesitant as before. You know my

supervisors, like my colleagues, are Westerners, so the direct way of communication is applicable to some degree. And it [the direct way of communication] is one element composing my critical and independent thinking. (Joy)

For the rest of the students who work temporarily or on a casual basis and place their PhD first, the voices of critical thinking and/or independence from the supervision space weigh most in their responses to feedback and are most transformative. "PhD study is the only true business in the three years", Sunny commented. These two voices the students digest are part of the leading educational philosophy in New Zealand, even in the Western world (Bailin & Siegel, 2003). "If you want to successfully get your degree, you have to think and, most importantly, write critically", said Lily. Because these students prioritise their PhD in first place, the prevailing voices in the space of PhD supervision matter most. Similar to Joy, what makes the two voices transformative is that, in a sense, they stand opposed to the voice of dependence or deference, which the students have already assimilated as part of their culture.

The most transformative voices, relating to the students' experiences, are those prominent in the prioritised space and possibly contradictory with the already assimilated voices in other spaces—the students' own cultural norms, for instance. However, the oppositional voices can promote one's ideological development. As Bakhtin (1984) explains, "everything lives on the very border of its opposite" and that "opposites come together, look at one another, are reflected in one another, know and understand one another" (p. 176). Therefore, the more differentiated voices the students confront and interact with, the more chances there are for them to experience profound thinking and reflection, as well as ideological transformation.

8.3.4 Voice, time and space

In addition to the relationship between voice and space, I found that time is another strong element working with space to configure the development of the voices. Bakhtin (1981) insists that time and space are inextricably intertwined and are "forms of the most immediate reality" (p. 85). The inseparability of time and space is also echoed by some other researchers, though the research perspectives or focus may differ. For instance, when discussing politics and space/time, Massey (1993) contends that space (spatiality) and time (temporality) are different but "neither can be conceptualised as the absence of

the other" (p. 153). Usher (2002) also claims that time and space are "inseparable and interactively relational" (p. 42).

How do Chinese international doctoral students interact with the past and present, the Eastern and Western voices, in the framework of Bakhtin's chronotope, given the inseparability of time and space? Chinese international doctoral students come to the new spaces with their past experiences (the culturally embedded voices) and future expectations. The future expectations are dynamic, which are largely decided by the culturally embedded voices, but are also influenced by the interactions of the embedded and the present alien voices. The students' future goals further impose an effect on their prioritisation of specific space. Apart from the future orientation, they refer to the past as the baseline of action when interacting with the alien voices in new spaces. Overall, the students keep going back and forth between the past and the future to respond to the present, which is filled with the alien voices and characterised by the interactions between the embedded and alien voices. The past and future together explain and influence the present. Bakhtin (1986) highlights this relationship by suggesting: "Trying to understand and explain a work solely in terms of the conditions of its epoch alone, solely in terms of the conditions of the most immediate time, will never enable us to penetrate into its sematic depths" (p. 4). Therefore, to understand the present—for instance, the students' feedback responses—it is necessary to put the present back into the chain of time and relate it to the past and future. These findings are consistent with those of Araujo (2005), who uncovers that the doctoral students' present is lived upon their past memories and future expectations. Furthermore, I also found that the future goals of the students are greatly associated with geographic place. The Chinese international doctoral students, from what I found, and as shown in the following subsection, have their unique chronotope, a typical spatial and temporal matrix, configuring the dialogues among the voices.

The future to the present

The analysis of data shows that students' responses to present situations are future driven, which corroborates with Bakhtin's future-oriented chronotope (Shields, 2007). Araujo (2005) points out that "PhD candidates live in a time ahead of themselves, in the sense that the future is deeply constitutive of their present, leading them to postpone and suspend (possible) actions in the present" (p. 206). The current study manifests this

future-driven concept: how the students project their future governs their ranking of the spaces which further affects their interactions with the voices in the spaces they engage in. More than the future-driven orientation (Araujo, 2005; Bakhtin, 1981), the findings also indicate that some students' futures are largely tied up with geographic space. Two strands of future goals associated with space divide the students into two groups.

Two students, Lee and Joy, have a very clear aim: to stay in New Zealand after graduation. Both of them have already obtained a Master's degree in China. A full-time job offer from qualified employers is the only thing they need in order to apply for the permanent residence of New Zealand. Local working experience is consequently essential for the full-time job offer, which urges the two students to prioritise the professional space over the supervision space.

However, what is the point of their doing the three- to four-year PhD? How does this PhD degree help them to succeed in future goals?

> It [the PhD] is a channel, transiting me to this country with less risk. Doing PhD is to reduce the risk as a back-up plan. I have a job in China, and the PhD degree is the shortcut to promotion. So if I cannot stay in New Zealand after graduation, it is not the end of the world. But, as you know, it is almost impossible to find a job closely related to my PhD degree here [New Zealand], so the PhD study falls into the second importance to me… (Joy)

In addition to these 'tool' and 'risk management' concepts of PhD, Lee thinks of the PhD more in terms of a flashy title which adds credibility and reputation to the person who gains the degree. She mentioned,

> Although I won't look for job in Education [her PhD is about education], I am not an academic type of person [laughter]. The degree itself counts. It speaks to your future employers and clients of your qualification, your training, your horizon and so on. (Lee)

In summary, the future goals of Joy and Lee link to the geographic space: New Zealand. In order to enhance the chances of obtaining permanent residence in New Zealand, they attach most importance to employability, which makes the professional space distinct. Consequently, they have to pursue more employable careers which are, in most cases, irrelevant to their PhD study, because the chance of securing an academic job in a

university after graduation is very slim in New Zealand. Thus, they consider the PhD a medium to reach their future goals, which explains why these two students prioritise the professional space and rank in first place the voices within this space. What they care most about in relation to their study is to graduate and secure the local certificate to get a job in New Zealand, rather than applying the knowledge learned during the doctorate to practice and pursuing a related career. The supervision space falls behind the professional space, and the voices in the supervision space are hence less transformative and influential in their feedback responses.

In contrast, for the other four students, speciality in their PhD fields counts greatly towards personal and professional development in their near future, and their future is not confined/defined by a specific geographic space. They aim to gain knowledge to upgrade themselves or to seek answers to their questions. "I feel something is going on and it's not right. I want to find out more", Ryne explained as her motivation of doing the PhD. Likewise, Ann considers doing the PhD as being able to explore the issue she thinks problematic and to do something about it in the future. For Sunny, the PhD is a must for her current career in terms of the qualification and the knowledge gain: "I need a PhD to get promoted and, most importantly, to be updated by the cutting-edge knowledge". Lily studies for her PhD out of her interest and would like to be a professional in this field: "I am really interested in it [her research project] and want to make a living on it". Nevertheless, for these four students, the present is more important, because the expertise they gain in doing their PhD now is decisive for their future, which gives rise to their prioritisation of the supervision space and its voices. Consequently, the voices in the supervision space drive their feedback responses. Moreover, they choose not to limit their future to a particular location, which again differentiates them from Joy and Lee.

All six students are practical about the PhD degree and they are doing it for future purposes. The differences exist in relation to how they perceive the PhD in planning the future, and how they perceive the space, namely, the geographic space in their future plans. These differences, in turn, largely affect the students' perceptions of the voices in the academic or supervision spaces, as well as their assimilation of these voices. The geographic space, such as New Zealand, is an inclusive and complex space which consists of various cultural spaces, working spaces, living spaces, educational spaces and so forth. Therefore, the geographic space implies future possibilities in all the sub-

spaces it contains. The complexity of space supports Massey's (2005) idea of space as being "open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming" (p. 59).

The past to the present

If future goals drive the students to prioritise particular spaces and the voices in the spaces, their past experiences in various spaces are the benchmark they usually refer to when they come across and respond to the voices in similar spaces in current situations. The past helps construct the present and future. As Bakhtin (1986) elaborates, one "cannot live in future centuries without having somehow absorbed past centuries as well" (p. 4).

Comparison and contrast with the past are the most frequent strategies the students use to rationalise their current overseas experience:

> It [the supervision relationship] is completely different. In China, I used to receive directions from the teacher and do what I was told to do. But now, my supervisors say to me: tell us what to do. I feel strange but I think I have to figure out a proper way to work with my supervisors. (Anne)

> I don't feel too much foreignness in NZ. There are so many Chinese elements here. It is more like Hong Kong… (Lily)

The students use their past experience as the reference to evaluate the current situation and, together with the future goals, to rationalise their actions in interaction.

The difference between the past and the present is where the change or transformation usually happens, for the consciousness awakens when encountering alien voices (Bakhtin, 1981). As retrieved from the interview data, whenever the students talk about the differences between the past and the present, there is always deep thinking, involving conflict, struggle and movement. The typical examples, as I have mentioned in Chapter 7, are: the different standards of good English academic writing (Ryne, Sunny, Lily); and, some students' entanglement among the voices of deference and critical thinking (Lily, Anne, Sunny). These are the cases where conflicting voices from the past and the present are fighting for hegemony (Bakhtin, 1981), providing the opportunities for the transformations or changes to happen. Take Joy's case as an example. The voice of indirect communication she has assimilated in the past in China is fighting with the

voice of direct communication she encounters in the professional space in New Zealand. Beholding the future goal of finding a job and staying in New Zealand, Joy decides to adapt herself to fit into the new professional space to let the voice of direct communication win. The effect of this voice goes beyond the professional space to the supervision and feedback response, as Joy has explained already.

To conceptualise the development of the voices using Bakhtin's (1981) chronotope, with its inseparability of time and space, is exceptionally complex. The analysis of the six students' data suggests that there is no single chronotope for all. To respond to the present in various spaces of New Zealand, all the students refer to their past experiences in spaces outside of New Zealand and are driven by their future planning; however, what differs is the degree of importance the students attach to their past experiences, present situations and future goals. For instance, Lee and Joy attach more importance to future planning which is bound to a geographical space, whereas the other students are more present-oriented, focusing on their current PhD studies the most. The findings at this stage present individual differences in how these Chinese international doctoral students live in time and space, with their past, present and future interweaving, in which they assimilate others' voices and renovate their enrooted voices. This observation supports Bakhtin's idea that the historic past links to the present and the unspecified future (Shields, 2007). At the same time, it also confirms Manathunga's (2017) notion of time, that time is not "single, universal, linear and homogenous", but can be "both religious and secular, mythical and rational and eternal, cyclical and linear" (p. 115). Furthermore, the students' different ways of living in time and space indicate the individualised chronotopes, in "variable, active, open and always-becoming modes" (Shields, 2007, p. 11).

