

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CHINESE STUDENTS AND
GERMAN UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS

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Abstract

With the increase in educational exchanges and cooperation between China and Germany, the growing number of Chinese students in Germany has given rise to considerable research addressing their various needs, which is becoming a prominent interest among scholars in Germany, as well as in China. Although there has been much research on Chinese overseas students in the field of intercultural adjustment and integration, it rarely specifically concentrates on the communication of Chinese students with their German teachers at German universities.

Against this background, this study employed a mixed research method in form of questionnaires and interviews, aiming at investigating the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in academic settings, namely, in class and in one-to-one conversations. Three research groups, Chinese students in Germany, Chinese students in China, and German teachers in Germany, participated in the practical research investigation. Inspired by the Communication Concerns Model developed by Staton-Spicer and Bassett (1979) and the subsequent adoptions, the current study explored the perceived intercultural communication concerns from the perspectives of both Chinese students and German teachers. All the quantitative data obtained in the questionnaires were classified based on a two-fold classification system, which consists of three categories of concerns: concerns about self as a communicator, concerns about the task of communicating, and concerns about the impact of one's communication on others; and four types of communication barriers: barriers caused by language ability, academic knowledge, personal emotion, and perception. The achieved qualitative data in this study were applied to clarify and explain the communication anxieties identified in the questionnaires.

The results indicated that the major concerns in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers were caused by Chinese students' face-saving, reserved behaviors resulted from their respect for teachers, the doctrine of moderation,

and their insufficient language proficiency.

Focusing on Chinese students and German teachers in Germany, the results showed that German teachers often wished that Chinese students could participate in class actively with sufficient background knowledge. However, the reality was that Chinese students normally behaved passively and submissively in communication. The most of Chinese students concerned about the impact of their communicative approaches on German teachers and whether their own behaviors were appropriate to the German academic settings. Based on the statements of Chinese students, their concerns mainly came from the different teaching and learning approaches between German and Chinese universities. This resulted in that some behaviors, which were regarded as correct for Chinese students, turned out to be incorrect in German academic context. Additionally, the high academic pressure of Chinese students resulted from the Chinese education system, society, and families, also contributed to the submissive behavior of Chinese students, which finally resulted in the concerns of both students and teachers in communication.

Results of the comparison of the concerns reported by Chinese students in Germany and in China showed that Chinese students in Germany expressed a generally higher level of concerns than students in China did. The changes of their concerns mainly embodied in the concerns related to the language and cultural background. Chinese students in Germany worried more about their language ability, while students in China expressed the opposite opinion. Both students in Germany and in China stated more culture-based concerns than personal capacity-related concerns. The findings also displayed that the change of cultural environment changed the major types of concerns of Chinese students in Germany and led to the growing degree of their concerns.

Moreover, the results reported that the personal-based factors of Chinese students and German teachers involved in this study had an impact on their communication to a greater or lesser extent. Briefly to say, it appears that the more frequent and longer contact with the German culture Chinese students have, the fewer

concerns they have in communication. Likewise, some knowledge of the Chinese culture can also help German teachers to improve the quality of communication with Chinese students. Additionally, this study discovered that female Chinese students expressed more communication concerns than male peers did. German teachers were not affected by their gender in communication with Chinese students. Moreover, Chinese students and German teachers working in the fields of sciences (natural sciences, agriculture, medicine and engineering) experienced fewer concerns in communication than those working in the areas of non-sciences (humanities and social sciences).

On the basis of the communication concerns discovered in this study, some suggestions and countermeasures were put forward for prospective Chinese students and German teachers in order to reduce their communication concerns and improve the quality of their communication with each other.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Teacher-Student Communication, Communication Concerns, Chinese Students, German Teachers, Academic Settings

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background

Since the introduction of the economic opening-up policy of China in 1978/1979, the economic exchange between China and the western world has intensified (Guan, 2007; Song, 2009; Liu, 2010). In particular, transnational higher education has become a new education trend in Chinese higher education in the last few years with the driving impetus of globalization in economics. Studying overseas has gained increasing attention by young Chinese students and become more and more important for their personal development. As a country well-known in the world for its high level of development in technology, science, and culture, Germany has been becoming one of the most attractive countries to study in for Chinese students for some years now (Schneider, 2007). The last decade of the 20th century witnessed rapid growth in the enrollment of Chinese student in Germany. Recent data indicates that about 30,500 Chinese students were enrolled in German universities in the winter semester 2015/2016 and that Chinese students made up one of the largest groups of foreign students in Germany¹. As with the strengthening of bilateral relationship and cooperation between China and Germany, the number of Chinese students studying in Germany will continue to increase in the future.

There are several reasons for the strong increase of the Chinese student population in Germany. The rapid economic growth in China and the associated increase of private incomes over the past decades is the major contribution to this phenomenon (Günther, 2007:7ff). In addition, a German graduation certificate and learning experiences in Germany can give many advantages to Chinese students in the Chinese labor market (Freyeisen, 2008). If the financial situation permits, most Chinese parents want to make a larger investment for a better education and professional future of their children (Guan, 2007; Zhou, 2009). Particularly, due to the

¹ Source: Statistisches Bundesamt:
<https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/BildungForschungKultur/Hochschulen/StudierendeHochschulenEndg.html>

widespread and profound influence of the one-child policy², which has been carried out in China since 1978, most Chinese families currently have only one child. Since studying abroad, especially in the western countries, holds great appeal for Chinese youngsters and for their families, those Chinese parents and families are willing to make any sacrifice to help their single child to build a successful future³.

However, in addition to the enthusiasm of enriching personal experiences and the hope for a professional future, young Chinese students are confronted with a series of challenges during their studies at foreign countries. Studying in Germany for Chinese students means not only a transformation of learning place from the eastern world region to the western world region but also the change of the cultural, language, educational, and social environment (Dai, 2006). Their accustomed learning habits, values, and beliefs in China can in many cases not easily be integrated with the requirements and circumstances of the studying in Germany. For example, Chinese students come from a centralized education system⁴, in which learning is predominantly collectivism-oriented⁵ (Ding & Fluck, 2001; Lin-Huber, 2001). On the contrary, German education advocates self-management skills and the sense of self-responsibility of students (Müthel, 2006). The confrontation with the different educational ideas and unexpected changes in teaching and learning make Chinese students feel frustrated and nervous, which generally reduces their self-confidence during their study. In addition, given the influence of the one-child policy, most of the Chinese students are very well taken care of and protected by their parents. These students almost have no experience with living separately from their parents before studying abroad alone. Therefore, the feeling of isolation and helplessness in a foreign country is also a factor in enhancing the learning difficulties of the Chinese students studying in foreign countries.

One of the challenges of studying in Germany can be embodied in teacher-student communication, which is considered as an essential part of education. Although nearly all international students experience various amount of difficulties

² The influence of the one-child policy on Chinese students and their families will be discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3.1.1.

³ Family and social expectations toward Chinese students will be discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3.1.2.

⁴ Features of Chinese educational system will be discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3.2.2.

⁵ The “collectivism-oriented” here refers to students’ study and campus life as under centralized and unified management of universities (detailed explanation see section 2.3.2.2).

when communicating with German teachers, it appears that, when compared with students from Indo-European language⁶ backgrounds, students from other language backgrounds often express a higher level of language- and cultural-based concerns in interaction with German lecturers (Zeile, 1991; Motz, 2005; Esser, 2010; Schäfer & Heinrich, 2010). Particularly, Chinese students, as speakers of non-Indo-European languages, often experience language- and culture-based problems when communicating with German teachers. For instance, Chinese students value highly the modest, restrained, and collectivism-oriented communication style⁷ (Mitschian, 1991; Schneider, 2007; Liu, 2012). Thus, they believe that the behaviors, such as remaining quiet in class and seldomly questioning teachers' teaching, are the proper state of a good student. However, in German classrooms, where the active interaction with teachers and initiative expression of personal opinions are encouraged and often praised. Therefore, Chinese students may be at a disadvantage and their Chinese-style communicative habits may be wrongly understood as inactiveness and passiveness by German teachers. Such kind of intercultural communication concerns have become an important variable that influences the instructional effectiveness and quality of international education.

The increase in the number of Chinese students in Germany has given rise to considerable research addressing their various needs, which is becoming a prominent interest among scholars in Germany, as well as in China. For instance, prior research on intercultural teaching and learning at German universities have explored Chinese students' language ability and speaking skills (e.g. Wang, 2007; Chen, 2012; Liu, 2015), psychological and social pressure (e.g. Guan, 2007; Zhou, 2009; Chu, 2017), academic adjustment and integration (e.g. Guan, 2007; Zhu, 2012), perceived needs (e.g. Song, 2009), acculturation (e.g. Sun, 2010), culture-based strategies of learning (e.g. Luo & Kück, 2011; Liu, 2012), and cultural ethics in communication (e.g. Günthner, 1993; Liu, 2010)⁸. Scholars have realized that support for Chinese students for coping with adjustment difficulties and adapting to the new cultural and academic environment are critical factors in fully realizing and securing educational benefits of

⁶ The Indo-European languages are a language family of several hundred related languages and dialects, which include most of the modern languages of Europe and are spoken by almost 3 billion native speakers across all inhabited continents (Auroux, 2000:1156).

⁷ The features of Chinese communication style will be discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

⁸ Section 2.4 in chapter 2 presents the summary of research on Chinese students studying in Germany.

their overseas learning experiences.

Although there has been much research on Chinese students studying in Germany in the field of intercultural adjustment and integration, it rarely specifically concentrates on the problem of teacher-student communication at German universities. The few studies on the communication of Chinese students in Germany either focused on the level of student-student communication or introduced communication problems of Chinese students as a part of their difficulties in studying in Germany without thorough analysis. In general, the previous research reports that, as a result of their own concerns and perceived unsuccessful performance in interaction with others, Chinese students are aware of their communication problems and sometimes feel frustrated in communication in German academic settings (e.g. Song, 2009; Liu, 2010; Zhu, 2012). These studies have an insight into the communication problems from the perspective of Chinese students, however, there still remains a great potential for research in this research area. For example, they have yet to comprehensively explore the demonstrations and the underlying causes of Chinese students' concerns in communication with German teachers, nor have they probed into the issues from the perspective of German teachers. In brief, the problems remaining to be researched can be summarized as the following aspects:

(1) According to the results of previous studies, the lack of language proficiency and the different communication principles between Chinese and Germans are identified as the main obstacles of Chinese for establishing a successful academic career in Germany⁹ (e.g. Günthner, 1993; Nagels, 1996; Müthel, 2006; Wang, 2007; Liu, 2010). Some researchers focused their studies on the communication between Chinese and Germans based on the different cultural and social identities (e.g.; Zinzius, 1996; Rolle, 1999; Zhang, 2006; Guan, 2007; Zinsmeister, 2009). Nonetheless, the nature of communication difficulties and specific individual feelings, that Chinese students and German teachers experience during their communication in different communication situations, has not been thoroughly observed. In addition, the communication problems of Chinese students in Germany reported in previous research are mainly of a general nature. Their worries and concerns in communication with German teachers need to be specifically focused on

⁹ A brief review of the research on communication between Chinese and Germans will be discussed in chapter 2, section 2.2.

and analyzed according to the communicative objectives and settings.

(2) The aforementioned research on Chinese students' communication in Germany mainly emphasized on exploring the concerns on the side of Chinese students and relatively little involved the perspective of German faculty members. Danckwortt (1984:27) suggests comparing academic staff's comments and opinions with study difficulties of international students in order to find out the factors, which impeded or support international students' concerns of studying at German universities. "Who decides what a successful study is? The student or the university? (ibid:27)¹⁰" Danckwortt raised these questions so as to obtain a wider perspective, that transcends culture-bound principles and norms of good understanding and learning. Volet (1999a) also points out that research on communicating and learning cross-culture should be composed of subjective perceptions of both lecturers and students, although lecturers play a relatively more active instructional role. A few studies have been carried out in order to explore Chinese students' communication from both perspectives of lecturers and students, such as in Australia (e.g. Samuelovicz, 1987; Gao, 2013), in the UK (e.g. Wisker et al., 2003; Turner, 2006; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Durkin, 2011) and in the U.S. (e.g. Huang, 1997; Liu, 2001). Since teacher-student communication is a mutual process of exchanging information and feelings, more studies on Chinese students' communication from the perspective of teachers are still called for. Responses of teachers would complement or explain those relating to students' perceptions of teacher-student interaction, which might help to improve the communication between students and teachers from the standpoint of teachers.

(3) The intercultural communication between Chinese students and German teachers has not been studied thoroughly. As intercultural communication happens against an intercultural academic background, it is more than just a communication process (Cai, 2010; Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2012). Neither interacting with German teachers in an isolated academic environment nor obtaining knowledge by means of a book-to-brain mode are Chinese students exposed to a face-to-face interactive learning environment in the German academic culture. In order to survive in the German learning milieu and establish successful communication with teachers, Chinese students must learn to coordinate their accustomed Chinese learning style

¹⁰ The original German expression is: "Wer bestimmt, was ein Studienerfolg ist? Der Student oder die Hochschule?" (Danckwortt, 1984:27)

with the unfamiliar German studying methods and try to find the right balance in between. For instance, they need to switch to the new language environment, adjust to the new communication standards, rebuild the personal network, and pursue a new cultural and social identity at German universities. Therefore, the changes that Chinese students need to experience in the German learning context are inevitable and the consequent challenges that they need to conquer cannot be ignored.

Although the previous researchers have extended a broad scope of the topics related to the learning status and communication of Chinese students at German universities, most of the studies only focused on the situation in Germany, and not much research has deeply explored the differences between “communicating with German teachers in China” and “interacting with German teachers in Germany”. Very little research has involved both Chinese students in China and in Germany (e.g Liu, 2010) in order to explore their different perspectives of communicating with German students. However, similar investigations on the teacher-student communication remain to be further developed. The changes of Chinese students’ mentality and behavior in communication resulted from the change of cultural and language environment may promote a deeper understanding of their communication concerns and provide a fresh point-of-view to the research on intercultural teacher-student communication.

(4) Individual differences, such as gender, age, academic level, and personal experience, sometimes can affect and even change the outcomes of interpersonal interaction, especially in the field of intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005; Dow & Wood, 2006; Cai, 2010; Taguchi, 2012). For example, different academic levels possess different teaching and learning expectations, which results in different methods and requirements in teacher-student communication. At the undergraduate level, given that the number of students is large, students normally listen to lectures in class and do not have many opportunities to interact with teachers (Stefanou & Salisbury-Glennon, 2002). In contrast, at the post-graduate level, the learning competence, such as the independence and creativity in communication, are highly expected (Ford, 1985; Wisker et al., 2003). Therefore, teacher-student communication in different academic levels might have different features and appear with different levels of concerns. However, such influencing factors of

communication in relation to individual differences and experiences were overlooked in the past studies and deserve to be explored in this study.

Against this background, the current empirical study concentrates on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in the German educational settings. By applying the methods of quantitative, qualitative, and comparative analysis, this study attempts to explore both objective and subjective concerns of Chinese students and German teachers, which influence the process of their communication, and further to discover the underlying reasons behind their concerns.

1.2 Research objectives and significance

In response to the research background mentioned above, technically, four research groups were involved in this study, namely Chinese students and German teachers in China and in Germany. Among them, three research groups (Chinese students and German teachers in Germany, and Chinese students in China) participated in the practical investigation of the current study. The primary objective of the present study is to investigate the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in academic settings, which in this study refers to communication in class and in one-to-one conversations, by assessing the perceived communication concerns from the perspectives of both parties¹¹. The purpose of involving Chinese students in China in this study is to compare the concerns of Chinese students regarding their communication with German teachers in China and in Germany. The results of the comparison serve a valuable reference to better inquire into the causes of the communication concerns expressed by Chinese students in Germany.

To be specific, the objectives of this study can be summarized in five points:

The first point is to identify the major concerns of Chinese students and German teachers in their communication. The current study first analyzed the overall results of the concerns indicated by Chinese students and German teachers and then

¹¹ A detailed explanation of the research participants and methodology of this study is presented in chapter 3.

examined the concerns appearing with the highest frequency of occurrence among the overall results. In this way, the major concerns in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers can be identified and the reasons behind these concerns can be discovered. Additionally, on the basis of the distribution of their communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations, the levels of each group's concerns in different academic settings can be examined.

The second point is to further explore the specific concerns that existed in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany. Since Chinese students and German teachers have different cultural and language backgrounds, it is important to understand what kind of concerns each group had in their communication and whether they express same concerns about each other. The potential results can help to provide targeted solutions to improve the quality of their communication.

The third point is to discover the changes of Chinese students' concerns regarding their communication with German teachers in China and in Germany. The changes of Chinese students' concerns can help to understand the features of teacher-student communication in China and in Germany, which is beneficial to discover the influence of different cultural and language environments on their communication.

The fourth point is to examine the relations between some specified personal factors and the improvement of individual ability in communication. As mentioned in section 1.1 (4), some individual factors and experiences of Chinese students and German teachers, such as their genders, fields of study, and overseas experiences, might have a certain influence on their communication with each other. Thus, it is necessary to verify the relationships between communication skills and individual experiences in order to discover the potentiality of Chinese students and German teachers in their communication.

Finally, based on the empirical findings of the present study, this dissertation aims to draw implications for the improvement of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers. Specifically, according to the concerns and the related underlying reasons discovered in this study, the corresponding suggestions are put forward for both students and teachers in order to minimize the problems in their

communication.

On the basis of the above-mentioned points, the detailed description of the research questions of this study will be put forward in chapter 3. Furthermore, the results regarding the first and second points will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. The findings with respect to the third and fourth points will be specifically illustrated in chapter 5. In the end, the implications of the findings and the relevant inspirations for Chinese students and German teachers will be provided in chapter 6.

In sum, this study attempts to shed light on a new line of research on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany. The findings would be significant for Chinese students, German teachers, and related research in Germany, as well as in China.

For Chinese students studying in Germany, they can have a better knowledge about their own communication concerns, as well as the teacher-student communication process and requirements at German universities, which can guide them to adapt to the communication in the German academic context more quickly. Since effective communication with teachers is a key element in any successful study experience (Turecek & Peterson, 2010; Nünning & Zierold, 2008; Behmel, 2005), the information offered in this study can help Chinese students not only to improve their communication with German teachers but also to make greater academic achievements with minimal hardship. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all Chinese students in Germany, it may further the understanding of certain issues in their academic transition and adjustment. Additionally, the information offered in this study might also contribute to better preparation of prospective Chinese students, who plan to pursue their studies in Germany.

German teachers who teach or intend to teach Chinese students could also benefit from this study. The findings of this study may provide German teachers a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese students' concerns in communication and the underlying cultural and linguistic causes, which might enable German teachers to communicate with Chinese students in a more efficient way. In addition, German teachers could also gain inspiration from the current study to better

communicate with the other students from the East Asian cultural sphere¹².

Last but not the least, under the background of globalization of higher education, the results presented in the present study could, on the one hand, offer some implications for better understanding the communication between German teachers and Chinese students, and on the other hand, may provide a meaningful reference to future research for promoting cross-cultural exchanges and enhancing educational cooperation between China and Germany.

1.3 The organization of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. **Chapter 1** presents the general introduction of the current study by presenting the research background, aims, purposes, and an overview of chapters. **Chapter 2** provides the theoretical background for the present study. It first reviews the related studies in the field of intercultural communication in teaching and learning, then, focuses on the features of Chinese and German communication style. Additionally, this chapter also reports the socialization of Chinese students regarding their family influence and educational background in China in order to provide a full overview of the relevant factors of Chinese students for this study. **Chapter 3** is dedicated to the methodology and research design, in which the methodology, research design, detailed research procedures, reliability, and validity are described. **Chapter 4 and chapter 5** demonstrate the findings of this study based on the research questions. It first reports the verification results of the hypotheses of each research question. According to the obtained qualitative data, the potential causes of the discovered communication concerns of Chinese students and German teachers are discussed afterwards. **Chapter 6** summarizes the major findings of this study. The inspirations and suggestions based on the findings for each research group are provided. In addition, the limitations and directions for future research are also put forward in this chapter.

¹² "East Asian cultural sphere (in Chinese: 东亚文化圈)" refers to a grouping of countries and regions in East Asia that were historically influenced by and still share the culture of China, which mainly includes Mainland China (PRC), Taiwan Island (ROC), North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Ryukyu Islands and Mongolia (Choi, 2010; Kornicki, 2011; Preston, 2016).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Principles of the Study

As indicated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to explore the communication concerns of Chinese students and their German teachers in class and in one-to-one conversations. In this chapter, a research overview is given on the topics relevant to this work. The literature related to this study are classified into three categories, which include an insight into the intercultural communication in teaching and learning (section 2.1), the intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans (section 2.2), and the socialization of Chinese students in China (section 2.3). Finally, a summary of the selected literature and the intended contribution to this study are presented.

2.1 Intercultural communication

2.1.1 Intercultural communication

As a research area, *Intercultural Communication* flourishes nowadays in many research fields, such as cultural studies, ethnology, anthropology, linguistics, foreign languages philology, communication science, and psychology, and its concept is understood and defined differently based on the different research fields. Himenkamp (1994:3) points out that “there is so far no interdisciplinary consensus” about the term of *Intercultural Communication*.

Considering that the central investigation of this study, as introduced in chapter 1, focuses on a research topic regarding the intercultural communication between Chinese students and German teachers, it is sensible to describe the research approaches of *Intercultural Communication* in a goal- and application-oriented manner. Therefore, as the basis and import of the present study, the concept of *Intercultural Communication* is primarily discussed based on the research context of interpersonal encounter.

Apeltauer (1997:17) defines *Intercultural Communication* as “the understanding between two persons from clearly different groups¹”. Although this definition is too crude and simplified, it directly expresses one of the main characters of intercultural communication, which is interpersonal communication. In addition, the term of *Intercultural Communication* not only emphasizes the communication between people but also embodies the recognition of the discrepancy of cultures and the resulting influence on people (cf. Maletzke, 1996; Casmir, 1998; Knapp, 2003; Hess-Lüttich, 2003). As Hinnenkamp (1992: 142) describes, “cultural participation, which refers to culture-specific ways of communication, reflects in the communication” and “common cultural participation facilitates communication, while different cultural participation makes it difficult”. Thus, the diversity of cultures is an unavoidable issue that cannot be ignored in intercultural communication.

In consideration of the above aspects, according to Gudykunst (2002:179), “intercultural communication, in general, is conceptualized as communication between people from different national cultures”. A more comprehensive concept of *Intercultural Communication* can be understood as “the communication process that takes place in a circumstance in which communicators’ patterns of verbal and nonverbal encoding and decoding are significantly different because of cultural differences”, as pointed out by Kim and Gudykunst (1988: 305) in their early research on *Theories in intercultural communication*.

Since culture is a whole concept, its variables and characteristics, such as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, dialect etc., can also be considered as a resource for studying intercultural communication (e.g. Bradford, Kane, & Meyers, 1999; Dean & Popp, 1990; Oetzel et al., 2002). Thus, communication between people who speak the same language but have different cultural origins is regarded as intercultural communication. In addition, in the vast majority of cases in the area of linguistic research, intercultural communication is understood in a narrower sense as communication between interaction partners of different cultural origins, in which at least one of the interaction partners speaks a language other than his mother tongue

¹ The original German expression is: “Die Verständigung zwischen zwei Personen aus deutlich verschiedenen Gruppen” Apeltauer (1997:17).

(e.g. Günthner, 1993). This also includes situations in which all communication partners speak in a foreign language other than their mother tongues (e.g. Keles, 2013).

Focusing on the present study, Chinese students and German teachers as two target groups have different cultural origins (the culture of China and Germany) and communicate with each other either in the German language (a foreign language for Chinese students) or in the English language (a foreign language for both sides). Given this background, this study meets all of the above-proposed features of intercultural communication and can be also defined in this category.

Research on intercultural communication began in the 1970s. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the research area of intercultural communication has become increasingly important, which has been reflected in the tendency of systematic subject research to academic institutionalization (Hess-Lüttich, 2003:76, in Liu, 2010:36). This tendency can also be confirmed by the increasing research on interdisciplinary fields of study, which particularly embodies in the fields of intercultural business communication, intercultural communication in foreign language didactic, contrastive linguistics, pragmatic and so on. In general, the main questions of intercultural communication focus on the extent to which the different communication structures and different modes of thinking and behavior influence the communication process, and which difficulties and problems they can cause, and how to solve these “disturbances” in intercultural communication (cf. Jandok, 2009:56).

Scholars point out that many barriers may interfere with the process of intercultural communication, such as the barriers of anxiety, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language (e.g. Samovar et al., 2014:105ff). Particularly, the barriers caused by cultural differences and the resulting distinct ways of thinking and expression have been generally considered as the main disturbances in the process of communication and have been widely discussed (e.g. Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Gudykunst, 2003; Jandt, 2007; Liu, 2010). For example, Jandt (2007:48f) indicates that people from Western and Asian cultures often have the greatest chance of misunderstanding each other, because the cultural values that people hold are very different and affect both their communication decisions and interpretation of what others communicate. However, Jandt (2007:48)

also notes that some skills not only can eliminate the communication obstacles but also improve the personal ability to prevent the potential disturbances in intercultural communication, such as the skills of cultural awareness (understanding of how people of different cultures think and act), self-respect (being confident in one's own thinking and behavior), psychological adjustment (ability to adjust to new situations and norms), and acceptance (being tolerant or accepting of unfamiliar things).

Following these ideas, the influence of cultural differences on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers and the resulting communication concerns of each group are regarded as key research aspects of this study, which forms one of the leading research questions. In addition, the potential self-adjustment ability of Chinese students and German teachers of coping with their difficulties in communication with each other is also necessary to explore.

Nevertheless, although much research focused on cultural and behavioral differences as the main problems in intercultural communication, some researchers also explored intercultural communication from the perspective of cultural similarities (e.g. Norenzayan et al. 2002; Chen, 2003; Church et al. 2010; Li, Patel & Sooknanan, 2011; Scollon & Tov, 2012). For instance, Norenzayan et al. (2002) investigated the social inference practices between Koreans and Americans based on their cultural differences and similarities. Church et al. (2010) studied the perceived affordance or conduciveness of situations for five specific behaviors between Americans and Filipinos and found substantially greater cultural similarities than differences between these two cultures in this regard. Scollon and Tov (2012) examined cultural conceptualizations of emotion and the role of emotion in interpersonal communication by considering the similarities and differences among cultures. Therefore, cultural similarity is a factor that cannot be neglected in intercultural communication studies, which is worth learning for reference of the current study.

To sum up, in intercultural communication, one encounters other codes, conventions, attitudes, and behavioral forms. It is a part of common sense that communication processes between members of two or more different cultures are usually far more susceptible to interference than communication among members of a single culture. Even if the members of two cultures are able to communicate fluently in a particular language, it is often the case that irritation and misunderstandings still

occur. Among the barriers occurred in intercultural communication, culture- and language-based communicative barriers are commonly considered as the major causes for communication disorders. However, not every intercultural encounter undertakes communicative disturbances. In fact, disturbances are first established by the two communicative sides in the interaction. Additionally, it should not be excluded that individuals are also capable of adapting to the communication conventions of other cultures and of applying new forms of communication in intercultural situations. Last but not the least, except for the differences between cultures, cultural similarities are also standpoints in intercultural communication research. The theoretical basis introduced in this section serves as the source of the development of research questions and is also used for reference in the empirical analysis of this study.

2.1.2 Intercultural teacher-student communication in teaching and learning

As mentioned in section 2.1.1, the concept of *Intercultural Communication* in this study is primarily discussed based on the research context of interpersonal encounters. Moreover, given that the communication settings involved in this study belong to the academic context, research on intercultural teacher-student communication in teaching and learning is worth briefly reviewing.

2.1.2.1 Intercultural communication between teachers and students

As an essence in teaching and learning, two-way communication plays a crucial role in the educational process, because, in addition to the formal classroom instruction, students learn through hands-on experiences with teachers as well, which also has a great help to students' study (Wang et al., 2010:220). Thus, successful and effective communication between students and teachers is considered as a critical determinant of the high-quality instruction (Jacob, 2001; Atkins et al., 2002). Especially for international students, in view of their different cultural and language backgrounds, effective communication with teachers in host countries appears to be more important for them, which turns out as a focus of this study.

The importance of intercultural teacher-student communication has been recognized by scholars in a considerable amount of research. However, as mentioned

in chapter 1 (see section 1.1), studies pertaining to international students have usually treated the teacher-student communication as one factor in a broader range of research concerns, such as international students' adjustment problems (Mehlhorn, 2005; Schäfer & Heinrich, 2010; Zhu, 2012), their educational needs (Albert et al., 1990; Ender & Wilkie 2000; Motz, 2005), and effective teaching for international students (Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Biggs & Tang, 2011). Although the findings are fragmentary, they nevertheless provide some information on communication between international students and teachers from both students' and teachers' viewpoints.

Most international students perceive their communication with teachers to be of critical importance in their studies (Molla & Sedlacek, 1989; Mitschian, 1991; Schneider, 2007; Guan, 2007; Liu, 2010; Wang et al., 2010). As Molla and Sedlacek's (1989:8) indicates, "contact with faculty is important to academic success". However, "students from different cultural origins, their perceptions and experiences vary to some extent", which results in their different needs in communication with teachers (Wang, 2008a:34). For example, according to Ender and Wilkie (2000), European students generally feel that lecturers and professors provide sufficient instructions and exhibit personal interest in them. On the contrary, non-European students have different opinions. For example, as discovered by Meleis (1982, in Wang, 2008a:34) that Arab students thought the reason they had to make their own choices in matters of education was because their teachers did not care for them and did not want to take responsible for the consequences. Some studies also report that Asian students, especially those from origins in China, Japan, or Korea, have a strong desire for the guidance of teachers in the process of their integration into school life and socialization into institution in Western countries (e.g. Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Yeh & Inose, 2002; Guan, 2007; Wang, 2008a; Wang, 2010).

In addition to the studies conducted from the perspective of international students, a handful of research has been carried out from the teachers' point of view. Not completely congruent with students' views, teachers tend to place more emphasis on the curriculum design and learning ability of international students. For instance, Timko (1990) found that the faculty members at one American university cared more about whether a course was designed to meet the needs of international students and to help them develop the independent research ability. Wang (2008a) also discovered

that some American teachers were more concerned with the language and research abilities of their international students based on academic tasks, rather than the relationship with international students.

Therefore, it can be recognized that students and teachers have different focuses and expectations on the interaction with each other. Students care more about the relationship with teachers and support offered by teachers. However, the expectations of students on teachers may vary depending on their different understanding of the teacher-student interaction based on different cultures. On the contrary, teachers tend to emphasize on the academic performance and ability of students in the interaction. Based on this conclusion, in addition to the research aspect mentioned in section 2.1.1, another three leading questions enter into the field of thinking of this study: Will Chinese students and German teachers perceive different concerns in their communication? If yes, to what extent are their concerns caused by cultural differences? Do Chinese students have similar concerns in communication with German teachers in China? These leading questions contribute to a part of the research questions of this study, which will be specifically addressed in chapter 3 (see section 3.1.1).

2.1.2.2 Communication concerns model

Given that students and teachers have different needs and expectations in communication with each other based on the findings of previous studies, scholars have developed some methods to detect the process of teacher-student communication in order to improve the instructional communication. Among all methods, the “communication concerns model” introduced by Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979), which is to date one of the maturest quantification approaches of teacher-student communication concerns by continuously adapting and developing in the studies afterwards, is worth specifically mentioning.

In the light of Fuller’s (1969) study of investigating teachers’ instructional concerns, the communication concerns model was first introduced by Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979). Fuller’ (1969) study provided the broad framework for examining concerns of teachers and conceptualized teacher concerns into a three-phase sequence

model: concern about self, concern about task, and concern about impact (Borich & Fuller, 1974, in Station-Spicer and Bassett, 1979:139). However, Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979) considered that Fuller's model "investigated teacher concerns in general" and did not focus specifically on communication-related aspect. Thus, recognizing that "the instructional process may be viewed as primarily one of communication", the purpose of Station-Spicer and Bassett's (1979:139) study was to "systematically identify teacher concerns about communication and determine if they were distributed in a fashion similar to general concerns (i.e., self, task, and impact)".

For this purpose, Station-Spicer and Bassett restricted the definition of communication to "face-to-face interaction" in their study. In addition, they clearly defined that "a concern was considered a communication concern if it involved participation in face-to-face interactions (ibid:140)". Based on the study of Fuller (1969), Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979:141) further identified the communication concerns of teachers into three main categories as follows:

- (1) Concerns about **SELF** as a communicator:
Person expresses concern with self and own adequacy, being accepted by students, parents, supervisors, etc. Person expresses concern about credibility as a teacher, about being liked.
- (2) Concerns about **TASK** of communicating:
Person expresses concern with teaching and communication performance. The focus is on situational concerns: "how to" give a lecture, lead a discussion, ask various types of questions, use appropriate vocabulary.
- (3) Concerns about **IMPACT** of communication on others:
Person expresses concern with the effect of communication on others. Statements are about whether pupils understand what is being taught and if they are developing intellectually, socially, and emotionally. The concern is with how students, parents, etc., are affected by the communication. (ibid.)

Additionally, according to the obtained data, Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979:141) also employed three new categories to classify data in their study, namely:

- (4) Not a personal concern about own communication:
Person expresses concern about communication in general, or about the communication of someone other than him or herself.
- (5) Non-communication or non-teaching concern:
Person expresses concern about something unrelated either to communication or to teaching.

(6) No concern:

Person expresses that he or she is not concerned about a particular aspect.

The results of Station-Spicer and Bassett's (1979) study were consistent with those of Fuller's (1969). They argued for "the important of communication concerns for teacher teaching training" and "suggested that the self, task, and impact framework be used as the foundation for the sequencing of communication instruction" (Station-Spicer, 1983:159).

On the basis of the previous studies, Staton-Spicer (1983:165) further attempted to develop an objective scored instrument to facilitate examination of the relationship between teacher's communication concerns and students' learning and/or satisfaction. Based on the concerns identified by the communication concerns model of Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979), she tested forty-five hypothesized items of concerns by examining the communication of 661 school teachers. As a result, she selected fifteen items of concerns for a final, shortened version of the instrument to measure the self, task, and impact dimensions of teacher communication concerns. The reliability and validity of the instrument were also verified. The study of Station-Spicer (1983) demonstrated that the communication concerns model (Station-Spicer and Bassett, 1979) can be embodied as a research instrument in empirical teacher-student communication concern studies. Additionally, based on the findings, she also suggests more research to "uncover additional correlated of teacher communication concerns" by employing the communication concerns model and "investigate behavioral manifestations of teachers with various levels of concern about communication" (Staton-Spicer, 1983:167).

Under the direction of Station-Spicer (1983), this model has been adopted by several researchers to access the face-to-face interaction between teachers and students in a variety of instructional settings. The representative studies are as follows:

Bauer (1992) further applied the communication concerns model (Station-Spicer and Bassett, 1979) in her study in order to explore the instructional communication of international teaching assistants in America. She employed the instrument of Staton-Spicer (1983) and expanded the original instrument to twenty-four items rating on a 7-point Likert scale. Particularly, she added both quantitatively-

and qualitatively-oriented items reflecting the language and cultural proficiency of international teachers in the survey. The findings revealed six instructional communication concerns of international teaching assistants, which were “English language proficiency, two-way process of communication, the establishment of teacher-student rapport, student involvement, intercultural sensitivity, and teaching skills” (Bauer, 1992:110, in Wang, 2008a:47). Moreover, the study of Bauer manifested that the communication concerns model is also valid for investigating intercultural teacher-student communication and the combination of qualitative and quantitative instruments is conducive to yield more valuable research data.

Based on the research of Bauer (1992), Feezel and Myers (1997:110) refined the original domains of communication concerns into four categories (self, task, impact, and role conflict) to investigate graduate teachers’ concerns in more depth. The results showed that graduate teaching assistants experience “eight somewhat interrelated types of concerns: self, task, impact, role conflict, teaching, area knowledge, procedural knowledge, and time management”. The communication concerns model and the resulting instrument were once again verified to be valid and reliable by the results of their research.

Although the communication concerns model was originally developed for investigating instructional concerns of teachers, as the trend of instructional communication has shifted from teacher-centered instruction to teacher-student interaction (Englehart, 2009), researchers have attempted to explore the concerns of students in the instructional process by applying this model. To date, the studies focusing on the communication concerns of students by applying the communication concerns model have been confined to the higher education level.

For instance, the communication concerns model was developed and applied by Wang (2008a) and Wang et al. (2010). They focused more on the concerns of students instead of those of teachers and explored the communication between international graduate students and American teachers at an American university. In their studies, the intrinsic structure of the communication concerns model introduced by Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979) was reserved as the framework of the research instrument. On this basis, the adaptation and expansion of the model employed in the previous relevant studies (e.g. Station-Spicer, 1983; Bauer, 1992) were also adopted

in their studies. The content descriptions of concerns were modified from the perspective of students in order to reflect learner-centered communication. Meanwhile, in view of the feature of intercultural communication, six items in relation to language- and culture-based communication barriers were also utilized in their studies, which can be classified into the three categories of concerns (self, task, and impact) introduced by Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979). The results revealed that the concerns caused by students themselves, the impact of students' concerns on teachers, and students' English communication ability were the main concerns of both sides. The communication concerns model (Station-Spicer & Bassett, 1979) was proved to be effective and reliable again by the research findings.

The communication concerns model (Station-Spicer & Bassett, 1979) was also applied in other studies to explore the teacher-student communication and achieved the expected results (e.g. Hiemstra & Station-Spicer, 1983; Ivy, 1988; Cakmak, 2008; Dannels, 2015). In the light of the feasibility and reliability of the communication concerns model demonstrated by the previous studies, the current study also adopts this model as the basis for the development of the research instrument. The six concerns categories purposed by Station-Spicer and Bassett (1979) are also applied in this study as the data classification and coding standard. The construction of the instrument and categorical distribution of concerns of this study will be introduced in detail in chapter 3 (see section 3.3.2.2).

2.1.2.3 Strategies for eliminating concerns

On the grounds of the communication problems and concerns discovered in the previous studies, some corresponding countermeasures and suggestions are given to teachers, as well as students. However, it would be impossible to present in one portion of this chapter a full methodology purposed by previous studies for developing intercultural teacher-student communication. Thus, some representative methods, which also contribute to interpreting the findings of this study in chapter 6 (section 6.2), are introduced as follows:

According to the findings of the previous research (e.g. Ivy, 1988; Bauer, 1992; Cakmak, 2008; Wang, 2008a; Wang et al. 2010), concerns are often found in culturally diverse communication between students and teachers. For example, Wang

(2008a:123) discovered that Chinese students in American were not confident to express themselves openly to American teachers. In turn, the negative emotions of the students affected the feeling of teachers in communication and ultimately led to the concerns of teachers. Correspondingly, some researchers suggest teachers use empathetic methods to motivate students in communication because “empathy can potentially foster openness, attentiveness, and positive relationships” (Jacqueline & Irvine, 2002:434). For instance, Jacqueline and Irvine (2002:434f) points out that teachers’ empathy, from both affective and cognitive concept perspectives, is an important factor in working effectively with culturally diverse students and teachers are better able to modify pedagogy and curricula to fit their students’ needs. Hence, teachers’ empathy is helpful to students in communication.