My research focus limits the methodologies I use as well as the findings. I made the present the point of departure, in order to ask the students to reason their responses to the present situation, with a particular focus on the feedback responses. This way of interviewing results in the findings which show a strong impact from the past and future to the present, but with little information on how the present along with the past influences the future, or other connections in-between. However, time alone is dense. What I revealed is only one facet of the students' experience with time, in relation to the space and voices.

8.4. Transformative voices for one

The outstanding individual differences found in the second round of interviews cause difficulties in examining in depth the development of the voices for each student. Thus, a third interview was conducted in order to focus on one student as a single case study to provide a deeper and more detailed picture of the voices' development in one person. The transformative voices identified at this stage are deference, critical thinking and independence, which mostly develop out of the supervision space. I aim to find out in this interview the interactions enabling or preventing the development of the three voices (through assimilation and renovation) in this student.

8.4.1 The third interview: Talking to one

I chose Lily to be the individual student who was interviewed the third time. This is because her data are rich—she was very reflective and willing to share—but also paradoxical. The analysis tracing her feedback responses was the most difficult, because it was almost impossible to relate the feedback to its corresponding response, as she made major revisions throughout of the whole piece of writing. In other words, she usually developed her supervisors' feedback to a large extent, which left me with the impression that she was highly independent and critical. However, it surprised me in the later interview that she considered herself a highly dependent and deferent student. I can see the tensions and struggles within her, between being critical, independent and dependent. Her case shows something of the complexity and the subtleness of the assimilation of voices and the concomitant transformation of herself as a speaking person—of her subjectivity—within that process.

The third interview took place in her dormitory in the 28th month into her PhD candidature. As a reminder, I conducted the text analysis, the first and the second interviews, when Lily had been enrolled for 11 months, 14 months and 18 months, respectively.

The data collection followed the thread of the development of the three voices which were steered by the interactions which help (or hinder) the development. In the interview, I firstly checked with Lily about the transformative voices discovered in analysing her responses to the supervisors' feedback and later refined in the last two interviews. By looking into the findings of the previous phases, she agreed with the most

influential and transformative voices as being independence, critical thinking and dependence (deference) and started to reflect on the trajectory of their development and the relevant interactions. Thus, the interview questions at this stage were about the journey or the path of the development of these three voices because of her interactions with the outside context defined by time and space. For example, one of the typical interview questions is: Is there anything you can think of to help or hinder the development of critical thinking?

To analyse the data in this single case study, I firstly drew the development of the three voices by tracking and comparing the information Lily revealed in the third interview with that of the first and second interviews. Thus, the data involved in this phase was mainly retrieved from the third interview, but also referred back to the first and second interviews. Then I tried to locate the associated interactions of the speaking persons, who are highly accentuated in Lily's account of the significant factors and interactions. Under the same speaking persons, I used thematic analysis to explore the essential interactions Lily and this speaking person engage in. At the same time, I reflected on my own experience upon Lily's, as a result of communicating with her and other students. The remainder of the chapter will explain Lily's journey in the development of the three transformative voices and relevant interactions.

8.4.2 Independence

In this interview, Lily did not specifically or systematically talk about the development of the independence as she did for critical thinking and dependence. Instead, she talked about the voice of independence rather loosely. After carefully examining her data, I found three dimensions with regard to the development of independence. They are self-regulated learning, independent thinking and self-management. Although Lily herself did not mention the three dimensions directly, she agreed with my interpretations when I brought the findings back to her for validation.

The voice of independence occurred to Lily as self-regulated learning firstly, which she integrated when she did her postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom:

> I gained this notion in my master's in UK with tough experience. Independence is the main characteristics of Western education. Although four-year PhD is different from the one-year master's, independence is always the requirement. I mean you

should be responsible for and actively engaging in your own learning, not wait for the teacher to tell you what and how. (Interview 1, January 2015)

Lily unpacked her understanding of being independent before she started her PhD, and then described the growing independence in the supervision space:

At the very beginning, it was them [the supervisors] who asked me to meet. This year, they want me to initiate. Although I am not that active, I start to contact them through email as soon as I have questions, and call for a meeting. (Interview 2, May 2015)

Independently regulating and participating in one's own learning was how Lily conceptualised and exercised the voice of independence before and in the early stage of her PhD candidature. This conceptualisation of independence is how Zimmerman (2001) defines self-regulated learning. In the third interview, Lily said,

Now, before I meet my supervisors, I would have some ideas, questions or plan of actions in mind, which will be the leading thread of the supervision meeting. Rather being led as before, I now start to lead. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Lily's self-involvement and management in her own study deepens, from being called to the meeting, to call for a meeting, to lead the meeting. This progress signifies the enhanced level of self-regulated learning.

By doing the PhD, the voice of independence is granted with additional connotations: independent thinking. The opposite can be compliance or obedience. In the supervision space, it is to think independently from the supervisors, seeing the supervisors as one source of authority, not the only authority:

Generally speaking, I grow from less independence to more, but of course not complete independence. I learn more about my subject. So when I encounter controversial ideas, I have to think over, relating these ideas, including my supervisors', like their feedback, to my research, and decide how to use these ideas. It is like critical and independent thinking. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Lily's understanding of independence here means to think independently and critically about others' voices, such as the supervisors' feedback. This dimension of independence leads to independent decision making and is different from self-regulated learning in a

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sense. If self-regulated learning materialises independence as the student being an independent learner, as opposed to largely relying on teachers and supervisors, independent thinking embodies independence, conceiving the student as an independent thinker, which governs their way of thinking and attitude towards authority. Moreover, Lily connects independent thinking to critical thinking. The idea of bonding these two concepts together is reflected in her narratives and is embedded in her interactions with the supervisors and their written feedback. Therefore, I further discuss critical thinking and independent thinking in the next section.

In the third interview, Lily extended the meaning of independence to self-management. I use the word of self-management, because she begins to independently manage herself ahead of her PhD study, making it part of the whole:

> One of my friends influences me quite a lot. She has strong awareness of regulating and managing herself in study and in preparing for future academic career. Because of her, I realise that doing well in PhD is not enough. Apart from PhD, things like applying for research funds, publication, cooperation with peers in China, networking etc., all count if I want to be an academic and pursuing an academic career. I never thought of these before, and she made me feel shame and narrow-minded. I should be more independent in organising and managing things for both present and future planning. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Self-management contains self-regulated learning and independent thinking, but it goes beyond at the same time. It is future-oriented, which is one main feature of Bakhtin's (1981) real-life chronotope. It is with a long-term plan for the development of an academic career, rather than focusing only on the four-year PhD. Furthermore, the key for Lily to conceptualise this idea as one dimension of independence lies in both the awareness of "present and future planning" and the reflection on the past: "I never thought of these before, and she made me feel shame and narrow-minded". This finding supports Bakhtin's (1986) claim that there are no limits to the dialogic context, which can extend into the boundless past and future.

To conclude, the voice of independence develops in Lily's ideology from self-regulated learning, independent thinking to self-management. There might be alternative interpretations of the three dimensions of independence as three different voices. As Bakhtin (1981) claims, the unitary language is something posited and relative; the limit

of the voice of independence is thus also posited and relative, and can be interpreted differently. I include, in Lily's case, self-regulated learning, independent thinking and self-management, under the umbrella term 'independence', since this is how Lily perceives the voice of independence.

8.4.3 Critical thinking

The voices of critical thinking went through qualitative changes in Lily during the two and half years. To her, critical thinking and independent thinking appear to intertwine and cannot be clearly divided. To be precise, independent thinking is like the by-product of critical thinking, which constantly accompanies critical thinking. Lily is not the only one who combines the two. Elder and Paul (1994) define critical thinking as thinkers in charge of their own thinking. This definition shows the element of independent thinking.

Development of critical thinking

When asked how the voice of critical thinking has developed so far, Lily thought a while and said,

> It is a process. The concept of critical thinking basically didn't occur to me during my undergraduate. I started to have a preliminary understanding in my postgraduate: to criticise and question. I applied critical thinking only in the literature review, writing about the limitations of other researchers' work. But my doctoral supervisors ask for more: to challenge their ideas and think critically. It is difficult, as it goes against my culture. Even right now, I still do it [challenge supervisors' ideas] very carefully. As to thinking critically, I gradually realise it is not to take everything for granted: yes, people do this all the time, but does this mean it is right to do so? What bias might I or other people have when looking into this issue? So, it [critical thinking] is to think with reasoning, considering the interests of different groups of people, including positive and negative aspects, reflecting on your own perspectives, and so on. I am still learning [how to think critically]. (Interview 3, March 2016)

The path of Lily's assimilation of the voice of critical thinking is characterised by her educational phases: undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD. Lily assimilates this voice through a process of moving from having little idea about what it might mean, to having

a superficial comprehension and, then, to an in-depth awareness. This transformation continues as she said, "I am still learning", which indicates the 'unfinishedness' of the becoming (Bakhtin, 1981). The continuing development of this voice in Lily's ideology implies that individuals can have different views of critical thinking at different stages, which signifies the progression of understanding. This finding extends the literature of the diverse conceptualisations of critical thinking, discussed in Chapter 7, by suggesting that they can all be true for individuals at different stages.

Influence on interactions

The voices of critical thinking are always reinvested with new meaning when Lily interacts with different groups of people in new contexts. As Bakhtin (1981) posits, "The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogise it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (p. 346). The development of these internally persuasive discourses (critical thinking) renovates the way Lily thinks as well as the way she interacts with others in various spaces. The change is evident in her interactions with her supervisors and their feedback in the supervision space; her interactions with others in a self-centred space, a space for her own interests; and her interactions with others in an 'other-centred' space, a space for other people's interests.

In the supervision space, the power has been gradually shifted to Lily from her supervisors. The supervisors no longer stand in the pyramid of power dynamics, and Lily, the doctoral student, is gaining more say.

> I think more critically and independently. (Interview 3, March 2016)

This change is manifested through the way in which she responds to her supervisors and their feedback:

> I have more control in my own research, more say in supervision and more flexibility on the feedback. I mean like in the first year, I tended to treat the supervisors' words as 圣旨 [the imperial edict] that even though sometimes I may doubt, I still do as what they said. For example, when I got the feedback, I thought: yes, right, I have to revise as the feedback suggests, at least follow the general direction. But now, I would have a second thought: should I do this or should not?