Moreover, since the language proficiency of international students is often considered as one of the critical concerns in their communication with foreign teachers, how to improve the quality of foreign language teaching, aiming at improving the language ability of international students, has been frequently discussed by scholars. Many researchers suggest integrating cultural aspects into foreign language teaching in order to enhance students’ knowledge of the cultural background of a certain foreign language (e.g. O’Sullivan & Rösler, 1999; Harden & Witte, 2000; Hallet, 2002). Intercultural competence is also defined as a “soft skill” of foreign language learners, which enables language learners to cultivate linguistic comprehension and master a foreign language (e.g. Küster, Lütge & Wieland, 2015; Lütge, 2016). In addition, the combination of competence-oriented teaching approaches and intercultural teaching contents is also intensively discussed by domain scholars (e.g. Burwitz-Melzer, 2006; Hallt & Krämer, 2012; Vogt, 2016) and is considered as the teaching direction in foreign language teaching. Thus, it can be seen that, in addition to teachers’ empathy in communication, to improve students’ foreign language ability by combining the language teaching with culture teaching is also one of the methods to facilitate the intercultural communication between students and teachers.

In addition, in view of students’ language barriers and their psychological concerns resulted from cultural diversity, the task-based communication approach is purposed by some scholars in classroom instruction, which is derived from the

instructional approach of task-based language teaching and learning (TBLT) and can be applied to both students and teachers. TBLT was originally adopted by Prabhu (1987) and has been widely applied in language teaching practice over the past 30 years (e.g. Candlin & Murphy, 1987; Brumfit, 1979; Brown, 1991; Eills, 2003; Long, 2004; Shehadeh, 2012; Rozati, 2014). Prabhu (1987) suggests language learners to concentrate on language forms incidentally while completing “a meaning-focused activity” (Ellis, 2003:32). Ellis (2003:334) further stresses that if the task-based lesson is meaningful for students, it can lead to authentic language learning and interaction. In addition, Ellis (2009) concludes that tasks can be designed to “develop communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy” and promote classroom interaction in language teaching. Against this background, the task-based approach is identified as one of the factors to examine the communication between teachers and students. A few researchers applied task-based approach to explore teacher-student communication in other fields, such as Gass et al. (2011), who examined the impact of settings of classroom and laboratory on task-based interactions between teachers and students. Thus, the task-based approach provides a different perspective for studying and enhancing teacher-student communication.

Above all, although the research and strategies discussed above do not include all the relevant research findings in the field of teacher-student communication, they are representative and helpful for better understanding the findings of the present study. These research and methods mentioned above contribute to part of the theoretical basis of the results inspirations, which are discussed in section 6.2 in chapter 6.

2.2 Intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans

Considering that this study focuses on the interpersonal communication between Chinese students and German teachers, section 2.1 only introduced a part of the theoretical backgrounds of the current study. In addition to the feature of intercultural teacher-student communication, as discussed in section 2.1, another primary specialty of this study is embodied in Chinese-German communication. Hence, it is necessary

to briefly review the development of intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans in this section (see section 2.2). Furthermore, due to originating from the different cultural backgrounds, central features of Chinese and German communication styles are also worth particularly describing (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2).

The history of the contact between China and Germany dates back more than 700 years with trade relations and cultural exchange between the two countries taking place for about 400 years. Particularly, since the reform and opening-up policy in China in the end of the 1970s, contacts and exchanges between China and Germany have strengthened with the constant development of the bilateral relations in all areas. Against this background, the Chinese-German communication has attracted a considerable interest of scholars in various research fields. Through a comprehensive study of the literature on the interpersonal communication between Chinese and Germans, the content of this research field can be summarized as the following primary areas:

Since the early 1990s, a growing number of researchers have paid attention to the German-Chinese communication in German-Chinese joint ventures, such as Jin (1994), Dürkop (1995), Nagels (1996), Vogl (2001), Shi (2003), Geng (2006), Gülow (2011), and Ma and Becker (2015). An important reason for this phenomenon is the lack of intercultural communication competence of many business specialists and executives working for foreign companies. As Ma and Becker (2015) points out in their study, the great cultural differences between China and Germany are often underestimated in business communication. Moreover, communicative strategies applied in marketing or personnel management are also subject to great cultural resistance. Thus, in order to determine the differences between Chinese and German cultures in business communication, the researchers predominantly presented the distinct communication values, etiquette, standards of behavior, and customs between China and Germany. The purpose of this line of research is to develop theories and methods to facilitate effective Chinese-German business communication and cooperation.

In addition to the research on Chinese-German communication in the business field, intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans has attracted great

attention in academia in over the last half century. The most representative studies are the studies of Susanne Günthner. For instance, Günthner (1993) investigated authentic German-Chinese intercultural communication situations and focused on informal communication situations. She specifically discussed the Chinese cognitive and communicative principles and compared the communication styles between Chinese and Germans. She concludes that the different communicative approaches and principles between Chinese and Germans are the reasons for causing their misunderstanding and unhappiness in conversation with each other. In addition, Günthner also studied the cultural differences between Chinese and Germans in some specific communicative activities and contexts, such as Chinese-German cultural differences in recipient activities (1994a), in informal discussions (1994b), in misunderstanding (1995a), in language performance (1995b), in daily conversations (1999), and in usage of proverbs (2001a). Although the findings of Günthner's research are various, the differences between Chinese and German communicative cultures are always the basis of her research.

Above all, it can be concluded that studies on Chinese-German intercultural communication are ultimately ascribed to analyze the different cultural factors behind the different communicative behaviors. Therefore, an understanding of the Chinese and German communication cultures and their representative features of communicative style are the premise of research on intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans. Given that the current study concentrates also on the communication between Chinese and Germans, it is necessary to present the central features of Chinese and German communication style (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) as part of the theoretical foundations of this study.

2.2.1 Central features of Chinese communication style

In order to provide an overview of the general research status of the Chinese-German communication, as discussed in section 2.2, an introduction to the representative characteristics of the thinking and behavior model of Chinese is necessary. Thomas (1996) studied the Chinese cultural standards in his research. He states that a good understanding of these cultural standards is the foundation for establishing a pleasant

conversation with Chinese. As Fan (2000) also notes, the theory of cultural standards holds a popularity in investigations of the communication between Chinese and Germans from the perspectives of both Chinese and German researchers (in Liu, 2010:53).

Based on the previous studies (e.g. Günthner, 1993; Thomas, 1996; Bond, 1996; Liu, 2010), some features of the Chinese culture commonly embodied in interpersonal communication are presented in the following sections (sections 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.5). The relevant findings are discussed in the data analysis chapters of the current study (chapter 4 and 5).

2.2.1.1 Confucianism as the social ethic orientation basis

It is necessary to introduce Confucianism in the first place because it exists as the Chinese social ethic orientation basis and plays a critical role in constructing Chinese culture, values, etiquette, and standards of communication, which is also reflected in the findings of this study.

Confucianism emerged around 500 BC in China as a set of moral rules on social conducts. Its founder, Confucius (551-479 BC) lived during a time of great disorder and conflict in China, known as the Spring and Autumn Period (春秋战国, 770-476 BC). He spent his whole life studying and exploring how to bring about social order and harmony. The teachings of Confucius are lessons in practical ethics without religious content (Zinzius, 1996:27) and focus on the perfection of man and the improvement of a more peaceful and harmonious society (Cheng, 1991:188; Guan, 2007:63). Arguably the most important and influential person to the origin and development of Chinese culture, Confucius and his philosophy continue to exert a recondite influence on Chinese society even in modern China today.

Confucius believed that a society can only remain stable when each individual is integrated into a hierarchical and patriarchal structure. Therefore, he tried to restore the social order and morality by regulating human relations and teaching people to behave properly according to their social ranks. In this way, the society would run properly and people would live in harmony. Thus, whenever people failed to behave

in line with their prescribed roles, the society would be in turmoil. This ethic can be embodied in the Confucius five fundamental relations in a society (Five Cardinal Relationships, 五伦 wǔlún), namely the relationship between government and citizens, parents and children, husband and wife, among siblings, and among friends, which explains how to implement his theory into family- and society-based reality (Guan, 2007:63). The first four relationships are between superior and subordinate, while the last relation among friends is based on horizontal mutuality.

The position and the role of the individual within a society was clearly defined through Confucianism as primarily a hierarchically structured relationship rather than an equal status. Age and social status determine the value of an individual and his corresponding obligations and rules of conduct (Tu, 1998). Thus, the subordinates need to be obedient to the superiors; the younger men owe piety and obedience to the elderly; the husbands play a decisive role in families; and the elder brothers take the responsibility for making decisions and protecting the younger brothers (Chang & Holt, 1991). Only the relations between friends are relatively equal. However, the friend-relationship established by Confucian is still based on social classes and positions. In order to make sure that the society can function in a normal way, the relation between each relationship is not a one-way relation, but a mutual influence and interdependence. Hence, for instance, the older ones must protect and educate the younger ones, and the superiors have the duty to take care of the subordinates.

Other than the principle purposed in western countries that everyone has equal standing within a society, Confucius ethic is egalitarian within a social rank. The differentiation of relationships that present in the contemporary social life in China is still anchored in Confucian ethics and can be understood as ethical-centered social roles. The idea of the equality of the West is alien to this ethics (Zinzius, 1996:73). For more than 2000 years, social status and hierarchy of Confucianism, as a guideline, has permeated all areas in the Chinese society and has been profoundly influencing the thoughts and behaviors of Chinese people from generation to generation. The hierarchically constructed human relationship hinders the development of ideas based on the individual emancipation, such as democracy, freedom, and equality (Steckel, 1988:127). In essence, Confucianism encourages people to adapt the world, but not to change or dominate the world (e.g. Paul, 1990; Kriger, 1991; Tu, 1998; Hwang, 1999).

The pronounced awareness of the hierarchy with the high regard for the elderly and the higher echelons means that the respectable persons, such as parents, teachers, superiors, cannot be directly contradicted, which results in the fact that Chinese are generally accustomed to obeying the orders of the higher authorities and accept the arrangement of the superiors. As a result, the reverence for elders and the obedience for authorities are ingrained deeply in Chinese culture. The behavior patterns of Chinese are, thus, characterized by adaptation, conformity, and passivity. However, after the 30-year economic reform and opening-up policy in 1978, the modern China has moved past these narrowly defined roles with the influence of the Western culture in all social spheres. Nevertheless, the Chinese government still attaches particular importance to Confucianism, on the one hand, for officially assigning it as the cultural identity of Chinese people; on the other hand, for considering it as the foundation of the construction of a modern Chinese socialist ethics (Joseph, 2011:11). Therefore, the theory of Confucianism has always a far-reaching influence on the values and ethics of Chinese society and guides the ways of behavior of Chinese people. The majority of Chinese today still tend to think and behave in interpersonal communication in accordance with social hierarchical status much more than Westerners, who tend to be more open and egalitarian towards others (Staiger, 2000:267).

Above all, Confucianism and its promoted etiquette culture deeply affect the style of living and communication of Chinese people. Without exception, the profound influence of Confucianism also reflects on the communication of Chinese students with German teachers, which is discovered in the findings of in this study and going to be discussed in detail in chapter 4 and 5.

2.2.1.2 Social harmony

Under the permanent Confucian influence, “harmony (和谐, héxié)” is perhaps the most popular term that man can find in all areas in the Chinese society. This term is not only used by Chinese for describing the government-promoted policy but it also has its firm foundation in the traditional Chinese culture. According to Liang (2006:33), among the cultural concepts developed in the intercultural confrontation

with the Chinese culture, “the preservation of harmony is regarded as the central cultural standards”, which reflects “the perception, thought, value, and behavior of Chinese people in communication”. For many years, maintaining harmony was always deemed as the main prevailing philosophy and the guideline for virtue and ethical behavior of Chinese people.

Although harmony is by no means to be viewed as a China-specific phenomenon in interpersonal communication (Chen & Starosta, 2003; Liang 2006), there are different emphases on this concept from the different perspectives of Chinese and Western. On the basis of the general Chinese understanding, harmony refers to “the regulation of the social order” (Liang, 2006:35). Chen (2011:2-4) further indicates harmony “as the foundation of the paradigm of Chinese communication” and “an elaborating symbol in the Chinese culture”, which not only guides the way of “Chinese to think, believe and act” but also “provides Chinese people cognitive and affective orientations and strategies for orderly social action embedded in the defined goal of Chinese culture”.

According to Chen (1993), Chinese believe that harmony is the purpose rather than the means of human communication. In contrast to “the self-assessment, satisfaction of individual needs, or the attainment of personal goals”, which are highly valued in the western culture, the primary function of communication from the Chinese point of view is to “maintain the existing relationships between individuals, to acknowledge the different social positions, and to obtain the harmony in social groups” (Lin-Huber, 1998:136). Chinese people think that a good interpersonal relationship can promote harmonious communication, while conflict can cause harm to the harmony in the process of communication. Günthner (2001b:302) also says, “an essential aspect of maintaining harmony in China is to avoid open disagreement and direct confrontation, which can protect the face of one’s own and others”, because Confucius emphasized that saving face serves harmony, namely both inner and social harmony (Chen, 2002a; Zhang, 2007). Thus, interpersonal communication in China is a process of constant self-adjustment and re-positioning in order to adapt to the transforming process of surrounding environment and finally achieve harmonious interaction (Chen, 1993:6-7). The philosophical concept of “seeking harmony without

uniformity² (和而不同, hé ěr bù tóng)” expounded by Confucius also points out that a righteous man should aim at harmony by balancing the contradictions and differences of the world (Miike, 2009:65).

Since the preservation of harmony exists as one of the important cultural standards of communicative activities in the Chinese society, harmony-orientated behavior patterns also guide Chinese students in educational contexts. Heringer (2004:183) drew an example that Chinese students did not like to ask their teacher questions, even though they had not understood everything instructed by the teacher. In this situation, Heringer understood that Chinese students intended to create a conflict-free atmosphere with teachers in class by avoiding embarrass the teacher. Although this interpretation might sound too simplified for this situation, it still shows a representative attitude among German scholars for the Chinese harmony concept.

As the fundamental cultural standard of interpersonal communication, the idea of preserving harmony of Chinese students is also reflected widely in the findings of this study and will be specifically illustrated in chapter 4 and 5.

2.2.1.3 Collective thinking

Growing up in a socialist society, Chinese students are more or less influenced by the socialist values. As one of the major socialist values advocated in China, the collective thinking affects the social behavior of Chinese students, as found out in the findings of this study, and deserves to be particularly discussed.

In order to analyze cultural differences on the levels of individual, group, and society, some researchers distinguish culture into two main types, namely individualism and collectivism (Slembek, 1998; Thomas, 1993a). Individualists value independence and advocate the priority of individual interests (Darwish & Huber, 2003). On the contrary, collectivism identifies the type of culture that considers the needs, values, and aims of the group higher than that of the individual (Slembek, 1998). As Pohl (2002:121) states, collectivist thinking is characterized by consensus-

² Quote from the 《Analects Zilü》 (《论语·子路》). 《Analects》 (《Lúnyǔ》), also known as the 《Analects of Confucius》, is a collection of sayings and ideas of Confucius (551 B.C. to 479 B.C.) and his disciple, recorded and compiled by Confucius' followers.

oriented solution strategies and is socialized to put group interest ahead of individual interest. Thus, collectivism can be defined as values, norms, and beliefs of a cultural group, which grants the interests of a community the top priority. The individual interest is then less emphasized and subordinates to the collective interest. Most of the Asian cultures can be classified as collectivism. Values of collectivists, such as harmony, modesty, restraint, and commitment to parents, are significant for the collectivist culture (Thomas, 1993a:396).

Collectivism as a value orientation has a long tradition and a significant impact on the Chinese society, which is also considered as one of the traditional features of Chinese during the years of the study. Instead of upholding individual freedom, the sense of communal identity is paramount in the Chinese society, whether in the family, business, or in the policy (Jing, 2006). Collectivism is not reflected only in the era of Mao Zedong's "Great Leap Forward (in Chinese 大跃进)" movement, in which every Chinese family had to give up their cooking materials in order to win metal for the industrialization (Gao, 2006). In fact, the collective thinking has already existed much longer and can also be found in Confucianism going back a thousand years ago.

The ideal lifestyle of Confucianism is living in harmony with the living environment, both with social relations and with the natural environment (Cheng, 1991; Lee, 1996). Confucius demands that all members of a social group and all social groups of the Chinese society should exist harmoniously. This ideal is achieved by subordinating the individuals in the group (the collective, the community, the family, or society) (Huang, 2008:12). In doing so, one should avoid extremes and find a balanced middle way. The Confucian overarching goal of a harmonious society, in turn, promotes collectivism in China. Therefore, the interpersonal relationship plays a very important role in life for each individual in the Chinese society. In order to maintain a positive relationship within a group, individuals need to strive to meet the expectations of the group, adapt to social norms, and avoid the emotional social sanctions (Micholka-Metsch & Metsch, 2015:117), which reflect the consciousness of collectivism. In this respect, the enforcement of individualism, which links to the western cultural value-orientation, has not yet been universally accepted by the Chinese society.

Chinese culture is one of the most important representatives of the collectivist denominator and the collective thinking of Chinese people in interpersonal communication is particularly emphasized in numerous publications. For instance, according to Lin-Huber (2001:49), the collectivist orientation of Chinese culture manifests in many norms and rules, which determines the behavior in interpersonal communication. Günthner (1991) also states that the conformity exists as one of the Chinese value foundations in interpersonal communication. Jing (2006:21-23) further indicates that every member of the Chinese society is expected to take the feelings and opinions of others into consideration, as well as to remain humble, courteous, respectful, and obedient in appropriate situations. Those who violate the rules must be criticized and excluded from the community.

In short, the Chinese culture is a culture characterized by collectivism. Collectivist thinking has expanded in all spheres of the Chinese society, which has become an indispensable part of people's lives. The collective interests lie before the interests of the individual. Chinese emphasize on the individual value in a collective manner, while the aspiration of Western individuals for “independence, self-realization, and self-responsibility” is not a tempting path for most Chinese people (Jing, 2006:22). As a result, compared to the countries characterized by individualism, the connections among people in China are more intense and the networks are more extensive. These features of the interpersonal relationship in China resulted from the collective thinking are also manifested in findings of the current study and demonstrate the certain influence on the communication of Chinese students, which is reflected in the findings discussed in chapter 5.

2.2.1.4 Face-saving

Another typical Chinese behavioral strategy reveals itself in the conscious of “face-saving” in interpersonal communication. Although the issue of “face” is an old topic in the research field of Chinese culture, in view of the strong influence of “face-saving” on Chinese students in their communication, which is discovered from the findings of this study, it is still necessary to introduce the concept of “face” in this section as one of the basic theoretical principles of the current research.

The concept of “face” in the Chinese society is perhaps the most difficult for Westerners to fully grasp among all the idiosyncrasies of Chinese culture (Chang, 2008:299). Unlike the face management in the Western sense, which is more self-oriented protecting or enhancing one’s ego (Oetzel et al., 2002; Ting-Toomey, 2004), the Chinese “face” is more about how one is viewed by others (other-directed), which can be earned or given, as well as lost or taken away (Chang, 2008).