This decision will be made after reading additional literature and thinking critically. Also, if I have doubt, I will raise it out to them [the supervisors]. I think I think more critically and independently rather than just follow. (Interview 3, March 2016)

By comparing to the past experience of being led by the supervisors in supervision, Lily highlighted her enhanced critical and independent thinking ability in interacting with the supervisors and their feedback. The second thoughts in relation to the supervisors' feedback is to analyse and evaluate the information, which characterises the critical thinking, according to Duron, Limbach and Waugh (2006).

The voice of critical thinking is transformative for Lily because it is not only influential in the supervision space, it also changes her world views and how she responds to the outside world in general:

I feel my thoughts before are very preliminary and shallow, very uncritical [laughter]. My research has something to do with the gender, feminism. Now when I read others' articles, news reports or posts in online forums, I would think about: is there any gender inequality embodied in this discourse? Who are oppressed by this discourse? It's thinking with awareness, rather than take it for granted as I did before. (Interview 3, March 2016)

It seems that the changes brought about by critical thinking not only happen in how Lily sees her roles in supervision and PhD study, but they also happen deeply in ideology, influencing her way of thinking and behaving. Meanwhile, despite critical thinking, which is connected with independent thinking, I can also read something else, something which relates critical thinking to critical studies or critical theory, one of the research traditions. She talked about the oppression and struggle of power based on the gender, which according to Lincoln et al. (2011), are the typical features of critical studies. This can be one departure point between the voices of critical thinking and independent thinking, because for Lily, the voice of critical thinking has gradually moved to engaging with critical theories and social justice. She also stated that this transformation was desired and expected: "I know I will change. That's one purpose of doing PhD". (Interview 3, March 2016)

The assimilation of critical thinking continues to take place for Lily, going beyond her research, beyond herself as the centre, to a space of serving others. She then begins to think about how to incorporate her academic idea of critical thinking with actions in order to influence others:

> I met some activists and some organisations. They won't spend time to write academic papers. Instead, they organise and participate in activities, like drama and lecture; they write in influential media, or post in forums. They are practising the theories and their ideas to influence others. So I wonder if I should or could be one of them. To do something for others, for the society… (Interview 3, March 2016)

Lily appears to assimilate the voice of critical thinking from some activists outside of the supervision space. The assimilation makes her think of the future possibility of transferring from a critical thinker and researcher to become an activist and serving others' interests. This finding reinforces Bakhtin's (1981) emphasis on the connectedness of time and space in chronotope and its future orientation. In addition, Lily's interaction with others in other spaces also reflects Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the 'public square', where "the individual is open on all sides" (p. 132), attending to the voices around.

The transformation brought about by assimilating the voice of critical thinking indicates the shifting roles Lily plays as an interlocutor of a dialogue. In the supervision and the self-centred spaces, Lily, as a speaking person, responds more to others' voices, whereas in the other-centred space she is thinking of initiating a dialogue and building up a conversational relationship with others. The shifting roles in dialogues implies the increasing agency, which Lily exerts to shape and control her own life, and which is emphasised within the realities of space and time by Bakhtin (Shields, 2007). The transformation is an accumulated, deliberate and desired process, and is expressed by means of Lily's own voices, including what she says, what she does and what she thinks.

8.4.4 Deference (dependence)

The voice of deference prevails from the very beginning of Lily's doctoral candidature. Because Lily used the word 'dependence' in her interviews, for the rest of this section I

will use 'dependence' more. Lily emphasised her high-level dependence on her supervisors in the first interview, conducted 14 months after her PhD enrolment:

> I mentally depend on my supervisors and trust them. I do what they say, although I know they actually want me to challenge them. I cannot help it. (Interview 1, January 2015)

In the second interview, conducted in the 18th month of her candidature, the dependence was still highlighted, but the tension had intensified between the voice of dependence and the voices of critical thinking and independence. Lily talked much about how she, on the one hand, felt uncomfortable to discuss and challenge the supervisors' ideas and feedback in meeting; on the other hand, she tried to have her own voices in writing:

> I am afraid of teachers since I was little, which is not what the teachers here expect. They encourage discussion and communication, which I feel a bit uncomfortable. When meeting with supervisors, I still like to listen rather than speak, and not like to challenge them. Do what they said. But when I write, sometimes I may intentionally not follow their advice, their feedback. This [direct confrontation/disagreement] will never happen in face-to-face communication. (Interview 2, May 2015)

The third interview was conducted about 10 months later, in the 28th month of her candidature. After the two previous interviews, which had revealed Lily's assimilation and practice of the voice of critical thinking and independence, I might have presumed that she would now be less dependent on her supervisors. But she gave a more nuanced account of her dependence:

> There is no change in the degree of dependence. I still depend on them, always. Every piece of their feedback and opinions are valuable and deserve my attention. What differ are the aspects of dependence. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Then she started to detail her present reliance, again, by comparing to her past, first-year experience:

> I rely on the supervisors in English language all the time, the application of theories, and the general direction. The question I ask them [the supervisors] at the end of supervision meeting: am I on the right track? If they say 'yes', then I

can rest my mind for about one month. And I will definitely follow their suggestions on how to keep myself on the right track. The last is when I struggle with the bottleneck constraints, their advice would be the compass in mist. Oh, my God! It seems I rely on my supervisors more and more [laughter]. I think in summary, apart from those I always count on my supervisors, I probably depend on them less in writing skills, like how to write literature review, and less in data analysis; while rely more on the theories and significance. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Lily's narratives suggest that the voice of dependence is still strong and influential, but with a shifting focus, revealing "ever newer ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346) in the New Zealand context. This finding challenges Gurr's (2001) model of supervision, which posits that supervision style should, over time, shift from hands-on to hands-off as students become progressively more autonomous. Lily's case gives evidence of progression towards autonomy being accompanied by the emergence of new areas of dependence, which supports Wisker's (2012) argument that supervisory dialogues need to be adjusted to different individuals at different times. The development of the voice of dependence also reveals Lily's trajectory of learning or the process of socialisation into the academic community, to some extent.

Finally, Lily ended her reflection about the voices by saying,

Dependence doesn't change in me, but the idea of critical thinking and independence are strengthened, because I keep interacting with these two ideas in various contexts with different people. (Interview 3, March 2016)

These final words from Lily summarise the developing trajectory of the three transformative voices which were identified in her feedback responses but lead to profound ideological transformation. The findings suggest that the multi-layered interactions among the voices of independence, critical thinking and dependence from the past, present and future in various spaces create or renew the meanings of the three transformative voices in Lily's ideology.

8.4.5 The researcher's first reflection

I am, myself, as the researcher and as a participant, a Chinese international doctoral student who has almost the same educational history as Lily: BA in China, MA in the

United Kingdom and PhD in New Zealand. Her experience largely resonates with mine. I have a strong desire to reflect on my own experience in assimilating the voices of critical thinking, dependence and independence by doing this project and by interviewing the students, particularly Lily.

I have the same understanding as Lily of critical thinking being questioning as a result of my MA education in the United Kingdom, but I never really practised it in my thinking. What I knew and did in my postgraduate and early PhD study was to write some limitations of other researchers' work in the 'literature review'. That was my whole idea of critical thinking. Doing this project and analysing the first interview data brought the voice of critical thinking to prominence. I suddenly realised how rich the construct 'critical thinking' can be, from the remote and grand Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, to the recent scholars, such as Bensley (2009, 2010), Ennis (1987, 1989, 1992) and Facione (1992, 1994). By reading these articles, I made dialogues with those authors and the scholars they cite, which changed my understanding of the voice of critical thinking to good reasoning, evaluation, analysis, higher order thinking and so forth. And I used these perceptions to analyse my other participants' data. These dialogues are, as St. Pierre (2014) claims, a different collaboration through the assemblage of reading and writing.

My understanding of the voice of critical thinking deepens again by dialogising with Lily for a third time. After interviewing Lily for the third time and listening to her journey of assimilating the voice of critical thinking, I was awakened from my 'little world' and recognised what Bakhtin meant by openness and unfinishedness (1981). The development never stops as long as the dialogue continues. Through interviewing, I conducted dialogues with my participant, Lily, which brought new meanings of critical thinking: 'not taking it for granted' not only in doing academic research, but also in the world of living heteroglossia when encountering various voices from others. I do not intend to assimilate all these new meanings, but these dialogues permit me to "find [my] own voice and to orient it among other voices, to combine it with some of them and to counterpose it to others, or to separate one's voice from another voice, with which it is inseparably merged" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 239). Moreover, they open up possibilities and novel perspectives which I can use to view the world and be part of the world.

For me, the voice of deference or dependence interweaves with the voices of critical thinking and independence on one hand. The voice of dependence was formidable in me during my early PhD. I strictly followed whatever my supervisors said, even though I may not have agreed with their suggestions. Now, if our opinions contradict, I will justify mine and raise questions about theirs, because of the voices of critical thinking and independence. As such, my dependence on supervisors' advice has moderated. On the other hand, when new problems and predicaments appear which I lack the skills to solve, I return to the supervisors and depend on their expertise. I think this is the normal process of learning that Lily, myself and other students have to go through: from being unskilled and dependent on the skilled, to becoming more skilled and less dependent. The learning is unfinished, so the learning process reiterates. This learning process agrees with Grant's (2003) claim that supervision can be seen as the pedagogy of personalised forms that the supervisors' facilitation changes to suit the development needs of the students to finish the thesis and become independent researchers.

In independence, I would say I am a self-regulated learner, a lesson I learned in my postgraduate studies, just as Lily did. I have initiated the supervision meetings and planned the content of discussions from the very beginning of my PhD. My understanding of independence, right now, is more about self-management, including balancing family, work and study, including short-term and long-term planning in these three aspects. I have to manage myself and my life as a mother, a daughter, a wife, a PhD student, a university lecturer—as each of the above as well as a whole. This is the real-life chronotope. Like in the 'public square' (Bakhtin, 1981), I have to face and respond to the voices addressed in the different 'me's: the present Chinese international doctoral student in supervision space, the past Chinese university student and lecturer, a future PhD graduate, etc. The different selves also initiate dialogues in manifold spaces. To conclude, by reading the literature, interviewing the students and analysing the data for my PhD project, I have become an active interlocutor participating in many dialogues. Consequently, I am influenced and changed by interacting with a variety of voices. The multiple selves in multiple dialogues mirror the ideas of heteroglossia with the "co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291).