Since the Chinese concept of “face” is other-directed impression management, the Chinese “face” is never an individual “thing” (Chang, 2008:302). A “face” issue is most closely related to the communicative situation and shared by people in relationships. Chinese people would prefer to save face in front of elders or highly qualified people rather than youngers or peers, but would rather lose face in a familiar environment than in an unfamiliar environment (cf. Heringer, 2004). This somehow shows the essence of the “face”: “a reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success, and ostentation” (Hu, 1944:45, in Zhu, 2015:150).

Many researchers consider the “face” of Chinese (in Chinese: 面子) as the main factor to explore the Chinese culture and an important focus when communicating with Chinese. For instance, as Günthner (1993:69) notes, the issue of “face” is one of the matters that Germans need to pay attention to in interaction with Chinese people. Lin-Huber (2001:46) also states that the supreme principle of every Chinese conversation is to preserve or increase one's own “face” or that of others. Zhu (2012:184) explains that Chinese students often care much about their “face” in a new environment, which is one of the reasons why they cannot easily adjust to the students’ life in Germany. The importance of “face” has also been discussed by many other researchers (e.g. Ma & Becker, 2015; Garnet, Michael & Ralf, 2006) because the understanding of the concept of “face” is considered as a key element to creating successful communication with Chinese people.

Since the loss of “face” leads to “the loss of reputation, power, and authority”, the idea of saving face is deeply rooted in the Chinese culture and exists as a guiding principle of Chinese social actions (Heringer, 2004:183). Due to the importance of “the ‘face-saving’ in the life of Chinese, it is a moral duty to give or leave ‘face’ to other people in the Chinese society” (Zinzius, 1999:47). Ding and Fluck (2001:94)

even states that the view of “face-saving” is a particularly terrifying research prospect for studying the communication between Chinese and Germans. However, Rolle (1999:88) criticizes the over-interpretation of the concept of “face-saving” and claims, “although the concept of “face” plays an important role in the Chinese society, the idea of “face-saving” cannot be used as a universal remedy or an excuse for all the problems found in the communication with Chinese”.

Nevertheless, it can be learned from the findings of the previous research that the concept of “face-saving” affects the communicative manners of Chinese. The extent to which the idea of “face-saving” actually influenced on the interaction behavior of Chinese students in their communication with German teachers is examined in this study, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4.1).

2.2.1.5 Modesty and “the Doctrine of the Mean”

For many investigations, which explore the culture-oriented behavior of Chinese in interpersonal communication (e.g. Liang, 1992; Lin-Huber, 2001; Günthner, 2001b; Liu, 2010), modesty is always considered as one of the typical Chinese behavioral strategies. As Günthner (2001b: 299,300) points out, “the demonstration of modesty is a traditional principle of Chinese politeness rhetoric”, and “modesty is still a central politeness strategy in Chinese everyday rhetoric”.

According to Liang (1992:75), modesty is “one of the Chinese avoidance rituals, which refers to one’s personal knowledge and ability cannot be openly presented”. In order to manifest peace and mediocrity of this traditional feature of Chinese mentality, humble and modest behaviors have become the typical Chinese-style expression gradually and can be found in many aspects. For instance, Günthner (2001b:308) provides an example that a direct acceptance of a compliment with saying ‘thanks’ is considered by Chinese as ‘impolite’ and ‘a sign of arrogance’ and ‘the lack of modesty’. Liu (2005:248) also illustrates that Chinese people like to describe a gift from them, which they have searched the whole city for finding it, as a ‘little thing’ or ‘nothing’ in order to express the respect and modesty to others.

To better understand the Chinese humble and modest mind, it is necessary to start with Confucius again, who is arguably the most influential person in Chinese history as discussed in section 2.2.1.1. Confucius believed in the order of social status and hierarchical manner of behavior. Only in this way can society develop harmoniously and stably. Based on this principle, he put forth “The Doctrine of the Mean”, which is called in Chinese “the way of Zhong-yong (中庸之道)”. Zhong-yong, which literally means “centrality and universality”, is the similar meaning as equilibrium and harmony. The essence of Zhong-yong is to guide people to behave in a moderate way and keep the harmony of universal relationship (Soccio, 2015:36). This would later be developed by Neo-Confucianists into the concept of Yin and Yang (阴阳), which represents the belief that everything in the universe is composed of two complementary yet opposing energetic forces (Cheng, 1991; Jasmuheen, 2007:26f).

The Chinese phrase Zhong-yong (中庸), also known as “The Doctrine of the Mean”, reveals the Confucian ideal of moderation, which is so broad as to encompass virtually every activity and relationship of human life. Fogel (2001:159) explains that “Zhong (中) refers to bending neither one way or another, and Yong (庸) represents unchanging”. To put simply, the principle of Zhong-yong asserts that one should behave neither in extreme joy or in excessive grief, because any unregulated happiness or sorrow can result in an intractable situation beyond one’s control (Gunaratne et al., 2015:133f). Ideally, the individual should adhere firm to the desirable center course between two extremes, so as to “maintain balance and harmony from directing the mind to a state of constant equilibrium” in every situation and at all times (Legge, 1893, in Wang & Hunton, 2011:93f). Though some similar Western theories, such as Platonic idealism³ and Aristotle’s “the Golden Mean”⁴, also have a certain influence on Chinese value and mode of thinking over the years, the

³ Platonic idealism usually refers to Plato's theory of forms or doctrine of ideas. According to Plato, for any conceivable thing or property, there is a corresponding form, a perfect example of that thing or property. His theory asserts that non-material abstract (but substantial) forms (or ideas), and not the material world of change known to us through sensation, possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality (Macintosh, 2012:6).

⁴ Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, scientist, and an excellent student of Plato, the founder of logical theory. Aristotle believed that the greatest human endeavor is the use of reason in theoretical activity. One of his best-known ideas was his conception of "The Golden Mean" - "avoid extremes," the counsel of moderation in all things (Hwang & Kretchmar, 2012).

far-reaching decisive effect of Confucius neutralism on Chinese mentality is incomparable with any other thoughts and theories in the world.

Under the deep influence of “The Doctrine of Mean” on the Chinese culture, some personal qualities, such as courteousness, restraint, and self-control are very much appreciated in the Chinese society (Zinzius 1996:49f). The traditional Chinese saying, “Modesty helps one to make progress, conceit makes one lag behind. (谦虚使人进步，骄傲使人落后。Xūxīn shǐ rén jìnbù, jiāo'ào shǐ rén luòhòu.)”, serves as a core principle to guide all Chinese in personal, social, and working life. Chinese people believe that being humble and modest are the best way to present oneself, which is also a good mean to create and maintain harmonious relationships with people. As a result, the consequences of this Chinese culture-specific socialization are a deep-rooted ego-weakness of Chinese and their passive behavior in the community and in front of authority persons (cf. Liang, 1998).

The humble and modest behavior manner are also found as one of the communicative features of Chinese students in this study and affect the quality of their communication with German teachers. The analysis results in this regard will be discussed in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4.3).

2.2.2 Central features of German communication style

Although the concerns of Chinese students and their relevant Chinese communication style are the main analytic target of this study, considering that German teachers as another important group also involved in this study, it is necessary to briefly introduce the central German cultural standards of communication in order to form a correspondence to the Chinese cultural standards discussed in the previous section (2.2.2).

Over the past few years, research has yielded a wealth of German cultural standards in interpersonal communication (e.g. Schroll-Machl, 2003; Thomas, 1996, 2003, 2006; Müthel, 2006). Schroll-Machl (2003:34) in her research on the perception and self-awareness of Germans discussed in detail the seven features of central German cultural standards developed by Thomas (1996,1999): “objectiveness,

appreciation of structures and regulations, time schedule, low-context communication style, rule-oriented and internalized self-monitoring, separation of the area of personality and life, and individualism⁵". The similar features of the German cultural standards are also illustrated in the study of Müthel (2006:106). Moreover, in the study of Ergenzinger and Krulis-Randa (2007:145ff) on the socio-cultural backgrounds of the German and Chinese managers, some cultural-specific features of both sides are found, in which the German characters are described as "rational", "participatory", "individualistic", "principle-oriented", and "fact-oriented".

Thus, although there are a number of German cultural standards in interpersonal communication that are important from different angles, in comparison with the features of Chinese communication standards mentioned in 2.2.1, the central features of German communication standards are primarily in compliance with the German cultural features stated by Thomas (1996, 1999, in Schroll-Machl, 2003 and Müthel, 2006). According to the contents of this study, the main features of German communication style can be briefly summarized as the following points based on the studies of Schroll-Machl (2003) and Müthel (2006):

- **The appreciation of structures and regulations** embodies in "the need for a clear and reliable orientation, to control a situation, to minimize risk, and to neutralize potential disturbances and sources of error" (Müthel, 2006:160).
- **Time schedule** refers to "the ability for organizing the life in a consecutive manner" and "the temporal reliability, which is regarded as an important feature of the assessment of trustworthiness" (ibid:160).
- **Low-context communication style** emphasizes on the "explicit and direct" expression approaches. In a low-context communication, "facts are paramount", and "formulated in a way that no room left open for interpretation" (ibid:160).
- **Objectivism** reflects in the "goal-oriented" behavior and the "fact-based" argumentation of Germans (Schroll-Machl, 2003:49).

⁵ The original German expression is: Sachorientierung; Wertschätzung von Strukturen und Regeln; Zeitplan; schwacher Kontext als Kommunikationsstil; Regelorientiert und internalisierte Kontrolle; Trennung von Persönlichkeits- und Lebensbereichen; Individualismus (Thomas, 1996,1999, in Schroll-Machl, 2003:34).

- **Individualism** “values highly personal independence and self-reliance”. “The primary identity [of individualism] is the personal identity of the individual”, which “distinguishes and characterizes a person as distinguished from other persons” in groups, organizations, or other collectives (ibid:204).

The German cultural standards introduced above serve as a reference for better analyzing and understanding the concerns expressed by Chinese students regarding their communication with German teachers in the German cultural context.

2.2.3 Research on Chinese students studying at German universities

By reviewing the relevant research, the targeted theoretical background regarding intercultural teacher-student communication and Chinese-German communication was provided, which includes the perspectives of teachers and students on their interaction, the model for detecting and evaluating communication concerns, representative suggestions for improving teacher-student communication, and Chinese and German central communication standards. At this stage, given that Chinese students are the major research subject of this study, it is still necessary to specifically focus on the studies on Chinese students studying in Germany in order to have a concise and explicit understanding of the main problems that Chinese students experienced in Germany.

As known from the research background of Chinese students studying in Germany reviewed in chapter 1 (see section 1.1), benefiting from the flourishing exchanges between China and Germany since the economic opening-up policy of China in 1978/1979, a growing number of Chinese students have had the opportunity to study in Germany. Against this background, in the last decade, an increasing amount of research has paid close attention to Chinese students and their living and studying status in Germany. Researchers have discovered a wide range of difficulties that Chinese students need to deal with in Germany, such as financial problems, language difficulties, lack of social contacts, psychological pressure, and self-identity disorientation (Guan, 2007:17f). Considering that this study mainly focuses on the communication activities of Chinese students at German universities, the findings of

the studies on Chinese students' learning status in Germany are the primary research basis of this dissertation. Section 1.1 of chapter 1 listed the general limitations of previous research in the field and further pointed out the research objectives of this study based on the limitations. Furthermore, by specifically focusing on the findings in this field, although Chinese students expressed various difficulties in studying, it can be learned that most of them faced some common problems and also shared similar worries, which are conducive to understanding the concerns of Chinese students discovered in this study and, hence, deserves to be particularly pointed out:

(1) Unprepared for the new cultural and learning environment

Almost all the research on Chinese students in Germany reflected that Chinese students encountered learning barriers and worries at German universities, especially in the initial stage of their studies. As indicated in the study of Zhu (2012:171ff), “a cultural shock or cultural conflict is unavoidable for Chinese students in their initial phase in Germany. They are confronted with a quite different culture, ways of life, and social systems in Germany, in which the learning and communicative approaches are different from those they have experienced in China. The radical change of cultural circumstance, life perspectives and social behavioral pattern call for a corresponding changeover of Chinese students, which leads to their loss of self-confidence and identity in the German learning context”.

Additionally, according to Song (2009), Chinese students are more likely to respond emotionally to the negative situation (failure) by restraining their emotions. In the face of difficulties in an unfamiliar environment, Chinese students' fears manifest more as emotional and perceptual concerns rather than verbal or practical actions. For example, the study of Yan and Berliner (2009:954) found that many foreign teachers in western countries were often confused about the “extreme silence” of Chinese students in seminars in the host country. As also discussed in a dialogue analysis of Günthner' (1993) study, the conversation with two female Chinese students was evaluated as “quiet”, “restrained”, “uninteresting”, and “without actual personal opinion” by two female German students, while the Chinese students felt that the German colleagues are “very direct” and “aggressive”.

Moreover, it is not only the foreign culture and behavioral pattern that require the change and adaptation of Chinese students, but also the operating modes and the academic freedom of German universities, which often lead them into disorientation (Guan, 2007:137ff). According to the educational and student management mode at Chinese universities, Chinese students' studies and life are well arranged and taken cared by Chinese universities⁶. However, the study plan and system at German universities are organized in quite different ways, which requires students to be individualized, independent, initiative, and able to solve problems on their own (Trommsdorff, 1989:188). The different learning methods and management style make some Chinese students consider the study in Germany as associated with painful experiences. Their deficient studying experiences and communication techniques hinder them from integrating into the German culture and learning environment successfully (Zhu, 2012:159ff). Researchers also found that, due to the fear of the unfamiliar German culture, Chinese students prefer to stay in Chinese communities in Germany in order to have a sense of security (e.g. Guan, 2007; Liu, 2010; Wang, 2011; Zhu, 2012).

Although most of the Chinese students perceived their studies in Germany as unmanageable, incomprehensible, and extremely stressful, especially in the beginning phase, some studies also indicated that the negative moods and state of Chinese students in Germany are possible to change and even can eliminate (e.g. Guan, 2007; Liu, 2009; Wang, 2010; Jin, 2011; Zhu, 2012; Yan, 2017). For example, the study of Liu (2010) found that some Chinese students, who were well prepared in terms of cultural differences for their studies in Germany, expressed fewer worries in their communication with Germans. Guan (2007) and Zhu (2012) also stated that Chinese students at the final phase of the study in Germany could integrate into the German learning environment better. Therefore, an optimistic attitude to overseas study and the courage to face difficulties are necessary.

Summarizing the above findings, it can be seen that the worries of Chinese students are mostly caused by the culture-based different learning methods and lifestyle between China and Germany. When facing with difficulties, their worries and fear mainly reflect on the psychological activities and emotional changes. However,

⁶ The educational and student management system at Chinese universities is discussed in section 2.3.2.

the findings also demonstrate that the sense of frustration and helplessness of Chinese students caused by the change of cultural and learning circumstance are understandable, but optional. The difficulties encountered by Chinese students in the process of study can be prevented by having good preparation and eliminated with the improvement of personal ability and experiences.

(2) Communication and language difficulties

Another noted problem of Chinese students during their studies in Germany reflects itself as the insufficient language competence. Many studies show that Chinese students commonly encounter communication problems caused by their weak language ability, such as listening and speaking, in their studies and also in daily life (e.g. Guan, 2007; Guan, 2010; Liu, 2010; Mao, 2010; Zhu, 2012).

For instance, Liu (2010:215f) found that Chinese students perceived the important role of language and considered the language barriers as the biggest obstacle in their communication with German students. Some Chinese students in her study expressed that they could conduct “successful and harmonious” conversations with Germans only in “simple” topics and casual situations, such as shopping, eating and drinking, and free time activities. The insufficient language ability hampered them from exchanging ideas with Germans more in depth. Zhu (2012:159ff) also discovered in her study that most of the Chinese students studying in Germany could not fully understand the contents of lectures and interact with German peers at German universities due to their insufficient language ability. Some Chinese students stated that, most of the time, they could not totally understand what the lecturer said; and even sometimes they could understand the content, they did not know how to express their ideas in German.

In addition, the different ways of thinking between German and Chinese language is also one of the difficulties experienced by Chinese students in Germany. For example, Liu (2010: 42f) points out an example of the different understanding of “yes” and “no” between Chinese and Germans. In the Chinese language, the standard answer to a question as “You are not from Germany?” is “Yes”, which confirms the assumption of the person with the fact. The message behind the answer “Yes” is “Yes, you are right. I am not from Germany.” However, in the German language is correct

to answer this question with “No”, which refers to the answer “No, I am not from Germany.” Such misunderstandings caused by differences in language expressions also lead to Chinese students’ difficulty in communication and studying in Germany.

Based on the studies mentioned above, there are at least two points, which can be learned from: First, some worries of Chinese students simply come from the difficulty of the language itself. Such as the example of Liu (2010) about the answers of “Yes” and “No” listed above, for Chinese students, the quite different grammatical and syntax rules between Chinese and German languages increase the difficulties of learning and using the German language. Second, some worries reflected by Chinese students seem to be resulted from their weak language competence on the surface but were actually caused by the lack of background knowledge regarding the topics of conversation. Looking back to the first example of Liu (2010), one can speculate that Chinese students maybe do not have relevant knowledge to talk with Germans about some “difficult” topics, rather than their language skills not being good enough. Likewise, in addition to the insufficient language ability, the worries of Chinese students in Zhu’s (2012) example maybe also be rooted in their lack of background knowledge of the lectures. Thus, the worries and problems expressed through language difficulties deserve to be pursued further.

Above all, it can be realized that the main barriers that Chinese students encounter in Germany are composed of two categories: barriers resulted from cultural differences and barriers caused by insufficient personal capacities. In particular, culture-based barriers are primarily embodied in emotional and psychological activities, while capacity-based barriers include the barriers of language competence and knowledge. This barrier category together with the concerns category (self, task, and impact) of the communication concerns model (see section 2.1.2) serve as the basis of data encoding in this study. The process of data analysis is discussed in detail in chapter 3 (see sections 3.4.2.2 and 3.5.1 (3)).

To summarize, this section summarizes the main problems of Chinese students studying in Germany based on the previous studies. In the meantime, the categories of barriers applied in this study are shaped by analyzing the findings of previous research. However, the knowledge about Chinese students acquired in this section is based on specific research themes and, hence, segmentary. In order to better understand the

performance and behavior of Chinese students and also to build a sound theoretical basis of this study, their growth environment and educational background in China are specially introduced in the following section (2.3). Section 2.3.1 focuses on the growth background in Chinese families and section 2.3.2 describes the educational background of Chinese students in China.

2.3 Family- and education-based socialization of Chinese students

The cultural-specific value system is considered as the central system that directs the actions of its people in interaction with others, which is primarily conveyed to the social offspring in the process of socialization in the family and educational institutions (Steinkampf & Stief, 1978:65). On the one side, sociologists always emphasize that, although the process of individual socialization cannot be ascribed to a certain phase of personal development, the socialization in early childhood in family is of particular formative importance, because early socialization forms the basis of individual personality in interpersonal relationships, which despite being adjustable, its structure cannot be altered. As Hurrelmann (1995:99f) notes, family growth environment and education are practically responsible for the socialization of children, while their intellectual and social skills can be trained in schools. On the other side, in order to survive and further achieve personal development in a society, its members must at least learn to undertake a partial adjustment of personal attitudes, actions, and expectation to meet the social and communicative demands (Hurrelmann, 1995:93f), which, in turn, react to the individual development and reflect the importance of school education. Therefore, given the interaction between the family- and education-based socialization and the social interpersonal communication, a brief introduction of the family and educational environment of Chinese students and the corresponding influence on the formation of their communication patterns is indispensable for the understanding of their communication problems in Germany.

In the following sections, the structure and characteristics of Chinese families (see section 2.3.1), the features of Chinese educational style (see section 2.3.2), as

well as the relevant influence on the formation of the communication value and habits of Chinese students are presented.

2.3.1 The family structure and expectations

2.3.1.1 The one-child policy as a social factor

The Chinese generation born in the 1980s is characterized by the strong influence of the one-child policy, which is known as a family planning policy of China. As one of the most important components of the state politics in China, the one-child policy was introduced in the late 1970s to slow down the rapidly evolving population and began to be formally phased out in 2015. The consequence resulted from the one-child policy is not only that the Chinese population has descended greatly, but more importantly, this policy has exerted a rapid and far-reaching impact on the change of Chinese society. As a result of the one-child policy, the vast majorities of Chinese from the generation since the end of the 1970s are single children and grow up in families without siblings. A family model of three people (parents and a child) is becoming the major model of Chinese families (Kane, 1985; Liu, 2006). The size of Chinese family has become gradually smaller than before. The education of the single-child generation based on the traditional concept, as a result, has become a problem.

On the one hand, this generation is often regarded as a generation that attaches specific importance of ego, while taking little consideration of others. As the single child at home, the parental care of the parents brings their single children to the center of a family under excessive protection and attention. “*The four-two-one syndrome*”⁷ (four grandparents and two parents endeavor all for one child) leads to most parents, as well as grandparents, sacrificing themselves to gratify the desires of their only child in the family and try to leave the child a barrier-free road to go forward (Guan, 2007:84). Not infrequently, Chinese children of the one-child generation are also often spoiled due to the high status that they have within the families. In the meantime,

⁷ Four-two-one syndrome is “a Chinese family pattern of single children over three generations with its consequent social problem.” (Algeo & Algeo, 1993:45)

these children also carry all hopes of the whole family. Given the lack of siblings, the high expectations of parents load on the shoulder of the only child in families, which form a considerable amount of pressure on the personal development of the children of this generation.

On the other hand, it should also be taken into consideration that most of the young Chinese of this generation still have rich experiences with the collective life that they experience outside of their families. For example, they need to go to schools under the uniform Chinese educational system, study with uniform textbooks, and go through the uniform college entrance examination. Thus, the Chinese generation of the one-child policy is still edified by traditional Chinese values and grows up under the nurture of the Chinese collectivism (Guan, 2007:98).

Given the changes in the structure of Chinese families and the growing background of Chinese children caused by the one-child policy, the debate on the positive effects and problems of this family planning policy continues. Growing up in the social transformation processes in China, the Chinese one-child generation, and also their parents, are experiencing a relatively different family educational pattern compared to the generation before the policy was implemented, which shaped or is still influencing their values and socialization in interpersonal behavior. Considering that the majority of the Chinese students participated in this study are the single child in their families, it is particularly meaningful to introduce the background of their growth and family education, so that to understand the formation of their socialization, especially with regard to the interpersonal communication values. In addition, for those Chinese students who are not the single child at home, although they have siblings to share the experiences of growth, the family education pattern that they went through is more or less similar to that of any other Chinese family. The only difference is that they have siblings to decentralize the efforts and time of parents and to share the expectations of the family. Above all, the family education and expectations of Chinese students are necessary to present.

2.3.1.2 Family education and expectations toward Chinese students

In the concept of Confucianism, the social order is based on the regulation of human relations and the family is the most important social entity. This can be reflected in the five interpersonal relationships founded in the social ethical order by Confucius (see section 2.2.1.1), three of which refer to the regulation within the family: father and son, husband and wife, as well as older and younger brothers. Thus, the ethical norm of Confucianism is strongly family-oriented (cf. Chang & Holt, 1991).

On the basis of the family concept of Confucius, the traditional relations between the generations, such as between parents and children, are hierarchically and authoritatively arranged according to the sequence. In a Chinese family, the authority position of the parents and their role in protecting children are very common (Bond, 1986:215). As Huo and Yuan (2015:1323) note, it is customary that Chinese parents protect their children very well with their authority status and can determine almost everything for their children in all areas, from everyday life to education, work, and marriage. Chinese children need to show their absolute obedience to the parents because resistance to parental expectations is regarded as non-piety and despised in the Chinese society (Chow, 2007:95). In case of any conflicts of opinion, according to Chow (2007:93; Ho, 1996:161f), Chinese parents normally exert massive pressure on their children. Most of the time, Chinese children make compromises in order to show their respect and piety to the parents, because it is only with respect and obedience that one can expect a corresponding protection from the family (Chow, 2007:95).

Steinkamp and Stief (1978, in Hurrelmann, 1995:125) voice the opinion that, for most of the Chinese parents, the primary aim of the family's education is not to cultivate the independent development and personality of their child, but to shape the child's passive adaptability and subservience to the wishes of parents, because good children need to have the qualities to fulfill the duties in the family, meet the wishes of parents, and take care their parents with reverent behavior. The children's own interests and aspirations that are against the expectation of the parents and the interest of the family should be suppressed as far as possible (Huo & Yuan, 2015:1324).

As Liu (2010:97) notes, although the process of reform and opening in China caused some changes of Chinese children in their value system and ways of thinking in interpersonal interaction, these changes do not mean that Chinese young generation nowadays is no longer under the influence of Confucian ethics. The concept of Confucianism in the relationships between parents and children continues to be deeply felt in the Chinese society today. In the light of the top-to-down hierarchical family structure based on Confucianism, values, such as piety, obedience to parents' authorities, mutual duty-conscious behavior are still familiar to Chinese as a behavioral orientation (Hwang, 1999:168f). Chinese parents are encouraged to provide their children with the best possible care and protection (Lo et al., 2016:51f). In return, children are obliged to be obedient and show gratitude to their parents (Xu et al., 2005). Thus, the opinions and perceptions of parents always play a highly important role in the process of personal growth of Chinese children. As a result, the long-term dependency of the younger ones on the elderly hinders the development of an independent personality.

In comparison with Chinese-style family education, Weggel (1997b:98) summarizes that the modern European-style education, especially the family education, can be highlighted with three differences: "firstly, European children are raised to be independent and, therefore, are left with more space for self-development; secondly, children are encouraged to fight for their dreams and live their own life; thirdly, children are surrounded by their peers at an early age, rather than their parents, grandparents, and siblings". In this milieu, European children are more likely to experience the process of shaping self-assertion and self-cognition.

In contrast to the Western culture, most of the Chinese children do not want to seek relief from their parents, but rather try to maintain their attachment to their parents. In this way, children can fulfill their duty of filial piety to their parents, which is one of the Chinese tradition ethics that is taken seriously by Confucianism. The takeover of responsibilities by parents and the resultant restriction of children's self-responsibility and decision-making potentially hamper the development of an active and independent personality. With this concept of education, the personality of Chinese children is normally developed with passive, obedient, and respectful characteristics towards authority persons, which is very different from the character

traits, such as autonomous, productive, and self-initiative capable for action, that are advocated by the Western society.

Moreover, Chinese children also live under the high expectations of their parents. As discussed in section 2.2.1.4, the Chinese society emphasizes collectivism and attaches great importance to the social recognition. As Günthner (1993:69ff) points out, in China, it is much more important and valuable to evaluate a person from the angle of a group than from a personal perspective. Therefore, Chinese people are very concerned with how other social members perceive and react to the behavior that they exhibit and the achievement that they get. Once their success and wisdom are recognized by others, their personal status in society will enhance (Guan, 2007:80). This undoubtedly causes pressure on Chinese children, especially those who are the single child in the family. If they perform well in school, they not only fulfill the filial obligation but also win honor for themselves, as well as for their families (Chow, 2007:95). For this reason, Chinese families regard the education of children as a “family business”, which might enable a future rise in the social hierarchy and to honor the ancestors (Huang & Gove, 2012:11). Hence, the decisions that Chinese children make are much more about the interests of the whole family, such as to choose a university to study at, to gain recognition in social groups, and to build their own families (Kane, 1985; Chow, 2007). Based on this social recognition, a failure of children is not only an individual experience but also the loss of the honor of the whole family (Huang & Gove, 2012). Since the academic achievement embodies too much significance, Chinese students shoulder the responsibility to be successful.

The reasons that Chinese parents place their high expectations on their children can be summarized as the following two points:

For one thing, due to the large size of the Chinese population and the limited study resources, Chinese parents consider education as a competition and even a war wherein their children cannot lose at the starting line (the Chinese slogan: 不能输在起跑线上). From the day of pregnancy, the prenatal training exists until the birth. Most of the Chinese children in primary school, who are between three to twelve years old, are required by their parents to take part in so-called “interests” classes, such as piano, dance, English, art, etc., which occupies the spare time of children.

Unlike German children, who participate in these extra-curricular classes due to personal interests, most of the Chinese children go to “interests” classes for satisfying their parents’ wishes. Starting from middle school, the average daily study time of Chinese students is more than ten hours⁸. Although students are overwhelmed by a large number of exams and homework, their parents, teachers, and the whole society still encourage them to work harder and harder in order to achieve better grades than the other peers.

Additionally, in view of the huge population and imbalance of regional development, Chinese parents are also worried about that China might not be able to establish a reliable social security mechanism for decades. Hence, Chinese parents consider having a good job as the long-term guarantee of medical care, pension, and a comfortable life for their children. Nevertheless, despite its rapid economic growth and rising prominence on the world stage, China has not yet been developed to such an extent as to create enough satisfactory job positions to meet demands of ambitious Chinese parents envisaged for their children⁹. Considering the fierce competition among talented students, the only reasonable response of Chinese parents is to give their children sufficient pressure to win in the competitive job market. As a Chinese parent expressed to a press: “If my child studies 20 minutes less than my neighbor’s child every evening, then our dream will be a little further than we expected” (Hurst & Naughton, 2013). This kind of fear is implanted in the minds of the overwhelming majority of Chinese families.

Considering the factors mentioned above, Chinese parents tend to take care of their children as long as possible and remove all the difficulties around their children in order to give them a comfortable and carefree environment to study hard in and further to fulfill the expectations of the families (Chow, 2007:94). Although this caring type of family education provide a relative easy growth environment, it instills a tendency of dependence and passiveness of Chinese children, which reflects one of the results of Chinese-style family education. Some features of Chinese students discussed above, such as passiveness, dependence, obedience, and respect towards

⁸ Date quote from 北京大学中国社会科学调查中心发布 《中国报告·民生·2010》 (《The Report of China-Livelihood-2010》 Institute of Social Science Survey, Peking University). Online resource: http://pkunews.pku.edu.cn/xwzh/2010-03/04/content_168849.htm

⁹ Ibid. 8

authority persons, are also reflected in the findings of the current study. More about this consideration and the relevant findings can be found in the results of the second research question discussed in chapter 4.

2.3.2 Learning and teaching in China

2.3.2.1 The education and student evaluation method as influencing factors

In addition to the pressure coming from family and society, in order to better explore Chinese students' behavior in communication, the education and student evaluation method in China are factors that cannot be ignored.

Throughout the research on the process of education of Chinese students, the most important feature of the education system in China is “exam-oriented” or “exam-centered” (e.g. Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Hill, 2001; Zhu, 2012). Qi (2004, in Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011:38) describes that students in China need to face “numerous examinations as soon as they start the schooling” and “examinations play a pivotal role in student success”. As also mentioned in section 2.3.1.2, Chinese parents and teachers have high expectations on Chinese children and “consider exam scores to be the only evaluating criteria” for the students in China (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011:39). Since the exam-oriented education regards exams as the means “to prove the worth of students”, some other individual qualities, such as “critical thinking”, are downplayed (ibid:39).

The Chinese Gao Kao (高考), a college entrance examination, is the best interpretation of the “exam-oriented” education in China. Gao Kao is the key way for Chinese students to enter to the higher education system and “the high scores [of Gao Kao] are the deciding factors behind getting a chance to attend elite Chinese universities” (ibid:39). Since most of the Chinese parents and students believe that a successful future depends on “the fact whether one receives higher education” (Zhu, 2012:77), as mentioned in section 2.3.1.2, Gao Kao is particularly important for Chinese students and their family. In order to achieve a good score in Gao Kao, most of the Chinese students spend years of focusing solely on the preparation for this

exam by continually memorizing and doing exercises, which, as a result, comes at the cost of the loss of “creativity and imaginations” of students (Zhu, 2012:77; Schmitz, 2011). Although the Chinese Gao Kao has some shortcomings, in terms of the existing education resources in China, Gao Kao is still “the fairest and objective evaluation form of selecting the qualified university candidates” (Zhu, 2012:78).

Zhu (2012:77) reports that the education in China is exam-oriented because of the large proportion of the population and “the limited educational resources”, which is an undeniable realistic reason for this feature of Chinese education. In fact, as pointed out by Martin (1995:5f), the system of Gao Kao “holds an importance similar to that of Keju¹⁰” and “can be seen as a continuation” of the Chinese imperial examination system. Kirkpatrick und Zang (2011:41) also indicate that “the modern education and examination system of China evolves indirectly from the old Chinese imperial examination system”. To understand this better, a brief introduction of the Chinese imperial examination system is necessary, which is presented below:

The Chinese imperial examination system (in Chinese: 科举制, kējǔzhì) was the longest civil service examination system in the world for selecting officials by continuing for more than 1300 years. Around 1400 years ago, the Chinese imperial examination system was introduced from the Sui Dynasty in 587 C.E in order to “select the best administrative officials and maintain the peace of the country” (ibid:41; Gan, 2008:117). The system developed and became the major path to offices in the Tang Dynasty, and remained its potency until its abolition in 1095 C.E.. Since Sui and Tang dynasties, most fields of Chinese society, such as social structure, political system, education and humanistic ideas, have been affected invariably by the imperial examination (Zhang, 1993; Elman, 2002; Wang, 2013). Until today, it still has a far-reaching consequence on the selection system of Chinese talents.

However, everything has two sides. The Chinese imperial examination system is no exception.

¹⁰ The Chinese imperial examinations (in Chinese: Keju) were a civil service examination system in imperial China to select candidates for the state bureaucracy. This system was introduced in the Sui Dynasty (587 C.E.) and abolished in the Qing Dynasty (1095 C.E.) in China (Gan, 2008:117). The detailed information is introduced in the following two paragraphs.

On the one side, the imperial examination played a significant role in the popularization of knowledge and promoting a learning culture in the folk. As an old Chinese folk song expressed, “A country boy, who is a farmer in the morning, can be a high official in the evening (朝为田舍郎，暮登天子堂¹¹)”. Thus, this system significantly improved the previous personnel selection system by completely changing the biological hereditary relationship and the monopoly of the garrison, so that those who were in the social middle or lower class but had intelligence and wisdom could have the opportunity to access the social upper class to display their talents. In a sense, this promotes the development of Chinese personnel selection. Although this kind of development is out of the general pursuit of fame and fortune, rather than the pure desire for knowledge or spirit; objectively, the imperial examination system brought the people in lower social class a fair opportunity and hope and promoted the learning atmosphere (Gan, 2008:126f).

On the other side, the imperial examinations also brought some disadvantages, which were mainly reflected in its contents and methods of the student evaluation. Since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.), the exams were mostly based on the knowledge of the classics and literary style, and only required candidates to be able to create a desirable form of articles, the thought of most of the intellectuals was gradually bounded by narrow classics and pedantic stereotyped writing so that their horizon, creativity, and independent thinking ability were greatly restricted (ibid:125). Given that “the imperial examination system combined the studying, examination, and to become officials together”, in order to “obtain power, fame, and wealth”, plenty of intellectuals concentrated only on “learning those classics”, “the examination contents”, “standard of enrollment”, and “all the arrangements of the royal court”, which hindered “the development of natural sciences” (ibid:130).

The imperial examination system existed as a reasonable regulation in Chinese feudal societies for more than one thousand years. Even after its abolition, it still left a profound trace in the formation and development of China's modern education and examination system.

¹¹ Quote from 《琵琶记》 (《The story of the lute》). A Chinese southern style play created by Gao Ming during the early Ming Dynasty, which was the most popular drama during the Ming Dynasty.

As Chen (1934) says, “the modern educational system in China inherited the traditional of the imperial examination system” and serves as the main way of selecting officials for the government (in Wang, 2013:71). Liu (1999) further indicates that the imperial examination provides a mechanism of the selection of personnel through the examination and has become a basic principle of the modern educational system in China in the 20th century. All the citizens, whether rich or poor, have a fair opportunity of competition through the selection path of examination, which maintains the stability of the society. Moreover, some of the habits and relics of the imperial examination can still be found in the Chinese Gao Kao today. For instance, the identities of students are sealed in order to prevent the collusion and cheating; and the student who achieves the highest score in Gao Kao is awarded the title of “principal graduate (状元, zhuàng yuán)” (Liu, 1999; Liu, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the modern education in China primarily draws lessons from the imperial examination system in order to select talented personnel through the written tests. Examinations are the superior way to evaluate students. Particularly, most of the questions in exams are based on rote learning¹², which depends mainly on students’ memory instead of their understanding and practice (Liu, 1999:3ff). Furthermore, the ability and knowledge of students are accessed solely by a final exam so that their performance on a daily basis is largely ignored. Under this assessment system, most of the students learn by rote and memorize the knowledge underlined by teachers with the purpose of achieving good results in the exams. Thus, the desire of seeking knowledge and the potential creativeness of Chinese students are largely neglected.

In order to improve the old examination and evaluation system, the qualities-oriented education (素质教育¹³) has been promoted at Chinese universities and schools since more than 20 years. In recent years, it has obtained certain achievements. For example, as Zhou (et al., 2007:22f) points out, the grade of physical education is considered as an important part of the criteria for the assessment of students, instead

¹² Rote learning is a memorization technique based on repetition.

¹³ The qualities-oriented education, called 素质教育 (Sùzhì jiàoyù) in Chinese, is promoted relative to the examination-oriented education. The qualities-oriented education focuses on sports, artistic ability and multiple intelligence of students with the purpose of encouraging students to develop potentials, cultivating good personality and improving disposition through self-discipline, rather than confining to academic ability. Such education is popular in Europe, North America, and other capitalist countries.

of only depending on the scores of academic exams. The construction of curriculum is biased towards raising students' interest, exploiting their intelligence, and cultivating their abilities of creativity. Nevertheless, given the actual situation in China, that the people's growing demand for the higher education does not match to the limited supply of educational resources, the opportunities for accessing education are not shared with every child, especially the chances of receiving the higher education. For example, in Guizhou province in the southwest part of China, where the economy is not very developed, only 5.29% of the population in this province have higher education levels, whereas 31.5% of the population of Beijing and 21.95% of the population of Shanghai have the opportunity to receive the higher education. However, the total population of Guizhou province (33,571,308) is around 1.5 times more than Shanghai's population (20,593,430) and more than double the population of Beijing (16,389,723)¹⁴. On the basis of the current situation, the traditional Chinese thought resulted from the imperial examination that “a good scholar will make an official (学而优则仕¹⁵, xué ér yōu zé shì)” still has an inveterate foundation in the Chinese mindset, especially in the economic less-developed areas. For Chinese students and their parents, the higher education has always been deemed as the principle road to success, and the exams, particularly the Chinese Gao Kao, are the thorns that they must overcome along the way.