8.5. Facilitative dialogues and interactions for one

The facilitative dialogues and interactions Lily engaged in were marked by an awareness and appreciation of her (non-Chinese) supervisors' personal qualities, as well as their recognition of her cultural difference, her progressive academic expertise and the role-modelling of her peers. These dialogues enabled her to assimilate the alien voices of critical thinking and independence, as well as renovate the ingrained voice of deference/dependence.

8.5.1 The personal qualities of the supervisors: "Someone who cares about me like a family member"

The personal qualities of Lily's supervisors hinder but eventually empower her to think critically and be independent by softening the vertical supervisory relationship she had been accustomed to in China. Lily experiences these qualities by interacting with her supervisors within, but not limited to, the supervision space.

What are some of these personal qualities? By looking through all the three interviews with Lily, I found Lily used many terms of praise when she talked about interacting with her supervisors: kind, nice, encouraging, sincere, empathetic, modest, responsible, patient, considerate, friendly, easy-going and so forth. She is not the only student who acknowledges and appreciates the supervisors' personal qualities. As a matter of fact, the other students also mentioned or commented, more or less, on the personal qualities of their supervisors. Lily gave an example of how she experienced empathy from one of them:

> My main supervisor did her PhD in USA. She had been an international PhD student herself, so she knows the situations of being foreign in the learning and living spaces. Therefore, apart from a meticulous care in my study, she is also considerate for my daily life. The winter in Auckland is very humid, and on one Saturday morning, my mobile rang, showing her name. I was a bit nervous: what's going wrong? Later I was completely shocked by her saying, "my husband and I will drive to your place and send you the dehumidifier. I know your hostel is in a poor condition…" You know, as an international student, I left my family and all the familiar ones to a new country, with no one to rely on except myself. There were times I felt lonely, weak and homesick. But my supervisor's call warmed me

in the cold winter and made me realise there is someone who cares about me like a family member. In my view, this is not the supervisors' responsibility and not every supervisor looks after the students all-roundly. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Through this interaction with her supervisor, Lily felt empathy and, even more, something like a family bond. Moreover, as Lily mentioned, the dislocation due to the change of the geographic, cultural and academic spaces magnifies the empathy or other qualities of the supervisors. Other researchers suggest that supervisors' positive attributes help build harmonious supervisor-supervisee relationships, which are crucial for the success of PhD projects (Denicolo, 2004; Seagram, Gould & Pyke, 1998). However, I consider how these attributes might impact on the student's interaction with voices of critical thinking, independence and deference.

In Lily's case, her supervisors' personal qualities appear to reinforce the voice of deference, thus hindering the assimilation of the other two alien voices. The personal qualities of the supervisors can win them true reverence from the students, not because of their socially constructed high status, or the power of gatekeepers overseeing the students' work, but because of who they are as a person and as a teacher. For example, Lily said,

I admire, even worship them [the supervisors]. They are established scholars with high academic achievement, but they are modest, sincere, kind, and willing to help students. I feel they are perfect as an academic and a person. (Interview 3, March 2016)

The admiration and appreciation Lily held towards the supervisors enhanced her trust in the supervisors, an essential dimension of the learning milieu and fundamental to effective use of feedback (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2006; Lee & Schallert, 2008; Price et al., 2011), which in turn gives more weight to her supervisors' voices. As a consequence, the voice of deference (listening to the supervisors) can be more powerful in dialogues. Students then may find it more difficult to doubt, to question their supervisors' ideas and to have different opinions, which are considered disrespectful and offensive in Chinese culture, as discussed in Chapter 7. However, when supervisors keep highlighting critical and independent thinking, students can be caught in a dilemma: 'I' should listen to the supervisors, but listening to the supervisors here means to not fully listen to them, but to challenge them. What should 'I' do then?

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Lily gave her story of how her supervisors' personal qualities helped her overcome the dilemma and eventually facilitated her assimilation of the voices of critical thinking and independence:

> My supervisors influence me profoundly. I trust them, respect them and admire them, so that what they suggest is of great value to me. When they encouraged me to think critically and independently, I felt very reluctant and uncomfortable for quite a long time. However, they are so kind, so patient, so encouraging and sincere, and created every possible chance for me to speak of my opinion, to justify my idea. I did not want to fail them, so I pushed myself to think critically. I found that they delight and applaud for every small improvement I made, even though sometimes the improvement was too small for me to notice. I felt I did the right thing. Gradually, I can think critically and independently. I mean they are really nice people, I feel safe to talk, and they value what I said. (Interview 3, March 2016)

This narrative depicts the path of how she has incorporated the voices of critical and independent thinking per se, as well as the course of her own mind-set of critical thinking and independence, from reluctance to uncertainty, to certainty. The personal qualities of the supervisors played out to develop a more dynamic supervisory relationship in which dialogues (two-way communications) are possible. More importantly, they boost Lily's trust for her supervisors and enhance the supervisory relationship, which helps her understand and induct the voices of critical thinking and independence ultimately. One's perception and understanding of a speaking person's voice are attributed to the relationship between the speaker and the listener, and to the degree of their proximity to one another (Bakhtin, 1984; Shields, 2007).

From Lily's interview data and other data generated for this study, it appears that the non-Chinese supervisors' personal qualities can foster proximity with their Chinese international doctoral students. As a result, the students' perceptions of the supervisors and their voices are enhanced, which facilitates the students' integrating these voices.

8.5.2 Supervisors' cultural recognition: "Engaging my culture"

Alongside the kind of qualities previously described, cultural recognition in supervision space plays a key role in facilitating the development of the voices in Lily. Generally

speaking, students seek their supervisors' recognition for many things, but mostly they are related to academic matters, such as their hard work, academic progress and achievement. This academic recognition is indispensable in supervision and raises the students' confidence and motivates them to progress in their PhD journey. In intercultural supervision, cultural recognition from non-Chinese supervisors can make a constructive difference for Chinese international doctoral students, apropos knowledge construction, supervisory relationship and eventually their assimilation of alien voices.

Helping constructing new knowledge is one productive result that cultural recognition can bring. According to Yúdice (2009), different cultural horizons legitimate different bases for constructing knowledge. There are possibilities of generating new knowledge when two or more cultures interact together and are interpreted without prejudice but with critical eyes. Lily's supervisors urge her to apply Chinese theories and methodologies, and they see the multiculturality as a treasure:

> They encourage me to engage Chinese philosophy into my own research. They think Chinese philosophy is deep and being a Chinese and knowing the culture are my advantages. (Interview 3, March 2016)

This encouragement manifests not only in words, but also in interactions:

> To a point of view, she [the main supervisor] will tell me how the Westerners think of it, how she thinks of it as being one Westerner, and then invite me to say how I think of it as being a Chinese. And I think this way of discussion trains my critical thinking and independence. (Interview 3, March 2016)

The supervisors' cultural recognition, in this case, includes more than respect and curiosity towards Lily's culture, but their encouragement, involvement and guidance in order for her to employ her cultural assets in research to make new knowledge.

The supervisors' recognition of the students' culture changes to some extent the supervisory relationship towards a more dynamic sharing of power, where the students can sometimes be the experts. At the same time, the supervisors' cultural recognition puts the students and their culture in very much the same level as the local culture or the supervisors' own culture, which might be seen as levelling off the supervisory relationship. The following accounts from Lily illustrate this point:

My main supervisor hugs or kisses her other doctoral students when they meet, but the most intimate body contact between us is hand-shaking. Cos she knows neither hug nor kiss is my culture. And I feel gratitude and being respected as an equal. I don't need to change everything and act like a completely different person. (Interview 3, March 2016)

All these extracts of Lily's narratives suggest, firstly, that the supervisors' cultural recognition is established on the basis of respect: respect for Lily's culture, for Lily as part of the culture, for possibilities of Lily acting, thinking and conducting research in a different way. This respect from the supervisors balances the supervisory relationship to some degree. However, the cultural recognition from Lily's supervisors goes further than respect: they encourage Lily to employ her cultural assets in research to construct new knowledge. In this manner, Lily the student, her culture and her culturally influenced ways of knowledge construction are no longer positioned in a subordinate level to those of the host culture and those of the supervisors. Singh (2009, 2011), in using Rancière's (1991) concept of productive ignorance in supervisory pedagogies, argues for the potential of knowledge generation where supervisors and international students bring equal intellectual power into the research. From a dialogical point of view, the supervisors' cultural recognition legitimises the status of the student, Lily, as one speaking person who can participate in the dialogues with her culturally embedded voices, the voices which are not from the "barbarians", nor "lower social strata" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271).

Secondly, the analysis of Lily's data implies that the supervisory relationship turns into power-sharing, when the supervisors view cultural differences constructively and assist the student, Lily, to take advantage and probe further into her past living experience, into her embodied cultural heritage. When Lily's home culture becomes the topic or part of the research, she may take the role of teacher, guiding her supervisors into a world of which they are often ignorant. The supervisors become learners. Thus, the space of intercultural supervision becomes one of mutual learning (Carter & Laurs, 2016; Wisker, 2012), in which students and supervisors are constantly exchanging the role of supervising and scaffolding, and the supervisory relationship becomes more dynamic and reciprocal. It is not simply equal power, but a movement of power between student and supervisors. It is power-sharing, in which both the students and the supervisors have power to act on the actions of the other (Grant, 2003).

What might the power-sharing have to do with the student's assimilating of the voices of critical thinking and independence? Based on the interview data in this phase, the power-sharing first and foremost turns around the apprentice-supervisor relationship based on a high-power-distance culture that characterises doctoral supervision in China (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In power-sharing, supervisors are not the only party who hold the authority; the students do too. The students know more about their own culture than their other-culture supervisors, so they have more opportunities to challenge and inform their supervisors. In principle, critical and independent thinking can be exercised in this manner, starting with something the student has confidence in. Furthermore, supervisors can be strategic in fostering the students' assimilation of the voices of critical thinking and independence. As Lily described earlier, her supervisors sometimes initiated turn-taking in their discussions: the supervisor set an example by speaking first, with the distinction of the standpoints between the mainstream Westerners' and her own, as an individual. As a result, Lily had the chance to practise critical thinking and independence by listening to her supervisor, which she can reflect upon and then speak of her own point of view as a Chinese. Lily herself acknowledged the benefits of the exchange of roles, the power-sharing, which she thought had developed her critical thinking skills and independence. The power-sharing does not deny but rather confirms Grant's (2003) finding of productive unequal power, which in this study has its roots in unequal expertise, the student's national culture and institutional standing.