To summarize, the exam-oriented education assigns the time and aptitude of most of the Chinese students focused only on the scores of exams, which not only forms a relative repressed and passive learning habits of students but also limits their potential of developing other personal abilities. These learning habits of Chinese students are also reflected in the findings of this study and are discussed in chapter 4 and 5.

¹⁴ Data quote from the website of “Nation Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China (中华人民共和国国家统计局)”, the data of the Sixth Population Census. <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm>

¹⁵ Quote from 《论语·子张》：子夏日：“仕而优则学，学而优则仕”。 “The Analects of Confucius” 《论语》 (Lúnyǔ) is a collection of sayings and ideas of the Chinese philosopher Confucius in the Spring and Autumn period. It is one of the most original and important classical Confucian documents, traditionally believed to have been written by Confucius' disciples. (Tan, 2006)

2.3.2.2 Features of student organization and teaching style at Chinese universities

In addition to the impact of examination and evaluation on Chinese students discussed above, considering that all the Chinese students participated in this study were with a university education, particularly, most of the students were at a level of master or higher education level, it is worth quickly outlining the features of student organization and education style at Chinese universities, as well as the resulting learning habits and limitations of Chinese students.

In China, studies at a university (according to German education system: Universität) usually have higher status than at a university of applied sciences (according to German education system: Fachhochschule), because a graduation certificate of a university of applied sciences is generally not completed with a bachelor's degree awarded by a university in China (Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007:18). Given the large population of university candidates in China, competition to get into a high-ranking university is particularly strong because the graduates of famous universities are generally always given better job opportunities. The competition to enter a famous university is often viewed as exaggerated in China, which results in the heavy burden of studies and heavy-loaded workload on Chinese students in high school.

Compared to the heavy studies in high school, life at universities is relatively relaxed for Chinese students. Although most students are far from their families, they are members of the respective university or faculty and live together with other fellow students in dormitories. The day-to-day care provided by the parents is now taken over by the organization of the university. Every university in China carefully looks after the lives of its students with a number of appropriate entities based on a complete management system. The student management system provided by Chinese universities refers not only to the initial difficulties in the orientation phase of the study but also to any other problems that students are possibly faced with throughout their whole learning process. Many organized activities under the leadership of the Party organizations (高校党组织) or the Communist Youth League (高校团组织) at universities can fulfill the function of the "peer group", which gives the students,

especially for the newcomers, the sense of belonging, as well as the collective consciousness.

To be specific, the student management system at Chinese universities can mostly be divided into a three-level structure. First, from the aspect of faculty, its main responsibility is to schedule the curriculum and examination for students. Although increasingly universities start to give students freedom in choosing the courses, considering the finite range of selection and the limited forms, students are not granted complete independence from universities in this regard. Especially, at the faculty-level, a counselor (in Chinese is called 辅导员 fú dǎo yuán) exists in every faculty, to whom the students can turn with their everyday problems or mental problems (Lian, 2004:44). The nursing staff exercises both an auxiliary and a control function (Zeng, 2010:64).

The second level of student management system is at the class-level. In each discipline, the students of a yearly level form a fixed class community (in Chinese is called 班级 bānjí) at a Chinese university (Zhang, 2011:113). Throughout the entire academic years, all students belong to one class and normally need to complete similar or the same courses and examinations. Since students of a class undertake similar learning tasks and have the same goals to achieve, the concept of the class, thus, still plays a part at Chinese universities. At the class-level, each class community has a lecturer as a class leader (in Chinese is called 班主任 bānzhǔrèn) who is responsible for the organizational and general problems of the students (Wang & Ji, 2007:151). However, the concept of class hardly exists at university-level in Germany due to the relatively open management of students at German universities (Guan, 2007; Song, 2009; Zhu, 2012).

Moreover, in every class, there is a student who plays the role as a class monitor (in Chinese is called 班长 bānzhǎng), who supports and takes care of the peer students in the same class community at the student-level. On the one hand, as pointed out by Chu and Jiang (2009), as a rule, each Chinese university offers the student residence on their university campus according to the class division, where normally four to eight students of the same gender share one room or one apartment. Since students need to spend the four-year study period together, they must take care of each

other and learn to adapt themselves. On the other hand, since all lectures and activities take place on campus, the range of activities of the students in China are relatively narrow and almost confined to the campus. Many students describe their university life as "three points on a line (三点一线)" (Guan, 2007:97), which means that they only move between classrooms, cafeteria, and dormitory. Due to the unified lifestyle and the centralized course arrangement, it is feasible to manage students from the perspective of students at Chinese universities. Although the student administrative mode at Chinese universities is beneficial to conduct a comprehensive and systematic management of students, the personal delimitation and the preservation of privacy are hardly possible. Due to the relative close social fabric, a development towards self-reliance is still being prevented.

Regarding the teaching method, the teaching style at Chinese universities is similar in many respects to general Chinese school education. Courses are largely structured by universities, and the teaching style is teacher-centered. Due to the strong influence of Confucianism, teachers in China have an authoritarian character and are highly respected by students. Chinese students learn the importance of "respecting teacher and his teaching" (in Chinese 尊师重教 zūnshī zhòngjiào) from the first day of school. Since conformity to the given way by teachers is highly valued (Burnett & Gardner, 2006:71), the teaching of the teachers is much more important than the literature and criticizing the teaching of teachers in class is seldom (Mitschian, 1991:216, 255). In addition, considering the relatively large size of classes, it is impossible to make the teaching at Chinese universities student-oriented (Zhu, 2012:78). The entire study plan of students is given by the respective faculties based on a defined process and timetable. Each student should attend the courses according to the study plan and finish the appropriate examinations. Under this teaching and learning management system, the possibility of self-determination and the promotion of self-initiative of Chinese students are severely restricted.

On the contrary, at universities in Germany, university life is normally characterized by "free study" or "academic freedom" and is not entirely structured by the university administration (Wild, 1996; Helmke & Krapp, 1999). The initial orientation, as well as the entire learning process, are the responsibilities of students

themselves, which stimulates the self-motivation of learning and also develops the ability of self-responsible planning and organization of students.

Furthermore, the demand for performance at German universities requires a high level of self-initiative of students, which is quite different from the collectivism and obedience promoted at Chinese universities. An autonomous and goal-oriented personality is the prerequisite for an optimal accomplishment of the study. For instance, Karcher and Etienne (1991:38-39) found in their analysis of the design of activities at German universities that some personal abilities required in German learning context, such as working out and developing one's own arguments to argue, were unaccustomed to the students who are from Eastern culture and challenged their accustomed learning habits acquired in their own countries. Those students must carry the pressure resulted from the differences between their accustomed means of learning and the learning habits at German universities until they could adequately meet the new standards, which required a complicated process of developing of self-identity at the intersection of two cultures.

To summarize, in contrast to the autonomous student management at German universities, the mode of student organization at Chinese universities is featured with collective management. Most of the Chinese students live under a top-down full range of supervision and rely on the supports offered on the class-, faculty-, and university-level. However, under this type of organization, the competence of self-independence and the possibility of self-determination of Chinese students are severely restricted and gradually diminished. These restrictions of Chinese students are also embodied in the concerns expressed by the Chinese students in this study and are illustrated in chapter 4 and chapter 5.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a targeted theoretical background of this thesis. Based on the review of relevant studies, the research ideas and direction were pointed out. Additionally, the criterion of the data classification and analysis of this study was also developed.

It started by reviewing the major relevant studies regarding intercultural communication and defined its meaning in the present study (section 2.1.1). The review highlighted the influence of cultural differences on the communication, which was considered as one of the main research aspects of this study.

Additionally, research on intercultural teacher-student communication in academic contexts was outlined (section 2.1.2). The review first introduced intercultural communication between teachers and students from the perspectives of students and teachers; then, presented the theoretical basis of the research instrument applied in this study, the communication concerns model (Station-Spicer & Bassett, 1979), and discussed its evolution process; finally, some representative strategies for eliminating concerns in teacher-student communication were highlighted as the foundation of this dissertation. In this section, the idea of different communication patterns of Chinese students and German teachers based on their cultural background were pointed out. The influence of different cultural circumstances on teacher-student communication also came into sight.

Furthermore, special attention was also given to the research on intercultural communication between Chinese and Germans. Through a brief review, Chinese and German different communication standards became a focus, which followed the introductions of central features of Chinese communication style (section 2.2.1) and German communication style (section 2.2.2). Then, studies on Chinese students studying in German were particularly summarized (section 2.2.3). According to the discovered problems of Chinese students, the culture-based emotional and psychological barriers, as well as the capacity-based barriers of language competence and academic background knowledge, were developed as the category for analyzing the barriers explored in this study.

This chapter ended with a discussion of the socialization of Chinese students concerning their family and social environment (section 2.3.1), as well as learning habits acquired at Chinese universities (section 2.3.2), with the purpose to better understand the communicative behaviors of Chinese students by providing a comprehensive introduction of their growth circumstances and educational background.

Chapter 3: Research Methodologies and Design

On the basis of the research background and the review of the previous studies discussed in chapter 1 and 2, this chapter will further introduce the specific research questions and the corresponding hypotheses of this study. In addition, the source of the research participants, the research design and methods, and the data collection and analysis will also be discussed in detail. Moreover, the reliability, validity, and ethical issues of this study will be presented as well.

3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

3.1.1 Research questions

As introduced in chapter 1, this study aims primarily to identify the concerns and barriers of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in instructional situations. Furthermore, it explores the potential reasons which may cause communication difficulties of Chinese students and German teachers on the basis of cultural differences, language, and learning habits between China and Germany. Based on the leading research questions put forward in chapter 1 (see section 1.2) and chapter 2 (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.1), six specific research questions of this study are addressed:

1. What are the major perceived communication concerns of Chinese students (in Germany and in China) and German teachers during their communication in different academic settings?
2. How do the communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany compare to those of their German teachers in different communication settings?

3. Considering the communication with German teachers, are the concerns perceived by Chinese students in Germany similar to those perceived by Chinese students in China? If not, how do their concerns differ?
4. To what extent do the culture- and capacity-based barriers (language competence, background knowledge, emotional process, and personal perception) perceived by Chinese students impact their communication with German teachers?
5. Do the personal background factors of Chinese students, such as their gender, age, the length of residence in Germany, academic level, financial situation, etc., have relevant influence on the communication with their German teachers?
6. Are the communication concerns perceived by German teachers related to the issues of gender, advising experiences, the field of study, instructional language and/or China/Asian experiences?

3.1.2 Hypotheses of the study

In order to explore the research questions listed above in depth, the following specific hypotheses were proposed under each question respectively as expected answers to examine. The hypotheses were derived from the research on the correlative study of domestic and overseas on Chinese students and their communication with foreign teachers.

Hypotheses of the first research question:

1a) Chinese students in Germany express a higher level of communication concerns in one-on-one conversations than in class/group meetings.

1b) Chinese students in China express a higher level of communication concerns in class than in one-on-one conversations.

1c) German teachers express a higher level of concerns regarding the

communication quality of their Chinese students in class/group meetings than in one-on-one conversations.

Hypotheses of the second research question:

2a) Chinese students and German teachers in Germany express different concerns in their communication.

Hypothesis of the third research question:

3a) Chinese students studying in Germany and in China express different concerns in communication with their German teachers.

3b) Supposing that Chinese students in Germany and in China have different communication concerns, the cultural and language circumstance reflect the main differences between them.

Hypotheses of the fourth research question:

4a) Compared to the barriers regarding language and knowledge, Chinese students' concerns are more related to the barriers involving emotion process and perception of communication.

Hypotheses of the fifth research question:

5a) Female Chinese students have a higher level of communication concerns as compared to male Chinese students.

5b) Older Chinese students have a lower level of communication concerns than younger students.

5c) Chinese students who stay longer in Germany have a lower level of communication concerns than recent arrivals.

5d) In terms of the academic degrees involved in this study, namely Bachelor, Master, Ph.D., and Post doctor, Chinese students working on a higher academic degree have a lower level of communication concerns as compared to the students working on a lower academic degree.

5e) Chinese students who have work experience during their studies in Germany express a lower level of communication concerns as compared to those without.

5f) Chinese students majoring in sciences (natural sciences, agriculture, and medicine) and engineering have a lower level communication concerns than those students in the fields of non-sciences (social sciences and humanities).

5g) Chinese students who communicate with German teachers in English language express a lower level of concerns compared to those who communicate in German language with German teachers.

5h) Chinese students living with international roommates (non-Chinese roommates) express fewer communication concerns than those living with non-international roommates¹.

Hypotheses of the sixth research question:

6a) Female and male German teachers express different concerns in communication with their Chinese students.

6b) German teachers who had five or more² Chinese students express a different level of concerns in communication than those who had less than five Chinese students.

6c) German teachers express different concerns depending on their departments in communication with Chinese students

6d) German teachers whose instructional language for Chinese students is English express fewer concerns in communication as compared to those instruct in German.

6e) German teachers who had overseas experiences in China express fewer concerns in communication with Chinese students as compared to those without.

¹ In this study, international roommates refer to non-Chinese students; non-international roommates stand for either (Chinese) family, Chinese roommates, or no roommate.

² According to the previous studies (Wang, 2008a; Wang et al. 2010), the average number of Chinese students that a western teacher/professor instruct is five.

3.2 Research participants

As mentioned in chapter 1 (see section 1.2), the participants participated in the practical investigation of this study were drawn from three populations: Chinese students in Germany, German teachers in Germany, and Chinese students in China. Representatives from each population were sampled respectively while receiving the similar questionnaire with the view of parallel valuing. The questions in the questionnaire for each population are nearly identical apart from the exception of slight modification, in accordance to the specific target population. The parallel sampling survey enables a comparison of the response, among the three target groups in pairs.

One of the target groups of this research is Chinese students, who are native speakers of Chinese born after the “Chinese economic reform³” in 1978 and have studied at a German university. In this research, 132 Chinese students living in the city Giessen in Germany were the main target group. 127 of them were from the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen (JLU), at all the academic levels. Among them, 99 students were studying during the period of survey and 28 of them had graduated from JLU within three years before the survey. In addition, five Chinese students who were studying in Technische Hochschule Hessen (THM), a technical college also located in the city Giessen, also participated in this study.

Since communication is a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, German teachers were selected as another key target research group due to their contributions to the other side of the communication. In this study, German teachers primary refers to teachers who assist Chinese students in course planning, curriculum teaching, experimental instruction, and thesis supervision, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. They gave lectures to Chinese students in German or English. All of the

³ The Chinese economic reform (in Chinese: 改革开放 Gǎigé kāifàng) refers to the policy of reform and opening up both internationally and domestically in the People's Republic of China (PRC) led by Deng Xiaoping in December 1978.

lectures were composed of not only Chinese students but also German and other nationalities.

Furthermore, an additional survey was carried out for identifying potential environmental influence on the intercultural communication between Chinese students and German teachers. The object of this inquiry were the Chinese students, who are also native speakers of Chinese and born after 1978. Those Chinese students studied at Chinese universities and had German teachers during the data collection. Contributing to this study, the data of Chinese students in China was gathered from Nankai University and Tianjin Foreign Studies University.

3.2.1 Chinese students in Germany

As the status of Chinese participants in Germany shown in Table 3.1, 132 Chinese students at all academic levels participated in the survey of this study in the period from September 2012 to May 2014. 99 Chinese students were non-immigrant students enrolled in JLU from the winter semester 2010/2011 to the summer semester 2013. Students wishing to pursue studies in the fields of electrical engineering (EE), mechanical engineering (ME), and industrial engineering were enrolled at the THM, as these programs are not offered at the JLU. Five Chinese students fell into this category. All Chinese participants speak Chinese as the mother tongue and were from mainland China, excluding the two special administrative regions: Macao and Hong Kong⁴. Since the education system of the province of Taiwan is slightly different from mainland China, students from Taiwan province are also not included in this study.

Given that the size of this particular population is relatively small, the author

⁴ Hong Kong and Macau were former British and Portuguese dependencies respectively, transferred to China in 1997 and 1999 pursuant to the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration of 1987 respectively. These two Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China are autonomous territories that fall within the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, yet do not form part of Mainland China. (*Ghai, 2000:92*). Considering the education in Hong Kong and Macau is largely modeled on the western system and foreign language ability of local people is widely popularized, which is different from the situation in Mainland China, the students from these two regions were not included in this study.

invited an additional 28 Chinese students to participate in this study with the help of the Chinese Scholar and Student Association of Giessen (德国吉森华人学生学者联合会). Among them, 16 Chinese students have enrolled between the academic year 2008 to 2010 in JLU and returned to China after their studies. Five Chinese students were one-year exchange students between the academic year 2012 to 2013. All of those Chinese students were invited to participate in this study. Additionally, three Chinese, who finished their studies in JLU less than three years till September 2014 and currently work in Giessen region also agreed to participate in this study.

99 questionnaires were completed on the spot. 33 of the 132 participants were sent the questionnaires per post, of which 28 responded. After the exclusion of four incomplete questionnaires, 123 participants turned out to be the acceptable subjects for this study. Additionally, ten of them volunteered for the follow-up interviews.

Table 3.1: Status of Chinese participants in Germany

Chinese Students in Germany							
Status	Full time study (09.2012- 09.2014)				Completion of studies (till 10.2013)		
Type	JLU			THM	Exchange Program (2012-2013)	Enrolling between 2008- 2010 in JLU	
	BA	MA	Ph.D.	Diplom		in China	in Giessen region
Participants	6	63	30	5	5	20	3
Total	99			5	28		
							Sum: 132
Acceptable	6	60	28	5	5	16	3
Total	94			5	24		
							Sum: 123

3.2.2 Chinese students in China

During the period from May 2012 to August 2012, the author sought out a research trip to China for the purpose of obtaining data of Chinese students studying at Chinese universities. Since the author is a native of Tianjin city and has a rich local knowledge and wide social connections, two Chinese universities located in Tianjin, Nankai University and Tianjin Foreign Studies University, were selected as the samples. 52 Chinese students of these two universities were invited to participate in this survey through friends of the author in Tianjin. In consideration with the nature of this study, all the chosen Chinese students were studying the German Language as a major (taught by German teachers) and at the time of the survey were in the fourth or sixth semester of their undergraduate study, which supports that they had certain experiences of interacting with their German teachers.

As shown in Table 3.2, 22 Chinese students from Nankai University took part in this study, 15 of which responded to the questionnaires in full. Among the acceptable samples, six students were in the fourth semester and nine were in the sixth semester. The German department of the second university, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, has a longer history and grown stronger than Nankai University. From there 30 Chinese students were contacted to participate in the survey. As a result, 27 questionnaires were acceptable, and included 13 students in the fourth semester and 14 students in the sixth semester. Questionnaires of 42 Chinese students in sum considered as acceptable data.

Table 3.2: Status of Chinese participants in China

Chinese students in China (Bachelor, Major of German)						
University	Nankai University			Tianjin Foreign Studies University		
Semester	4. Semester	6. Semester	Total	4. Semester	6. Semester	Total
Participants	9	13	22	15	15	30
Acceptable	6	9	15	13	14	27
Acceptable Sum: 42						

3.2.3 German teachers in Germany

German teachers in this study refer to the teachers who had experiences advising Chinese students, including professors and graduate faculty members, who served additionally as assistants for international students. The duration of the survey of German teachers lasted longer than the survey of Chinese students, which took place from October 2012 to September 2014.

The contact information of German teachers was provided by the Chinese participants in their questionnaires, who were studying at JLU during the survey. All the 44 identified German teachers, 39 professors and five faculty members, were invited by E-mail to the survey and the follow-up interview. 23 responded by returning the questionnaires via e-mail while eleven by post, all of which were completed. In addition, two teachers refused to participate in the survey and the other three did not respond. Therefore, as shown in the following table 3.3, 34 German teachers (30 Professors and four faculty members) turned out to be the qualified participants for this study and among them four professors indicated a willingness to participate in the follow-up interview.

Table 3.3: Status of German teachers at JLU

German teachers at JLU			
	Professors	Faculty members	Sum
Invited	39	5	44
Respond	30	4	34
Acceptable	30	4	34
Interview	4	0	4

3.3 Research methodology and design

By reviewing the previous studies with respect to the intercultural teacher-student communication, as discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2), three assumptions were

acquired and generally supported the conceptual foundation of the current research: (1) students at all academic levels have communication concerns in instructional process with their foreign teachers (Song, 2009; Feezel & Myers, 1997; Bauer, 1992; Staton-Spicer, 1983); (2) lack of language proficiency represent the main barriers of interaction between Chinese students and foreign teachers (Ryan & Slethaug, 2010; Wang, 2010; Zhou, 2009); (3) with the accelerating pace of globalization, cultural diversity and conflict play an increasingly important role in intercultural teaching and communication (Monkhouse et al., 2013; Zhu, 2012; Cho et al., 2011; Liu, 2010; Guan, 2007).

On the base of these three assumptions, as pointed out in chapter 1 (see section 1.2), the contexts of the intercultural communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers were identified in two main instructional settings: (1) communication with the teacher when other people were involved, such as in lectures, in seminars, in group discussions, etc., (2) communication with teachers in one-on-one conversations, such as during office hours. Through tracing the communication difficulties between Chinese students and German teachers in these two teaching situations, the communication concerns identified in relation to the potential culture- and language-based barriers will be further examined.

In order to discover the answers to the research questions, as well as to verify the hypotheses, the following questions were put forward in the first place: Which research method is appropriate for this study? Which questions are to be included in the questionnaire? How can the quality of the interview be increased? How can the validity and reliability of the instruments be proven? The answers to these questions are provided in the sections below.

3.3.1 Research method

This research utilizes a mixed research methodology. Mixing research modes can enable researchers not only to “reach target individuals who are inaccessible via a

single mode” (Fowler, 2002:51), but also “associates both qualitative and quantitative forms” (Crewell, 2003: 4).

In order to address the research questions and test the related hypotheses, self-administrated questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were applied in this study as the main approaches for data collection. Both methods were applied to the three target groups. The participants first received the questionnaire designed specifically for their own group. The data collected from the questionnaires include both quantitative data and qualitative data. Based on the information of voluntary application provided on questionnaires, the interviews candidates were selected. A series of semi-structured interviews was designed as a follow-up to the questionnaire and on-the-spot investigation for the purpose of uncovering more in-depth information and potential causes. The combination of qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis enhances the validity and reliability of this study. A detailed explanation of the data collection process, as well as analysis, will be discussed in the second half of this chapter (see section 3.4).

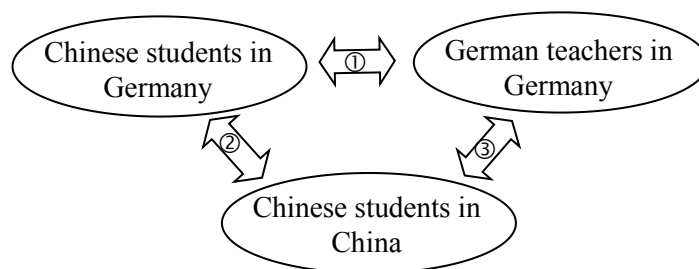


Figure 3.1: Comparative analysis among the three objects

Based on the collected data, three comparative analyses were applied in this study. As shown in Figure 3.1, double-headed arrow ① refers to the comparison of communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers in a mutual situation. Thus, different patterns of communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers can be examined; double-headed arrow ② refers to the comparison of communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany

and in China when they face with the similar communication problems in educational scenes. In this way, the influence of culture ascription and language environment on communication of Chinese students can be observed; double-headed arrow ③ refers that by means of exploring the different concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China, German teachers can receive some useful inspirations with respect to intercultural communication and teaching.

By these means, communication concerns between every two groups can be analyzed comprehensively and the causes of concerns of each target group can be fully explored.

3.3.2 Development of the questionnaires

3.3.2.1 Types of questions

The main structure of the questionnaires used in this study followed that of the study of Staton-Spicer (1983), Feezel and Myers (1997), and Wang (2008a) as reference and its viability has been proved. In consideration of the added new questions and the modifications after the pilot study, it is still necessary to illuminate the constitution of survey questions.

In view of the methods for examining the hypotheses and avoiding the respondents mechanically tick the same choices for all items because of boredom, four different question formats were adopted in the questionnaires, namely, open-ended questions, Categorical questions, Likert-scaled questions, and Multiple-choice questions (the last three formats belong to close-ended question).

Open-ended questions do not have predetermined set of responses and leave room for the respondents to express their opinions in a free-flowing manner, which results in a wide variety of answers in terms of content, length and complexity

(Penwarden, 2013a). Compared with close-end questions, although the responses of open-ended questions may be more difficult to interpret and analyze, open-ended questions can certainly provide more informative and multiple qualitative responses, which is of great importance for descriptive questions of empirical studies. Furthermore, open-ended questions may also play a role in breaking the ice with a survey by letting the respondents express their own opinions about the research question (Ballou, 2008:547f). In this study, open-ended questions were employed in the beginning of the questionnaire for the purpose of gathering individual statements of respondents regarding their communication concerns in different situations, meanwhile arousing their enthusiasm of answering following questions.

Closed-ended questions, on the contrary, give the respondents fixed choices and direct them to choose from supplied answers, including a preference not to reply (Penwarden, 2013a), which enable the data more manageable at the analysis stage. In the questionnaire of this study, three types of close-ended questions were applied, which are single-response questions, Likert-scale questions, and multiple-response questions.

Categorical questions (single-response questions): Each respondent of the survey must fall into exactly one of the possible answers, which can be classified, for a question. This kind of question is defined as categorical question. Given that categorical question may lead to bias because respondents are led by the answers provided by the researcher. In this study, categorical questions were applied for questions of demographic information located in section II of the questionnaire. Since each demographic question existed only one objective answer for the respondents, such as “Your age?”, “What academic level are you working for?”, “Do you work besides your study?”, the suspicion of bias was eliminated.

Likert-scaled questions: when respondents’ attitudes or feelings regarding something are expected to be measured, a Likert-scaled question is considered the appropriate form of the question (e.g. Bowling, 1997; Burns & Grove, 2004). A

Likert-type scale assumes that the strength or intensity of experience is linear and that attitudes can be measured (McLeod, 2008a). For instance, as a linear measurement of agreement, “strongly disagree” states at one end of the scale while at the other end shows “strongly agree”, in the middle part of the scale lists “disagree”, “unconcerned” and “agree” representing as the progressive attitude. The respondents must indicate how closely their feelings about the question match one of the offered responses on a rating scale.

In this study, the Likert-scaled questions were applied in sections III and IV in order to measure the given communication concerns of the respondents in two communication situations. Instead of giving a simple answer as yes/no, the respondents needed to choose one of the coded numbers, representing the frequency degree of concern, namely “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often” and “always” a concern, to indicate the researcher their level of concern in relation to the given communication scenarios. The quantitative data gathered from these two sections were classified in concern categories for further statistical analysis.

Categorical questions (multiple-response questions): Respondents can choose any of the answers, which match(s) their own responses, among the given multiple-choice options (Cox & Kohler, 2011). The number of multiple choices is normally finite, according to the instruction of the question, and the respondents can choose one or more answers.

In this study, five multiple-response questions were applied in section V of questionnaire. The topic of each multiple-response item referred to one of the common communication problems of the respondents, while the options of each item were the possible reasons for the question. The respondents were indicated to select the appropriate answer or answers that match they feel the most among all the possible options. Multiple-response questions were applied in this section with the purpose of reducing the difficulty of understanding by the means of sorting out

complicated responses into ordered categories. In this way, the data can be administered and analyzed efficiently.

3.3.2.2 Structure and content of the questionnaires

As mentioned in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.2), the 15 items of the communication concerns model developed originally by Staton-Speicer (1983), which were also adapted and applied in the studies of Bauer (1992), Feezel and Myers (1997), Wang (2008a), and Cho et al. (2011), were expanded and revised in this study in order to be appropriate for the present participants. In general, the revision involved five changes:

- (1) wording changes to be suitable for the communication of Chinese students, as well as to sharpen the conceptual distinctions of self, task, and impact concerns;
- (2) considering the differences of the communication situation between students and teachers, items in terms of role conflicts of teachers were removed from the current questionnaires;
- (3) adding five items to examine the concerns regarding the knowledge proficiency of students, three of which took into consideration the language-based barriers and two task items concerning the emotional verbal process;
- (4) modifying two language-related items to be knowledge-related items in order to balance the size of each domain;
- (5) converting the original 7-Likert-Scale to 5-Likert-Scale by indicating the extent of concerns from **never** a concern to **rarely, sometimes, often** and **always** a concern of responders.

The detailed structure and the content of the questionnaire of each target group are shown in this section:

Questionnaires for Chinese students in Germany and in China

As shown in Table 3.4, the layout of the questionnaires for Chinese students (both in Germany and in China) of this study includes seven parts in total: (1) an introduction to this study and the questionnaire, (2) eight nominal-level questions regarding individual background information, (3) open-ended questions of three topics in relation to their communication concerns with German teachers in two instructional settings, (4) 16 questions based on a 5-Likert-Scale in regard to communication concerns in class, (5) 22 questions according to a 5-Likert-Scale in regard to communication concerns in one-on-one conversations, (6) five multiple-choice questions with each contains five answer options and one open-ended option for observing the potential reasons of the common concerns and, (7) an inquiry for the contact information of their German teachers as well as an invitation letter for the follow-up interview.

Table 3.4: Structure of the questionnaires for Chinese students

Structure of the questionnaires for Chinese students	
An introduction letter	
Section I:	Personal background information
Section II:	Individual statements for communication concerns in different instructional situations
Section III:	Communication concerns in class
Section IV:	Communication concerns in one-on-one conversations
Section V:	Potential causes for five common communication concerns
An inquiry for the contact information of German teachers	
An invitation for the follow-up interview	

- *Letter of introduction*

An introduction will set the tone the following survey. Without providing the correct information, the potential respondents may feel uncomfortable or suspicious of the study. Therefore, a good introduction of the survey acts as the hook to keep

respondents (Penwarden, 2013b).

In order to attract the interest of the respondents, in the foreword to the questionnaire, an introduction letter is provided, which includes the following components: (1) a thank-you statement, (2) the purpose of the study, (3) selection of the participants, (4) assurance of confidentiality, (5) the expected time to complete the survey, (6) how to return a questionnaire, (7) the contact information of the researcher and (8) acknowledgment. The information stated in this introduction letter gave the responders a general idea of the survey, made them feel valuable to the study, enabled trust between them and the researcher and, the most important, encourage their honest and truthful survey answers.

- ***Section I: Personal background information***

In the first section of the questionnaires are eight nominal-level questions concerning background information of the participants and their learning experiences. Those questions include their gender, age, length of residence in Germany, current academic level, type of financial aid they have had, the field of study, the language of instruction and whether they had a job during their studies.

The data gathered from this section provided a clear overview of background information of all participants. The obtained information also contributed to explore the potential influence of personal factors on communication by conducting statistical comparisons based on demographic categories. The data acquired in this section were conducive to answer the fifth and sixth research questions, which will be discussed in chapter 5.

- ***Section II: Statement of individual communication concerns***

The second section of the questionnaires consists of three main topics in relation to personal experiences of perceiving concerns in communication. Each topic contains two or three open-ended questions. The open-ended questions, which are shown in the

front section of the questionnaire, play a role in sparking the imagination of participants, evoking their memories of individual communication concerns, and arousing their motivation of participation.

The first and second topics elicit communication concerns in different instructional situations, namely in class and in one-on-one conversations. The instruction to each question offered a general explanation of each topic and guided the responders to write their answers. These two questions drew on the questions in the questionnaire designed by Staton-Spicer and Bassett (1979), which was originally stated as “When you think about your teaching and communication, what are your concerns?” (Staton-Spicer & Bassett 1979:140). In view of the target research groups of this study, the original questions were modified as: “Please think about the situations when you talk to your German teacher(s) in class/group meeting or during your one-on-one conversations. What are your concerns about the communication? What are your worries during the interactions? What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns?” These leading questions inspired the responders to recall their own communication experiences so that to state personal opinions as much as possible.

The third topic, including three open-ended questions, was newly developed for this study. Since all the Chinese participants had studied at Chinese universities before their studies in Germany, these questions inquired about the differences between their communication with their Chinese and German teachers. In this way, it was possible to probe into the potential role that cultural background and language atmosphere played in their communication. The guiding introduction defined as: “Please think of your concerns and worries when you talk to your previous Chinese teachers in China compared to when you talk to your German teachers in Germany. What are the differences between talking to Chinese and German teachers, regarding your feeling, approach to dialogue and worries? Why do these differences appear to you?”

With sufficient space reserved in the questionnaire, the respondents could

freely write down their statements for each question. Responses to each question were analyzed qualitatively by means of a content analysis (Holsti, 1969; Klaus, 2013; Riff, Lacy & Fico, 2014.), which applied to the first, second, and third research questions of this study.

- *Section III and IV: Communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations*

The third section and fourth section are comprised of 38 items in total with respect to the communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations. Section III (No. 1 - No. 16) lists the communication concerns occurred during lectures/in group meetings, while section IV (No. 17 - No. 38) shows the concerns in one-on-one conversations.

The primary idea of the items in these two sections were derived from the communication concerns model of Staton-Spicer and Bassett (1979) and the correlated items applied in the study of Station-Spicer (1983), which were introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.2). Based on the studies of Staton-Spicer, Bauer (1992) and Feezel and Myers (2009) further completed the types of concerns and refined the dimension of concerns categories. Wang (2008a) also enlarged the items of this model and placed emphasis more on the communication concerns of students than that of teachers by using this model. The present questionnaire recomposed and incorporated all the items applied in the noted previous studies into the contents of section III and section IV.

To be specific, the items in section III and section IV consist of nine items applied in the study of Staton-Spicer and Bassett (1979) (No.1/No.17, No.2/No.18, No.11, No.14/No.35, No.19 and No.20), two items adapted from Bauer's (1992) study (No.6 and No.27), and 17 items developed in the survey of Wang (2008a) (No.3, No.4/No.25, No.7/No.28, No.8/No.29, No.10/No.30, No.12, No.13/No.33, No.21, No.22, No.24, No.31 and No.34). Considering a part of the items were originally

designed for the investigation of teachers, all items were rephrased in order to fit each target group of the present study. Besides the items adapted from previous studies, the remaining ten items in section III and section IV, (No.5/No.26, No.9, No.15, No.16, No.23, No.32, No.36, No.37 and No.38), were developed by the author in accordance to personal experiences, as well as opinions collected in the pilot study. The newly-developed items were revised, reworded, or rearranged in accordance to the responses of the questionnaire in the pilot study (see section 3.5.1) before eventually put into use.

In order to be convenient and efficient for the subsequent data analysis, all items in section III and section IV can be reclassified into the dual classification of communication concerns and barriers pointed out in chapter 2 (see sections 2.1.2.2 and 2.2.3). Namely, each item either belongs to one of the three communication concerns categories (self, task and impact) developed and defined by Staton-Spicer and Bassett (1979), or can be categorized into one of the potential communication barriers (barriers of language, knowledge, emotion, and perception). More specifically, according to the category of communication concerns, the *Self* category includes 13 items (No.1, No.2, No.3, No.15, No.17, No.18, No.19, No.20, No.21, No.22, No.24, No.37, and No.38), the *Task* category covers 16 items (No.4, No.6, No.7, No.8, No.9, No.10, No.11, No.12, No.16, No.25, No.27, No.28, No.29, No.30, No.31, and No.32), and nine items (No.5, No.13, No.14, No.23, No.26, No.33, No.34, No.35, and No.36) belongs to the *Impact* category.

In addition, the items in these two sections can be also regrouped into four main categories with respect to the potential communication barriers from the perspectives of language competence, emotional barriers, perceptual barriers⁵, and academic knowledge. This classification of barriers in communication is helpful to explore the degree of interaction and correlation between superficial phenomenon (communication concerns) and contribution factors (potential communication

⁵ The distinction between emotional and perceptual communication barriers in this study is discussed in section 3.5.1 (3).

barriers). Firstly, the communication barriers relating to language ability were divided into two subcategories: listening (four items: No.4, No.11, No.12, and No.25) and speaking (seven items: No.6, No.9, No.10, No.13, No.27, No.30, and No.33). Secondly, communication barriers belonged to the emotional context were further separated as verbal process-related issues (six items: No.2, No.7, No.18, No.20, No.24, and No.28) or nonverbal process-related issues (four items: No.3, No.23, No.31, and No.32). Thirdly, twelve items (No.1, No. 8, No. 14, No.17, No.19, No.21, No.22, No. 29, No.34, No. 35, No.36, and No.37) described the communication barriers within the perceptual context, in which way the communication concerns were interpreted through the senses of participants. Finally, five items (No.5, No.15, No.16, No.26, and No.38) pointed out the communication barriers on account of a lack of academic knowledge. Appendix A presents a summary of the two-fold categorization of each item from section III and section IV.

Other than the 7-point quantity of concern scale used in previous studies, the responses to each item were arranged on a 5-point scale in the Likert format, including 1-never a concern, 2-rarely a concern, 3-sometimes a concern, 4-often a concern, 5-always a concern. The participants indicated the extent to the designated communication concerns in terms of their own experiences. The quantitative data collected in section III and section IV contributed to addressing all the research questions.

Moreover, the items in these two sections for Chinese students in China were essentially the same as the items designed for Chinese students in Germany. The only changes were minor and were enforced in order to adapt the communication condition at Chinese universities.

- Section V: Potential causes of communication concerns

In the fifth section of the questionnaire were five multiple-response questions. These questions were designed for the purpose of identifying the potential reasons for

communication difficulties of Chinese students during interacting with German teachers. The first, second, and third questions referred to the study of Wang (2008a). They considered international students in America as the research object and investigated the communication ability and problems of these students. In view of the common characteristics of intercultural communication, a part of the questions used in Wang's (2008a) surveys were also appropriate for the present study, which was used to form the first three questions in this section. The last two questions and the corresponding response categories were derived from the comments obtained in the pilot study, as well as from the personal experience of the author.

Specifically, the contents of these five questions were chosen according to the main communication difficulties of Chinese students discovered in the previous studies (see section 2.2.3) and the concerns indicated by the Chinese students in the pilot study. These difficulties were related to understanding and expressing one's own ideas, remaining silent, avoiding asking questions, and engaging negatively in class. Each question contained five response options according to the possible causes of *language* (e.g. unfamiliar vocabularies, the length of sentences of lectures, rate of speech), *knowledge* (e.g. unfamiliar with the content of lecture, no interest in the lecture), *emotion* (e.g. too shy to ask, teacher's negative impression of surveyed students), and *perception* (e.g. respect the authority of teacher, behave in terms of the traditional role of Chinese students). Furthermore, given numerous possible alternative causes, each question includes also one open-ended item for observing the potential causes that were not mentioned in the existing options. The results of this section afforded a basis for answering the first, second, and third research questions.