Lily's experience suggests that supervisors' recognition of the students' culture can be an essential constituent for the students to assimilate the alien voices of critical thinking and independence. Cultural recognition is indeed a recognition of the students' past (intellectual and cultural history) and the geographic space of China. It is also an indication of the supervisors' initiatives to understand the students and the students' voices, which help co-construct the supervision, including the feedback practice. As Bakhtin states, "to understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context" (as cited in Morris, 1994, p. 35).

Apart from her supervisors' cultural recognition, Lily's accumulated academic expertise from interacting with her supervisors and others (e.g., her participants, literature) in and

outside the supervision space also assists her assimilation of the alien voices and renovation of her enrooted voice.

8.5.3 The student's progressive academic expertise

The amount of knowing and information acquired often decides the flow of authority and power in the space of doctoral supervision, which explains the traditional concept of teacher and student in some way. As Grant (2003) claims, "the supervisor is an authoritative knowing teacher and the student is an agreeable and cooperative listener" (p. 6). The more one knows, the more say one has, the more authoritative one could be. However, there can be instances where the students know more than the teachers or the supervisors, which partially reverses the supervisory relationship.

Lily previously described her changes in supervision interactions as holding more control and being more engaged, and responding to supervisors' written feedback more critically. The main reason, according to Lily, was this:

> I know a bit more now than in the first year. Comparing to the first year, I read more, think more and write more. So my horizon broadens a bit, and I will relate supervisors' ideas and feedback to my own inventory of knowing to decide what and how to do with my research. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Then, Lily gave more detail about how the information and authority flowed between her supervisors and herself:

> I am the one who collect and analyse the data, I take part in the whole course. I know more than anyone about the data and the themes extracted. Not like in the first year, all are assumptions, they [the supervisors] know more and I know little. Now I become the informant to my supervisors that they obtain the information from me and then give me feedback. I feel I know a bit more than my supervisors regarding my own project. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Due to the reversal of the asymmetric information quantity between Lily and her supervisors, the authority and power also reverse to some degree. The accumulated academic expertise converts Lily from a novice to experienced researcher, which puts more weight on her voices as a more authoritative speaking person in supervision and feedback dialogues. As I have emphasised many times, in addition to the speaking

context, the speaking person, namely, who is speaking, is vital in deciding the true meaning of the utterance, according to Bakhtin (1981). The voice of a novice researcher and the voice of an experienced academic can have different impacts on the listeners and listeners' response. Moreover, the progressive academic expertise enables Lily to exert her agency to develop her own voices and become more independent and critical.

To summarise, in Lily's case, the supervisors' personal qualities facilitate Lily's assimilation of the voices of critical thinking and independence. They are the fundamental force to close up the supervisor-student gap and to turn the one-way communication into two-way dialogue. In addition, the supervisors' cultural recognition and Lily's accumulated academic expertise further bridge the supervisor-student gap and overturn the direction of movement of the authority. These elements which facilitate the development of the voices are embodied through and affect supervisor-student interactions in the supervision space.

8.5.4 Peers' role modelling

Students do not only interact with their supervisors. Outside the supervision space, some other speaking persons, friends or colleagues for instance, can play vital roles in enabling the students' assimilation of certain voices through role modelling[12].

Lily recalled how her friend Lisa, a Chinese visiting scholar sitting in the same office as her, refreshed her understanding of independence in the long term with the idea of wholeness in which the PhD was only one part:

> She pushed me to think further. Every time she sees me she will ask whether I have some ideas of publishing, or introduce me some big names of my field in China and ask me to write to them and establish network. She invites me to be part of her project and tells me how important the funding application is in China…She helps me jump outside of my PhD world and see the PhD critically. (Interview 3, March 2016)

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[12] Role modelling, as a key theoretical component in social cognitive theory, means acquisition of learning through observing others (Bandura, 1986).

Another 'role model' Lily mentioned was one of her PhD colleagues, Jane, who "lives with the critical thinking", according to Lily:

> She is a role model for me. She is very critical and sharp. We listen to one PhD student talking about her opinions in 'not working hard enough to get the job' in a seminar. I feel the speaker is too idealistic about the situation, but I cannot think of more. While she [Jane] immediately pointed out that there is no consideration of gender, race and class … From her, I see critical thinking can be performed everywhere and anytime, not just lives in academic writing. (Interview 3, March 2016)

Jane, also a Chinese international doctoral student, acts out and manifests her understanding of critical thinking (in and out of academic life) to Lily. These two examples demonstrate the mode of 'near peer role modelling' (Murphey & Arao, 2001): Lisa and Jane become significant speaking persons for Lily as being 'near' to Lily in age, ethnicity, gender, present research experience and in frequency of social contact. Lily's accounts of "every time" and "again and again" indicate the frequency of interactions and suggest the cumulative effect of peers' role modelling. All these elements of being 'near' make Lisa's voice of independence and Jane's voice for critical thinking dialogical forces for Lily. The friends or the colleagues directly communicate the voices of independence and critical thinking with Lily through role modelling, which drive Lily's assimilation of these voices towards a wider and deeper understanding, the key of responses and dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981).

8.5.5 The researcher's second reflection

After talking to Lily directly during the interviews and making dialogues with her data in analysis, I sketch an opaque and pattern-less web with inter-connections. Yes, interconnections among voices, spaces and time. Reflecting on my own journey of assimilating the transformative alien voices, my initial interaction with the supervisors' written feedback helps me cross over the threshold of critical thinking and independence.

In the same way as Lily, writing a paragraph of limitations in the literature review is how I applied the critical and independent thinking in my early PhD. Like Lily, I also hesitated to express different ideas in the early stage in the supervision meetings when

making dialogues with two 'big heads' (my supervisors). By the way, I am a deferent, sensitive and prudent Chinese female who wants to satisfy the supervisors and meet their expectations. I tried very carefully to work out the legitimate boundaries of how deferent or critical I am allowed to be in this supervision space during the first year, and my supervisors' written feedback gave me lots of clues.

Every time I received feedback, I looked at the overall comments first to gain information about whether I am above the bar or not. This process can be very intense as commonly found in the literature (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2010; Eyres et al., 2001; Wang & Li, 2011). Fortunately, the overall comments on my writing were always generally good, which settled my nerves enormously and advanced my confidence in writing. Now I sometimes read my writing a second time against the feedback; I have the feeling that my supervisors are so kind and generous in giving me such supportive feedback, given the poor writing I produced at that time. I even think that they gradually raise their criteria based on my progression and academic level, as part of the personalised supervision (McWilliam & Palmer, 1995; Wisker, 2012) and are thus being supportive and encouraging all the time. However, prepared by the encouraging overall comments, I am more ready to dialogise with the in-text feedback, which reveals more messages about the supervisory dialogue: my supervisors invite me to speak as one stakeholder of my project. The star symbol '*', together with 'let's discuss' is always followed by content feedback, which I conceive as an invitation to communicate and the supervisors seeing me as kind of equal, not as a deferent student. And we do discuss these points in the supervision meetings, where I have to have my voices, which they value and take seriously. The post-feedback discussion confirms my speculation from the feedback of 'invitation to dialogue'. Therefore, I know what the supervisors expect from me in terms of critical and independent thinking and how they situate themselves in the space of PhD supervision as a facilitator, in most of the cases.

I interpret my role and that of my supervisors in supervision through initially making dialogue with their written feedback, which has established the theme of our supervisory dialogues as well as the legitimate periphery of critical and independent thinking. Therefore, in my case, the assimilation of the two alien voices starts by probing the supervisors' attitude and expectations via their written feedback, rather than negotiation as Hyland and Hyland (2006) suggests. In fact, the negotiation has taken place soon after my probing and finding the periphery. The periphery can be negotiated, because

the boundaries are permeable due to the intersection of the past, present and future (Bakhtin, 1981; Shields, 2007). I started to push the boundary through negotiation after I gained more research experience, or as Lily described it, increased academic expertise. My assimilation and application of these two voices is like dancing the tango, sometimes going backwards, sometimes going forwards, depending on the speaking context and speaking persons (Bakhtin, 1981).

8.6. Summary

In this chapter I have analysed the second round of interviews with the six students and the third interview with one single student. I have explored the transformative voices of the six students, which were identified from their feedback responses. In order to examine the developmental trajectory of the transformative voices, a vignette of one particular student is presented, delineating and discussing her experiences of interacting with significant others in significant spaces, within which the voices are developed. The single case study is supplemented by my reflection from the perspectives of the researcher and as a participant.

The findings drawn from the six students suggest similarities but more individualities in the development of the transformative voices in relation to time and space. The individualities indicate that the students live with different chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1981): they perceive the matrix of time and space differently in that some are more future-space focused, like Lee and Joy, while the rest are more present-space oriented.

The analysis of the single case study reveals the dialectical relationships among the voices of independence, critical thinking and deference. The findings from the single study also suggest that supervisors' personal qualities and cultural recognition, the student's progressive academic expertise, as well as the peers' role modelling facilitate the student's assimilation of the alien voices of critical thinking and independence, while renovating the enrooted voice of deference.

The overall findings in this chapter explore the 'becoming' longitudinally and suggest the complexity of students' feedback responses. Although they happened in the space of intercultural supervision, the students' feedback responses are influenced by the voices, particularly those opposing voices, from their past experience in various spaces of China, current experience in various spaces of New Zealand and their future planning.

Therefore, the students' feedback responses in intercultural supervision are the product of dialogues across time and space. The word 'intercultural' in this study suggests the enlarged heteroglossia, which includes two or more national languages (Chinese, English, and/or Māori) as well as more alien voices. In addition, the findings also imply that the students' assimilation of the alien voices and renovation of their engrained voices are an unfinished process, in a state of movement and oscillation, and with all kinds of possibilities.

Chapter 9. Closing: The becoming of students' voices through dialogical relationships

This study has drawn on a wide range of perspectives to contextualise and offer insight into intercultural feedback interactions which I argue should be dialogically constructed by both doctoral students and their supervisors. Intercultural feedback interactions or dialogues are conceptualised from two philosophical assumptions (postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and constructivist-oriented pragmatism), from two disciplines (applied linguistics and doctoral education), from particular interlocutors (non-Chinese supervisors and Chinese international doctoral students), from various theorists (predominantly Bakhtin) and from the researcher being one of the researched. These different perspectives provide different appearances of the same subject: feedback dialogue, which expands the boundary of a single understanding from a single perspective.

This closing chapter brings together the ideas presented in the previous chapters to respond to the research questions and to link back to the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of this study. In what follows, I will discuss the key issues emerging in this study under the following headings: (1) Answers to the research questions; (2) Overall discussion: four-level conceptualisation of feedback (3) A range of contributions; (4) Limitations of the study; (5) Future research.

9.1. Answers to the research questions

Based on the analysis of the data and theorisation, the overall argument of this study is that feedback interactions are in essence a series of ongoing and multi-layered (external and internal) dialogues, in which a variety of voices interact. This study has explored feedback interactions by asking research questions of what and how the feedback is provided; how the students respond to the feedback; and why the students respond in this way. To answer these questions, the data analysis chapters offer diverse views of feedback: from an initial exploration of what analysis of the text can tell us, to an ever-deepening exploration of the students' self-reasoning, to the multi-layered interactions

of the voices, and to the students' assimilation of alien voices and renovation of their enrooted voices.

9.1.1 Feedback provision

I examined the non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback on the first draft of their Chinese doctoral students' PhD proposals. Examining the two aspects of 'what' and 'how' feedback is provided reveals the explicit as well as tacit information communicated to their Chinese international doctoral students.

By answering the first research question of what and how feedback is provided, my main argument is that, being dialogic in nature and in pedagogy, the supervisors communicate with their students through their written feedback. Different kinds of information have been communicated, including: (1) the 'what' question, which refers to the aspects of writing the feedback addresses (e.g., linguistic accuracy/acceptability, content, organisation), communicates the dimensions being evaluated on doctoral writing from the viewpoint of the community of practice, the supervisors; (2) the 'how' question, which refers to the linguistic formulations of the feedback, communicates to some extent the supervisors' attitude towards the writing and their assumed supervisory relationships; and (3) the 'what' and 'how' can also reveal the students' weaknesses and possible ways to improve through critical feedback, as well as their strengths through positive feedback.

As a result, two analytical frameworks of feedback emerged. The first was generated from the data through constant comparisons (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to answer the question of 'what'. The findings show that supervisors examine doctoral writing in areas of language, content, appropriateness and organisation. The second analytical framework was based on the broad framework of pragmatic speech functions (Holmes, 2013) to answer the question of 'how'. In order to look at the feedback provision holistically, I used bivariate frequency distribution to integrate these two aspects. The findings suggest that the supervisors tend to negotiate with the students with advisory feedback and make more judgemental comments (expressive) in content. On the contrary, the supervisors like to make direct correction (referential feedback) in language, organisation and appropriateness.

9.1.2 Students' feedback responses

To some extent, what people do may reveal something different from what they say, and, therefore, the text analysis of students' feedback responses can complement their self-reported data, such as interviews, to obtain rich data and an in-depth understanding. Moreover, as the components of the external feedback dialogue, the feedback provision can exert great impact on the students' feedback responses. This is because, in the Bakhtinian sense, the feedback is not merely words in writing, but supervisors' voices, point of views, with the intention of influencing the students' ideologies in learning, thinking and behaving.

By comparing the revised proposal draft with the first one, it became evident that the students responded to the feedback in four ways: no change made despite feedback provided (no change); changes made exactly as the feedback directed (change/directed); changes inspired by the feedback (change/inspired); changes made without any feedback (change/additional). I also employed multivariate frequency distributions to investigate the relationship between the feedback response and feedback provision with regard to its focus and linguistic formulation. The findings suggest that the students, to some degree, agree with their supervisors' perceptions of language and content. The language is the most straightforward area, where the supervisors give direct referential feedback which the students tend to follow exactly. In contrast, content is the most slippery area where the supervisors are inclined to give advisory feedback which results in the most no change responses as well as inspired and additional change responses from the students. The finding that the students respond to most imperative and negative feedback, but leave most advisory feedback unattended implies that the students interpret advisory feedback as an area of negotiation and the other two formulations as severe problems which must be remedied. Although these findings are based on only six students' data, this study is the first to examine at doctoral level the students' feedback responses in relation to the supervisors' feedback provision within the three analytical frameworks. It extends beyond previous studies to illuminate that the students' feedback responses are closely associated with the supervisors' feedback focus and linguistic formulations.

The students' feedback responses bring to light diverse messages about their application of the feedback, about their perception and interpretation of the feedback and about the

supervisory relationship. The attempt to reveal some, if not all, the messages communicated by the students via their feedback responses brings to prominence the third research question: why do the students respond to the feedback in this way?

9.1.3 Why respond in this way?

In order to reimagine the possibilities and grapple with the complexities of students' feedback responses, I approached this 'why' question from multiple perspectives: external dialogue and internal dialogue, and through research paradigms of postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and constructivist-oriented pragmatism.

Students' reasoning around their feedback responses

The first round of semi-structured interviews with the students explored the self-reasoning about their feedback responses. In this phase I explained and supplemented the findings of the text analysis in terms of what the students said against what they actually did in responding to the feedback. The main findings confirmed the results of the text analysis, that the feedback provision influences the feedback responses. I found the students were in agreement with their supervisors apropos providing language feedback in referential form and content feedback in advisory and expressive forms. This preference reveals the students' lack of confidence in language and their contrasting intention of taking control in content. The findings from the interviews also complement the text analysis by refining the feedback formulation framework and by suggesting, contrary to some assumptions, that the 'no change' response can be an *active* inaction to the feedback.

As mentioned in the methodology and data analysis chapters, the analysis of the text and the first round of interviews are built upon the postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and Bakhtin's notion of external dialogue. However, I re-analysed the first round of interviews to explore the becoming of the students' voices, which was expressed in their feedback responses. It is a point of departure as a response to my shift to the constructivist-oriented pragmatism and Bakhtin's corresponding notion of internal dialogue.

Multi-layered interactions of voices when responding

In Chapter 7 I explored the 'why' question by investigating how the students' feedback responses come into being as a result of multi-layered interactions between diverse voices. These interactions are one fragment of the becoming of the voices from the constructivist perspective. The becoming of the students' voices is an unfinished open process which can be studied by capturing its fragments or representations, the feedback responses for instance. And the becoming of the students' voices at the point of responding is the result of dense and multi-layered internal dialogues the students engage in with a range of others' voices. The main findings at this stage support this argument by identifying the participating voices (e.g., the voices of critical thinking and deference), and their interactions (e.g., confronting and aligning), which lead to the students' feedback responses. When responding to the feedback, the students, as active participants in these feedback dialogues, have been pulled and pushed by others' voices and their own culturally embedded voices.

Assimilation of others' voices

In Chapter 8 I pushed further the boundary of the students' feedback responses by extracting the transformative voices and exploring their development in a broad context across time and space. Meanwhile, for further thinking about the becoming of the students' voices, this chapter looked at 'the becoming' within a time frame, rather than in a moment as the previous chapter did. The dialogues highlighted then become external again. The second round of semi-structured interviews was conducted in order to trace the development of the transformative voices identified in the students' feedback responses. The findings show a large diversity among the students in assimilating the transformative voices. Thus, a third interview with one particular student was carried out to provide a detailed, pertinent and longitudinal picture of the assimilation of the voices in that one case. This analysis suggests that supervisors' personal qualities and their cultural recognition, along with the student's progressive academic expertise and peers' role modelling, facilitated the student's assimilation of the voices of critical thinking and independence, and the renovation of her ingrained voice of deference.

In this final data analysis chapter, I argue that the becoming of the students' voices is the process of assimilating others' voices, while renovating their culturally enrooted voices. This is how the students' own voices develop and transform, during which

conflicts, struggles and reconciliations among the voices interweave. The process of assimilation and renovation is highly personal in that the students live with their own chronotope, featuring different modes of time and space.

9.2. Overall discussion: Four-level conceptualisation of feedback

This study aims to understand Chinese international doctoral students' feedback experience with their non-Chinese supervisors and to reconceptualise feedback.

Feedback, as many scholars suggest, is the information provided about the gap between the actual and the potential/desired levels of performance and about how to close the gap (Kumar & Stracke, 2011; Parr & Timperley, 2010; Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989). The findings from analysing supervisors' written feedback in the first-phase study strengthen this conceptualisation of feedback by identifying the gaps in writing and learning relating to the content, language, organisation and appropriateness. The findings also show that supervisors try to fill the gaps through referential, directive and expressive feedback. Moreover, the findings about the students' four types of feedback responses support the dialogical relationship between the feedback provision and responses (Ajjawi & Boud, 2017; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Boud, 2000; Parr & Timperley, 2010; Price et al., 2011) and Bakhtin's (1981) external dialogism. Therefore, the results of the first phase of this study imply that supervisors' written feedback intends to point out and fill the gaps the doctoral students face in writing and learning. However, beyond this surface-level understanding, the findings also suggest that the feedback is better understood as two-way dialogues between the providers and recipients, rather than one-way top-down information transmission.

Resonating with the emphasis on 'response' (Bakhtin, 1981; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Hattie, 2009), the students' feedback responses were examined in phases 2, 3 and 4 of this study. Findings from phase 2 by means of investigating the students' self-reasoning for their feedback responses reveal another layer of the feedback dialogues: the culture. The feedback dialogues between Chinese international doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors are intercultural. The intercultural feedback dialogues in this study, as some researchers insist (e.g., Manathung, 2011, 2015; Singh, 2009; Wisker, 2012), involve different perceptions of feedback and feedback provider, as well as academic English writing and knowledge construction, which in turn complicate the feedback

dialogues. This finding suggests that the intercultural feedback dialogues communicate not only information of filling the writing and learning gaps, but also culturally different perceptions of the 'gaps' and the ways of formulating the feedback to fill the 'gaps'.

Drawing from Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of internal dialogism, voices and speaking persons, findings from phase 3 suggest that the students' internal feedback dialogues which produce feedback responses are not confined to the speaking persons of supervisors and students. Instead, the findings imply that others and others' voices engage in the feedback dialogues as well. Although few studies specifically investigate other speaking persons and the interactions of their voices in feedback dialogues, a substantial amount of literature has proved the significant roles of others, apart from supervisors and students, such as the students' home culture, former education, peers and so on (Evans & Waring, 2011; Gieve & Clark, 2005; Wang & Li, 2011). Therefore, the results in phase 3 reveal another layer of the complexity in the intercultural feedback dialogues: multiple speaking persons from both the home and host cultures, as well as the multi-layered interactions among the voices.

From a longitudinal view of Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism, findings from phase 4 suggest that the students' feedback responses in the intercultural feedback dialogues are the result of their assimilation of the voices from the host culture and renovation of the voices from their home culture. Thus, adding to the findings from phase 1 to phase 3, results from the last phase imply the 'procedural' character of the intercultural feedback dialogues in which the students' past, present and future are intertwined, influencing their feedback responses.

Each phase of this study adds a new layer to the complexity of reconceptualising the feedback. In summary, the feedback in general is dialogical. In this study, feedback dialogues among the supervisors, the students and others, between the students' home culture and the host culture, are ways to fill the students' learning gaps and ways to negotiate the different and culturally embedded perceptions of effective feedback and supervisor-student relationship, even the epistemologies of knowledge and knowledge construction. 'Inter-culture' is the key characteristic of this conceptualisation of feedback or, more precisely, feedback dialogues. The change of geographic place from China to New Zealand pushes the boundary of heteroglossia further to intersect two national cultures. With more stratification of ideologies in the extended heteroglossia,

the students are more likely to encounter and interact with alien voices, which in turn enriches the heteroglossia. Moreover, the students' narratives about movement and the progression from simple to complex understanding of the nature of the feedback deconstruct the stereotype of Chinese students: they bear similarities as well as divergences. Noticing these similarities and divergences enables better intercultural feedback dialogues.

9.3. A range of contributions

This study contributes to the fields of feedback, doctoral writing and supervision in general, by offering nuanced and multiple perspectives on dialogic feedback interactions, from two disciplines (applied linguistics and doctoral education), two philosophical assumptions (postpositivist-oriented pragmatism and constructivist-oriented pragmatism), two types of dialogues (external and internal), as well as from students and supervisors. Furthermore, this study has import for the fields of second language writing and intercultural doctoral supervision by addressing the ethnic, cultural and language differences and the potential of the differences between Chinese doctoral students and their non-Chinese supervisors for the first time in the literature.

9.3.1 Pedagogical implications

This study has pedagogical implications for supervisors in relation to dialogic feedback practice and doctoral supervision. Firstly, the two analytical frameworks developed in analysing the feedback can help supervisors to reflect on their feedback provision, with the awareness that their feedback can encourage or discourage the students' feedback responses. Secondly, revision ratings generated in Chapter 5 can be a useful tool for supervisors to retrieve information through evaluating the students' feedback responses on their perceptions and comprehension of the feedback, subject knowledge and the supervisory relationship. Another important implication is that a 'no change' response is often an active response in itself. Supervisors thus are advised to distinguish the students' active inaction, justified by a careful 'cost-benefit' analysis, from passive resistance due to a lack of understanding, or the problematic nature of feedback or students' laziness.

Meanwhile, from the dialogic perspective, supervisors, as the key speaking persons, play a significant role in facilitating their students' assimilation of others' voices in the

supervision space by their interactions in the long term. Thus, supervisors are better to consider approaches that will maximise the facilitative effects. Finally, being dialogic as the feedback interactions and the doctoral supervision are, it will be helpful if the supervisors can legitimise the students' role as one of the speaking persons with their own voices, highlighting dialogue and co-construction. This is particularly important for intercultural supervision where the supervisors may easily forget the cultural and language differences of their international students and take their own values for granted. Taking into consideration the students' cultural background and possible reactions in supervision and feedback provision (e.g., Chinese students tend to avoid direct confrontation or disagreement) may assist the intercultural communication and improve the effectiveness. Lastly, Chinese students can be critical and independent in their writing and learning, but need supervisors to create opportunities and legitimacy in order for them to exercise these capacities.

This study is also broadly relevant to international doctoral students who are supervised by someone with different cultural origins and receive feedback from them. Conceptualising the feedback interactions in intercultural supervision dialogically presents a means for international students to understand the feedback and supervision practice in another culture. At the same time, this conceptualisation offers these students an alternative to either accepting or rejecting, but being active speaking persons to dialogise and negotiate with the mainstream voices in the host country. To do so, the students need to be open-minded, permitting the access and participation of others' voices into the external and especially internal dialogues. Furthermore, international doctoral students can obtain a general idea of the supervisors' expectations and evaluating criteria of doctoral writing via the two analytical frameworks of the feedback, to reduce their early-stage confusion of what and how to write. It is worthwhile noting that others (other than the students and the supervisors) and others' voices can participate in the feedback dialogues in supervision. The students can be active in several spaces as the speaking persons to assimilate others' voices in other spaces, and bring those voices back to the dialogues of feedback in supervision.

9.3.2 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to advancing the research of doctoral-level feedback in intercultural supervision and the research, as well as the application of Bakhtin's theory

of dialogism. It develops both strands by applying the latter as the theoretical and analytical framework of the former. In this way, this research offers theoretical innovations.

Theoretically, this study, firstly, provides empirical support for the dialogical and social view of feedback practice which emphasises the interactions students are engaged in. Expanding on this, it shows that the contextualised interactions are not limited to the supervision space with a sole focus of the student-supervisor relationship, but cover a wider scope to bring the relationships between students and their peers, between students, and their home cultural and host culture into feedback dialogues. Secondly, the use of the main constructs of Bakhtin's dialogism as the analytical framework offers a nuanced approach to investigating the feedback interactions in intercultural supervision, highlighting the students' role of co-constructor with their supervisors as legitimate speaking persons. Therefore, the dialogical perspective of feedback and supervision reconceptualises the nature of the supervisory relationship which empowers the students' subjectivity and attaches importance to the inter-subjectivity. Moreover, the employment of Bakhtin's dialogism as the analytical framework of feedback in which voices interact to generate responses, pushes the boundary of feedback research further to embrace both internal and external dialogues. The application of Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope brings the students' past, present and future into feedback dialogues with a historical view, crossing the boundary of time and space. Finally, this study is distinctive in its inter-disciplinary nature. It draws on theories and perspectives from disciplines of applied linguistics and doctoral education, making productive dialogues between these two fields and offering multi-angled analysis and understanding of the feedback.

9.3.3 Methodological implications

This study has several methodological implications. Firstly, it shows the potential of having dual roles in research, as being the researcher as well as a participant in order to promote greater reflexivity and offer particular insights and value. By making myself more aware of the dialogic relationship I am engaged in with my participants and the literature, and its effects on my ideological development, I constantly scrutinise the data with detachment and attachment. I often consciously conduct the internal dialogues about how my interpretations come about: whether under the influence of being a

participant, or being a researcher with the same cultural background as my other participants, or being both. There is an interplay of my voices as representations of the researcher and/or the researched in writing this scholarly piece.

More importantly, with this self-consciousness I have come to the recognition of the shifting research paradigms. The two different paradigms propose alternative ways of examining feedback dialogues from two philosophic assumptions with diverse focus of research questions and methods. The different perspectives help unfold the complex and multi-layered nature of feedback interactions and intercultural supervisions. The shifting paradigms lead me to an in-depth understanding not only of the research project but also of myself as the researcher and of the relationship between the shifting paradigms and the development of the research. In other words, I am conscious or try to be conscious of my intellectual development in doing this research project. This development suggests the dynamic and transformative nature of PhD study in which doctoral students develop, with all kinds of possibilities, through accumulated interactions. Last, but not the least, this study contributes to the debate of the 'paradigm war' by offering empirical evidence of being pragmatic and shifting between paradigms. It suggests that, although there can be discomfort to some extent, working on multiple paradigms is possible and can lead to rich and valuable understandings.

9.4. Limitations of the study

During the process of carrying out this research project I was challenged by some methodological and practical limitations.

The first methodological constraint lies in the absence of the supervisors' self-reported data on their perceptions of the feedback provision and the students' feedback responses. This missing element resulted from a series of tough arguments with my supervisors, and with thorough consideration of the depth and breadth of the study, as well as the availability of time and resources. It was, again, a struggling external and internal dialogical process. Finally, I decided to research in-depth the students' feedback responses, at the cost of a narrower research focus: I included the text analysis of the supervisors' feedback, but excluded the interviews on their insight into the feedback and students' feedback responses.

The second challenge I confronted was in the side-effects of my shift in paradigms, which have been discussed in detail earlier in the methodology chapter. This transition brought confusion, discomfort and uncertainty in the representation of the voices, and my writing styles, which becomes a distinct limitation of the study. The shift of paradigms, on the other hand, shows my dialogue with and the struggle between the many voices, which indicates the progress of thinking (which I consider to be positive overall).

The third limitation results from the ethical considerations of conducting the research. Obtaining the supervisors' consent to use their written feedback for ethics approval scared some 'unhappy' supervision pairs away from the research. I cannot speak for the supervisors as I do not have any evidence. However, there is a case that one Chinese international doctoral student approached me and expressed her keenness to participate in the study, but became hesitant and finally said "no", as soon as she realised her supervisor needed to be informed of her participation and also had to consent to participate. The reason given was "I don't want to let her [the supervisor] know my participation. It will make our difficult relationship public and thus make it worse". Some complex cultural considerations may lie behind this potential participant's decision of withdrawal from the research, such as the notions of 'face' and 'harmonious relationship', which I have explained in the data analysis chapters. More importantly, these cultural and ethical concerns filter the participants to some extent, and give rise to the fact that all my cases are generally satisfied supervisees. Although successful and referential experiences can be drawn from these cases, I lost the chance to explore the negative or less-than-satisfactory experiences—another layer of supervision reality.

A fourth limitation that restrains my production of this thesis is my English language proficiency. As a second language learner, I can express myself through writing in English, but find difficulty in expressing precisely and seamlessly what I think and feel. In writing this thesis, I have encountered enormous difficulties in finding the equivalent English words to express myself and to avoid repetition. My writing is to some extent confined to the scope of my English vocabulary and sentence patterns.

Another possible limitation I wish to highlight relates to the Confucian ideology or culture applied in this study. The Chinese culture is well known for its long history and diversity, in which the Confucian ideology is a major component. Although the findings

of this study are sometimes explained by Confucian philosophy, it only suggests the great influences that Confucius has imposed on the moral and educational life in contemporary China. It does not and is not intended to convey the impression that Confucian culture equals Chinese culture.

9.5. Recommendations for future research

The goal of this study is not to propose a formula for providing written feedback, nor to offer an exhaustive inventory for supervising Chinese international doctoral students. Rather, I intend to draw the attention of supervisors, students, researchers and supervision workshop organisers to the often complex interactions that occur in providing and receiving feedback and in the broad context of intercultural doctoral supervision, while at the same time, outlining principles for their systematic interpretation. This study is only a starting point of such research.

This study, like the first realm of Zen contemplation (Pu, 1984) which I used to describe my intellectual journey and also to start this thesis, opens up the feedback dialogues in intercultural doctoral supervision. Proceeding to the next realm requires enormous efforts. Future research based on a greater number of students and scripts across time, culture and discipline is necessary. In particular, the comparative analysis of the feedback provision and responses across the early and late stages of the doctoral journey may reveal whether or how the feedback changes as the students develop and become more independent. Moreover, future studies can embrace a diversity of students of other ethnicities and language backgrounds (L1, L2, EFL) to enrich the research output. The disciplinary differences in feedback dialogue are another interesting field worth exploring. It is also essential to probe into the supervisors' comprehension of their feedback provision and their students' feedback responses in intercultural supervision in order to promote more dialogical feedback interactions.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet and consent form (Supervisors/feedback provider)

<div align="center">

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(Supervisors/feedback providers: analysis of the written feedback)

</div>

Project title: Feedback for Disciplinary Acculturation: A Study of Chinese International Doctoral Students and Non-Chinese Supervisors

Introduction
My name is Linlin Xu and I am currently undertaking a PhD degree in the School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland.

My research is designed to explore how non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback acculturates Chinese international doctoral students (CIDS) into disciplinary literacy and assists them to become independent scholars during their doctoral journey. Written feedback was chosen because the literature indicates that, significant as it is in student's writing and learning, it doesn't realize its full potential to become an integral part of the learning process, and students have problems of understanding and interpreting teachers' feedback. Chinese international doctoral students were selected for three reasons: 1) there were few studies addressing feedback to doctoral student level; 2) the researcher is an insider to this group which allows aspects of the students' experience to be more meaningfully and sensitively investigated; 3) this study would produce more pertinent results for an increasingly large group of international postgraduate students in NZ.

During my research I want to talk to students and supervisors, but to avoid power relations between supervisor and supervisee, this research does not target supervision pairs. The non-Chinese supervisors, however, must be currently supervising or have the experience of supervising Chinese international doctoral students.

Participation
One of your students would like to participate in this research. If you agree, your written feedback on four pieces of writing will be analysed by the researcher, two in proposal stage and two in late stage (from writing first draft to submission). In addition, your written feedback is likely to be discussed in the two individual interviews with this student.

Data storage/destruction/use
Hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Auckland and electronic data will be stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected. After six years, all hard copy data will be shredded and the digital information will be deleted. The data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, and may be used for future academic publications and conference presentations. If you would like to have a copy of the research findings, please indicate this on the consent form, and I will send a summary to you.

Participants' right to withdraw from participation
You are entitled to withdraw your written feedback at any time until the data analysis begins on 1st November, 2014.

Anonymity and confidentiality

A pseudonym will be used in the study, and no identifying information and data collected from the research will be disclosed to a third party.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any inquiries or questions, please feel free to contact anyone in the following contact list.

Yours sincerely,
Linlin Xu

Researcher	Main supervisor	Co-supervisor
Linlin Xu linlin.xu@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 22 3896319	Associate Professor Barbara Grant bm.grant@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 0 9 623 8899 ext. 48272	Associate Professor Lawrence Zhang lj.zhang@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 0 9 623 8899 ext. 48750

You may also contact the head of the School of Critical Studies in Education, Associate Professor Carol Mutch, by c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz or +64 09 623 8899 ext. 48257.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142. Telephone: 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17/10/2014 FOR (3) YEARS, REFERENCE NUMBER 012676

CONSENT FORM
(Supervisors/feedback providers: analysis of the written feedback)

Project title: Feedback for Disciplinary Acculturation: A Study of Chinese International Doctoral Students and Non-Chinese Supervisors
Researcher: Linlin Xu

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to participate in this study by sharing my written feedback in early and late stages as requred.
- I understand that participation is voluntary.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw myself and the data I have provided before a certain date without giving any reason.
- I understand that the Dean has given the assurance that participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect my grade, academic performance, and relationship with the Faculty.
- I understand that hard copy and digital data will be stored separately and securely for a period of six years and then destroyed.
- I understand that the data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis at the University of Auckland, and will be used for academic publications and conference presentations arising from this research.
- I understand that if the information provided by participants is reported/ published, all efforts will be taken to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity.
- I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed to a third party or the public.
- I wish to receive a copy of the research findings by email _____

Name _____   Signature _____
Date   _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17/10/2014 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 012676

Appendix B: Participant information sheet and consent form (Students)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
(Students: text-analysis/individual interview/focus group)

Project title: Feedback for Disciplinary Acculturation: A Study of Chinese International Doctoral Students and Non-Chinese Supervisors

Introduction

My name is Linlin Xu and I am currently undertaking a PhD degree in the School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland.

My research is designed to explore how non-Chinese supervisors' written feedback acculturates Chinese international doctoral students (CIDS) into disciplinary literacy and assists them to become independent scholars during their doctoral journey. Written feedback was chosen because the literature indicates that, significant as it is in student's writing and learning, it doesn't realize its full potential to become an integral part of the learning process, and students have problems of understanding and interpreting teachers' feedback. Chinese international doctoral students were selected for three reasons: 1) there were few studies addressing feedback to doctoral student level; 2) the researcher is an insider to this group which allows aspects of the students' experience to be more meaningfully and sensitively investigated; 3) this study would produce more pertinent results for an increasingly large group of international postgraduate students in NZ.

During my research I want to talk to students and supervisors, but to avoid power relations between supervisor and supervisee, this research does not target supervision pairs. The non-Chinese supervisors, however, must be currently supervising or have the experience of supervising Chinese international doctoral students.

Participation

Text-analysis

You are asked to provide two sets of writing (draft with supervisor's written feedback and subsequent revision) in proposal stage and two sets in late stage (from writing first draft to submission). Eight pieces of writing provided by each participant will be analysed quantitatively. Approval from the feedback provider for using of his/her feedback in this text analysis and possible in later individual interviews shall be obtained after your consent to participate.

Individual interviews & Focus group

Two individual interviews will be carried out, and each will last for 40-60 minutes. Your perceptions and expectations of written feedback will be explored in the first interview. Then your responses and reflections towards feedback with reference to your writings collected earlier will be the subject of the second interview. Lastly, you will attend a 2-hour focus group interview with seven other Chinese international doctoral students. This focus group interview will be conducted in Chinese to triangulate and complement the data collected earlier. The two individual interviews and focus group interview will all be audio recorded.

Data storage/destruction/use

Hard copy data will be securely stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Auckland and electronic data will be stored on the researcher's computer, which is password protected. After six years, all hard copy data will be shredded and the digital information will be deleted. The data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis, and may be used for future academic publications and conference presentations. If you would like to have a

copy of the research findings, please indicate this on the consent form, and I will send a summary to you.

Participants' right to withdraw from participation
You are entitled to withdraw your texts at any time until the data analysis begins on 1st November, 2014.

You can withdraw yourselves at any time and have the right to ask the researcher to change, withdraw and destroy the data the researcher has collected from you within one month of the interview.

As to the focus group, you can refuse to answer any questions and are free to leave without giving any reason. However, you cannot withdraw the data you have already contributed from the focus group. In addition, you will not be given the opportunity to edit the transcripts, because alterations to comments of one individual may affect those of others.

Anonymity and confidentiality
A pseudonym will be used in the study, and no identifying information and data collected from the research will be disclosed to a third party. You will also be reminded the importance of confidentiality at the opening of the focus group, that you should not talk about the group discussion to others, and agree that everything that is said in the interview remains confidential to the people involved.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any inquiries or questions, please feel free to contact anyone in the following contact list.

Yours sincerely,
Linlin Xu

Researcher	Main supervisor	Co-supervisor
Linlin Xu linlin.xu@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 22 3896319	Associate Professor Barbara Grant bm.grant@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 0 9 623 8899 ext. 48272	Associate Professor Lawrence Zhang lj.zhang@auckland.ac.nz Ph: +64 0 9 623 8899 ext. 48750

You may also contact the head of the School of Critical Studies in Education, Associate Professor Carol Mutch, by c.mutch@auckland.ac.nz or +64 09 623 8899 ext. 48257.

For any queries regarding ethical concerns, you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142. Telephone: 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: humanethics@auckland.ac.nz

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17/10/2014 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 012676

CONSENT FORM
(Students: text-analysis/individual interview/focus group)

Project title: Feedback for Disciplinary Acculturation: A Study of Chinese International Doctoral Students and Non-Chinese Supervisors
Researcher: Linlin Xu

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I agree to participate in this study by submiting drafts with supervisor's written feedback and subsequent revisions in early and late stages as requred, and taking part in two individual interviews and one focus group.
- I agree to keep other participants' personal information and everything discussed in focus group confidential.
- I understand that participation is voluntary.
- I understand that the individual interviews and focus group will be audio recorded.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to answer any particular questions.
- I understand that I can turn off the audio recording any time in the individual interview, but cannot do so in focus group.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw myself and the data I have provided before a certain date without giving any reason, except for information provided in the focus group.
- I understand that I will receive transcripts of individual interviews to check for accuracy and meaning and return to the research by a certain date, but will not receive transcripts of the focus group meeting.
- I understand that the Dean has given the assurance that participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect my grade, academic performance, and relationship with the Faculty.
- I understand that hard copy and digital data will be stored separately and securely for a period of six years and then destroyed.
- I understand that the data collected from the research will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis at the University of Auckland, and will be used for academic publications and conference presentations arising from this research.
- I understand that if the information provided by participants is reported/ published, all efforts will be taken to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity.
- I understand that no identifying information will be disclosed to a third party or the public.
- I wish to receive a copy of the research findings by email _____

Name _____   Signature _____
Date _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 17/10/2014 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 012676

Appendix C: Interview guides

For the first individual interview: the students' self-reasoning for the feedback responses

1. Why did you choose to ignore this feedback comment?
2. Why did you choose to strictly follow this feedback comment?
3. Why did you choose to develop this feedback comment?
4. Why did you make this additional change without any feedback?

For the second individual interview: the students' assimilation of the transformative voices identified in the feedback response

1. Can you talk about any difficulties you have encountered in study or in daily life during your PhD candidature?
2. Can you talk about any major change(s) or transformation(s) which you are experiencing right now or you have went through during your PhD candidature so far?
3. What are the possible reasons for the change(s) or transformation(s), if there are any?

For the third individual interview: the development of the most transformative voices

1. What are the most influential and transformative voices functioning in your feedback responses?
2. Is there anything you can think of which helps or hinders the development of the voice—critical thinking?
3. Is there anything you can think of which helps or hinders the development of the voice—independence?
4. Is there anything you can think of which helps or hinders the development of the voice—deference (dependence)?