- *Additional information*

At the end of the questionnaire, two invitation sheets were attached to the questionnaire. These two sheets were written on a separate sheet of paper in order to be removed from the questionnaire easily. The subjects were also informed in the introduction of each sheet that this page would be removed prior to the analysis of

their responses to the questionnaire. In this way, the anonymity of the participants can be protected.

One of the sheets was a short letter for inquiring about the contact information of the German teachers. By this means, those German teachers who had/have been supervising Chinese students can be located quickly and accurately, which improved the efficiency of data collection. An additional sheet was included with a written invitation letter, inviting the questionnaire respondents to participate in follow-up interviews. They were informed that the interview required approximately 30-minutes and their personal information would be protected. If they were willing to participate, they could fill out the sheet with their personal information (name, department, e-mail, phone number, and a convenient time to call) for future contact.

Questionnaire for German teachers

With the purpose to enable a comparative analysis, the questionnaire for German teachers was developed based on the similar structure and content as the questionnaire for Chinese students, except for slight modifications. For instance, the personal background questions consisted of gender, nationality, native language, the field of study, the language of instruction, and experience of advising Chinese students. Furthermore, most of the items and correlative response options were rephrased in order to accommodate the perspective of teachers. For example, one question for Chinese students described as “I am afraid to express my dissatisfaction/request to my teacher in class.” Correspondingly, this question stated for German teachers as “I am concerned that my Chinese student(s) are unable to express their dissatisfaction with the course to me.” Thereby, the teachers were reminded that the questions in the questionnaire focused on their Chinese students’ interaction with them, instead of the concerns regarding their own communication with Chinese students. The data collected from the German teachers’ questionnaire contributed to the conducting of a comparative analysis with the data acquired from students’ questionnaire, and further helped in answering the first, second, third, fourth, and sixth research questions.

3.3.2.3 Questionnaire structure related to research questions

In total, three versions of questionnaires were employed in this study. Each version of the questionnaire contains similar questions according to different research objects in order to conduct comparative analysis among their data. Table 3.5 presents a general structure of the questionnaires applied in this study, displaying the content, types of questions, types of obtained data, analysis methods, and the corresponding research questions of each section. The structures of each section are described below:

Table 3.5: Structure of the questionnaires

Structure of the questionnaires					
	Section I	Section II	Section III	Section IV	Section V
Content	Background information	Communication concerns statements (in class/out of class; in Germany/in China)	Communication concerns during lectures/in class/in group meeting	Communication concerns in one-on-one conversations	Reasons for common communication problems
Question types	Single choice	Open-ended	5-Likert-Scale	5-Likert-Scale	Multiple choice & Open-ended
Date types	Quantitative	Qualitative	Quantitative	Quantitative	Qualitative & Quantitative
Analysis methods	SPSS & Microsoft-Excel	MAXQDA & content analysis	SPSS & Microsoft-Excel	SPSS & Microsoft-Excel	SPSS & Microsoft-Excel
Research questions	RQ5, RQ6	RQ1-RQ3	RQ1- RQ6	RQ1- RQ6	RQ1-RQ3

Section I contains eight single choice questions regarding personal background information. The quantitative data collected in this section were devoted to inspect the relations between communication concerns and different demographic variables, which correlated to the fifth and sixth research questions (RQ5, RQ6).

Section II includes three open-ended questions for the purpose of drawing

forth the major communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers in different educational settings. The qualitative data obtained from this section contributed to answering the first, second, and third research questions (RQ1-RQ3).

Section III and **section IV** are established of 38 questions based on a 5-point Likert scale, 16 questions in section III and 22 questions in section IV, respectively. Section III describes the performance of communication concerns during lectures, while section IV shows the worries of communication in one-on-one conversations between Chinese students and German teachers. By comparing the quantitative data provided by these two sections, the features of communication concerns among different groups were analyzed. The data contributed to addressing all research questions of this study (RQ1- RQ6).

In **section V**, the frequently occurring concerns in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers were expressed in five multiple choice questions. Considering that the existing answers may be not comprehensive, an open-ended answer option offered the participants the opportunity to state their own reasons. Two types of data, namely qualitative and quantitative data, were obtained from this section. The first, second, and third research questions were partly solved by the data obtained in this section (RQ1-RQ3).

3.3.3 Semi-structured interview

A series of follow-up interviews was conducted with both Chinese students and German teachers after the questionnaires were returned. The interview participants were drawn from those who volunteered to participate by indicating so at the end of their returned questionnaires. With the provided personal contact information, all interviews were preceded by E-mail or telephone contact, in order to confirm their participation and determine the date and time of the interview.

A modified interview format, which was developed based on the general interview guide approach of Patton (1990), listed a sequence of questions and topics to be studied beforehand as a general outline, which still persisted the process flexibility according to the actual conditions of interviews. In order to ensure that all the prepared questions and relevant topics were covered during the course of each interview, an interview protocol was applied. The protocol served as a checklist, which kept the interview on track and organized, but nevertheless, allowed for the addition of any individual comments or viewpoints. Every interview candidate had been informed in advance that the interview process would be recorded. All interviewees, which included ten Chinese students and four German teachers, agreed to record the interview contents into a digital format.

The information gathered in the interviews served to confirm and clarify the communication concerns addressed in the questionnaires and, furthermore, to shed light on additional communication concerns or worries, that emerged during the interviews.

3.3.3.1 Interview with Chinese students

15 Chinese students from JLU agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. Given that Ph.D. and Master students have more experiences regarding communication with teachers than Bachelor students, five Ph.D. students and five Master students were chosen as the interview participants. All of them had been in Germany over two years and had communication experiences with German teachers. Additionally, some background information of the students, such as the language of instruction (English and German), financial support (scholarship and self-funded student), subjects (natural science and social science), student identities (exchange and degree students) and gender (female and male), were taken into consideration when choosing the interview participants as well. In order to encourage interviewees to talk freely without any concerns of language expression, all interviews of Chinese students were

administered in their mother tongue, Mandarin, so that their answers to each question could be articulately and explicitly captured (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). The results were firstly transcribed verbatim in Chinese then translated into English for data analysis.

All of the Chinese interviewees were approached personally by telephone contact before the interview for the function of informing them of the purpose of this study and the interview procedures. The time and place of the interviews were scheduled by the interviewee according to their preference and convenience. For the purpose of minimizing the disturbance during the interview and protecting the privacy of interviewees, interviews were carried out either in researcher's office or in separate zones for group-discussion in a library of JLU. The length of each interview was divers according to the different interviewees. One hour appeared as the longest interview, while 30 minutes as the shortest interview. All the designed questions were covered regardless of the length of the interview.

The framework of the interview for the Chinese students was divided into three main sections: an introduction of the study, a discussion of the content questions, and a conclusion. Appendix E presents the outline of interviews for Chinese students.

All interviews began with an introduction, consisting of a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and an inquiry of interviewees' permission for recording the interview content. Afterwards, the interviewee was requested to give a short self-introduction regarding demographic information and educational background.

The main section of the interview was made up a series of questions concerning the communication between Chinese students and their German teachers, particularly the communication concerns or worries from Chinese students' point of view. For instance, their main concerns during the interaction with German teachers, concerns resulted from language- or culture-based reasons, how to solve the communication problems, etc. The communication concerns were further divided into two educational

situations, namely in class and in one-on-one conversations, with the purpose of exploring communication concerns that may exist in the specific communication situation. Most of the questions were phrased as open-ended questions in broad terms, aiming at evoking unrestricted responses and different perspectives of Chinese students. Their responses and opinions, furthermore, served as a basis for the more detailed follow-up questions, which helped to either generate explanations of written responses on the questionnaire or elaborate deeper doubts of the researcher. A future-oriented question placed as the last question in this section. According to their personal experiences, interviewees were asked to give some advice to the prospective Chinese students who plan to study in Germany in the future with respect to how to communicate with German teachers effectively.

As a conclusion, the researcher expressed the appreciation to each participant for their cooperation and provided personal contact information for any further questions of the participants regarding the procedure and content of their interview.

3.3.3.2 Interview with German teachers

Among the German teachers who replied the questionnaires, four German teachers from different research fields expressed a willingness to take part in the follow-up interview via E-mail contacts. Since this dissertation was planned to be written in English and all of the participated professors have a good command of English, the main process of interviews were conducted in English for the purpose to avoid the possible inaccuracy of translation. With the permission of the teachers, interviews were conducted in their respective offices and each interview process was recorded by the author. The average length of the interview was 45 minutes.

On basis of the similar interview approach of the Chinese students, the framework of interviews for German teachers consisted of three main sections as well, containing an introduction to the purpose of this study, a series of content questions,

and a final conclusion, which is listed in Appendix F. Apart from the section of content questions, each section was conducted in a similar way to the interviews of Chinese students. The content questions for German teachers were designed based on the following considerations:

Most of the questions were closely correlated and mutually corresponded to the interview questions designed for Chinese students. For example, the questions for Chinese students were expressed as *“Can you always express what you want to say clearly? If not, what is the major concern of you?”* The questions for German teachers were presented as *“Do you always understand what your Chinese students want to express? If not, what concerns you most?”* In addition, some questions for German teachers were designed based on the concerns mentioned by Chinese students in their interview. For example, a question of Chinese students was stated as *“How would my German teacher think of me when I stay quiet in class?”* Corresponding, the question to German teachers was displayed as *“What do you think of Chinese students if they stay quiet in your class?”* This method of questioning enabled the researcher to conduct a comparative analysis of communication concerns between German teachers and Chinese students in similar communication settings.

Finally, during the interview there were also some questions designed from the perspective of German teachers regardless of the influence of Chinese students' comments. These questions derived either from the observation of the researcher or from comments in the questionnaires of German teachers. For instance, questions such as, *“What is your general impression about Chinese students in your class?”* and *“What are your major concerns when talking with your Chinese students?”* etc., aimed to acquire a personal unique point of view of the topics.

3.4 Research procedure

3.4.1 Data collection

3.4.1.1 Administration of the questionnaires

The questionnaires applied in this study were designed in two languages according to the different research groups. Properly completed questionnaires were collected on the spot, via E-mail, or via mail. The administration process of the questionnaire of each research group is introduced in this section, respectively.

(1) The questionnaire of Chinese students in China

In order to discover the differences of the communication concerns between Chinese students studying in Germany and in China, the author performed fieldwork for the duration of three months from June 2012 to August 2012 in China. Nankai University and Tianjin Foreign Studies University, both located in the Chinese city of Tianjin, were chosen as the experimental universities.

With the assistance of acquaintance living in Tianjin, the author accessed the opportunity to get in touch with two Chinese students from Nankai University and one student from Tianjin Foreign Studies University. All three students, who were considered as representatives, majored in German and were instructed by German teachers in China. A total of 80 survey packets were firstly handed over to the three representatives, 40 for each university. The representatives were instructed to forward the rest of the questionnaires to their classmates. Each survey packet contained an introduction letter of this research, one questionnaire, and one empty envelop for sealing up the completed questionnaire. All the participants were free to choose whether they completed the questionnaire as publicly with a signature or anonymously.

The process of the questionnaire recovery lasted a duration of four weeks. In the interim, the author inquired about the progress regularly at both universities and collected completed questionnaires weekly. Four weeks later, 52 questionnaires in total were obtained, in which 22 were collected from Nankai University and 30 were collected from Tianjin Foreign Studies University. After undergoing a rigorous screening, 42 questionnaires qualified for the final data analysis.

Moreover, the author had first planned to conduct a survey (questionnaire and interview) together with the German teachers, who worked at these two Chinese universities. Unfortunately, each university had only one or two German teachers. Additionally, it was the summer holidays of Chinese universities during the author's research stay in China. Neither the quantity nor the time was beneficial to implement such an investigation, which in the end led to the abandonment of this plan.

(2) The questionnaire of Chinese students in Germany

With the help of the Chinese Scholar and Student Association of Giessen (德国吉森华人学生学者联合会), the author invited 132 Chinese students, who were studying or had studied in the German city of Giessen at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen or Technische Hochschule Hessen, to participate in this study. Survey packets were distributed to the selected 132 participants between September 2012 and May 2014. The author contacted 120 students personally on the spot, who were still studying during the survey, and provided them a survey packet. Each survey packet contained one copy of the questionnaire for Chinese students together with a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Considering 28 participants who enrolled between 2008 and 2010 in JLU and had already graduated from JLU during the survey, they were contacted via E-mail for distributing the questionnaire. Each questionnaire was coded with a number only known to the author as the record number. One week after each questionnaire was distributed, the author contacted those participants who had not yet responded to encourage them to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible.

The returned questionnaires were screened in order to identify whether questionnaires were complete and if the responses could be qualified. Of the 132 returned questionnaires from Chinese students in Germany, five of them did not complete items in the questionnaire, and four respondents indicated that they were instructed by non-German teachers. The unqualified questionnaires were excluded from the final analysis, while the remaining questionnaires constituted the sample for this study. Therefore, the sample was reduced to 123 acceptable questionnaires, from which 44 German teachers were identified.

At this time, the code numbers were erased from the questionnaires to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, after the demographic information was copied, the page on which the respondents indicated their willingness to participate in the interview was also removed for the purpose of future interview sampling.

(3) The questionnaire of German teachers in Germany

Survey packets for German teachers were distributed to the 44 teachers between October 2012 and October 2014 through their E-mail address, which were acquired from the last page of their Chinese students' questionnaire. Each E-mail included one copy of the questionnaire for teachers and an introduction letter as the body of the E-mail. One week after the initial sending of E-mails, a follow-up E-mail containing a new survey packet was sent as a reminder to those teachers, who had not yet returned the questionnaire.

Altogether, 40 questionnaires were returned by December 2014, 29 of them were received after the first contact, while the rest of the questionnaires had to be withdrawn, due to not responding even after sending a reminder by e-mail. Among the 40 teachers, one professor was not a German citizen, three indicated that they had not had any experiences advising Chinese students, and two professors stated that they did not have time to complete the questionnaire. The remaining 34 questionnaires

constituted as the sample for the target group of German teachers. All teachers were also invited to a follow-up interview. Four professors finally accepted the invitation and confirmed the date for an interview.

(4) Pro and cons of data collection

This study involved Chinese students and German teachers in Germany with the purpose to thoroughly explore their concerns and problems in communication from the perspective of both sides. In addition, in order to optimize the deficiencies of previous studies mentioned in chapter 1 (see section 1.1), Chinese students in China were also included in the study. By comparing the concerns expressed by Chinese students in China and in Germany, the changes of Chinese students in communication with German teachers can be revealed and the causes of their concerns can be better discovered.

Nevertheless, two shortcomings discovered in the process of sample selection need to be noticed. On the one hand, given the financial and time constraints, the author expected to identify the German teachers in Germany more accurately and comprehensively through their Chinese students. In fact, this identification method has not completely yielded the desired result. Based on the returned questionnaires of Chinese students, many of them refused to provide the contact information of their German teachers by showing their reluctance. Especially, some of the students still expressed their worry about their anonymity even after the confidential guarantee of their data by the author. This situation happened mostly with the students who were the only Chinese student of their German teachers. They were worried that their German teachers would find out easily which student provided the information. Therefore, it was more likely that these students had serious communication problems with their teachers and did not dare to be involved in this research. On the other hand, according to the low response rate of German teachers, a self-selection bias has appeared evidently in this study. On the basis of the data obtained from German teachers, it was not difficult to find out that those teachers who did participate in this

study and responded actively to the invitation of the author were more likely to care about the communication with their Chinese students. As a result, their responses tended to be student-centered and culturally appropriate. Accordingly, the responses of their Chinese students also showed positively.

3.4.1.2 Conduct of interviews

According to the response on the last page of the questionnaires, the demographic information of the respondents, who expressed their interest in participating in follow-up interviews, were recorded in a list. 15 Chinese students (two Bachelor students, six Master students, and seven Ph.D. students) and four German teachers from JLU were listed. Following the purposive sampling strategies of (Tongco, 2007), as well as according to the actual conditions of the interview candidates, the diversification of samples and the balance in demographic characteristics were both taken into consideration. Finally, ten Chinese students and four German teachers were selected as the interviewees. Particularly, the ten Chinese students consisted of two Bachelor students, four Master students, and four Ph.D. students. They involved ten professional disciplines, which ensured the diversity of samples.

More specifically, those selected Chinese students were contacted via telephone and invited to participate in the interview. If the student declined the invitation, a new name on the interviewee list was drawn as an alternate subject. 14 Chinese participants from the list were contacted and ten of them agreed to participate in the interview. Meanwhile, together with the survey packet, an invitation of the interview was distributed to German teachers as well. Two German teachers expressed their interest in the follow-up interview and agreed upon the interview date. In view of the insufficient sample quantity, the author contacted another two German teachers in person through the introduction of two Chinese Ph.D. students, and finally received the approval of these two German teachers for participating in the interview.

Seven of the interviews with Chinese students were held in the author's office

on campus and the rest of interviews were conducted in a separated room in the library to assure the quality of the recording and the privacy of the participants. In accordance with the requirements of Chinese interviewees, all the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and then translated into English by the author for data analysis. The interviews with German teachers were conducted in their own offices on campus. The average duration of the interviews with Chinese students was 43 minutes (the longest was 58 minutes and the shortest was 34 minutes), whereas the duration of the interviews with German teachers ranged from 40 minutes to 65 minutes.

Before each interview started, the author obtained prior permission of the interviewee for recording the interview process. After that, the interview opened with the greeting to the interviewee and then carried out on the basis of the interview framework (Appendix E for Chinese students and Appendix F for German teachers). In order to cover all of the main questions prepared by the author and to control the pace of the interview, each interview question was categorized into different topic sections and listed on an index card, which ensured that the interview proceeded as conversational, flexible, and natural as possible. The data gathered from the interviews resorted to the qualitative data analysis of this study.

3.4.2 Data analysis

After the data was collected, quantitative and qualitative analysis were applied to different sections according to the different types of data. Specifically, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were subjected to the descriptive statistical analysis (see section 3.4.2.1), and the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and open-ended questions in the questionnaires were analyzed based on Klaus' (2013) method of qualitative content analysis (see section 3.4.2.2). The procedure of data analysis will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.4.2.1 Quantitative data analysis

The quantitative data in this study were collected from section I, section III, section IV, and section V of the questionnaires.

After the questionnaires returned, the demographic data of the three subjects groups (Chinese students and German teachers in Germany, and Chinese students in China) in section I were calculated on the basis of the items in percentage for providing a description of the samples. Moreover, to explore the relationship between communication concerns and the demographic characteristics of the subjects, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to detect whether significant relationships existed between two or more group means. For this purpose, the perceived degree of communication concerns as the dependent variable, while the relevant demographic characteristics of subjects, such as gender, the length of residence, and the field of study etc., were treated as independent variables with the aim to validate the hypotheses of the fifth and sixth research questions.

The data obtained from section III and section IV of the questionnaires were analyzed with the aid of the statistical program, SPSS Statistics version 19.0 and Microsoft Excel 2013. First of all, the data from these two sections were classified according to the three concerns categories (self, task, and impact) based on the communication concerns model introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.2) and then subdivided into the four types of communication barriers (language, knowledge, emotion, and perception). Appendix A illustrates the detailed concern categories of the items in sections III and IV of the questionnaires. In order to find out the function of different concerns and barriers in communication, the main statistical functions of SPSS, such as frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages were utilized to calculate the data of each subject group. Additionally, all the responses in line with the four categories of barriers in these two sections were analyzed by a series of t-tests in order to examine the relationship between communication concerns identified in two instructional settings and each type of barriers. By this case, the mean score of

each subject group was firstly compared to ascertain whether significant differences existed among them. Subsequently, the level of confidence was set as 0.5 for determining whether differences noted were real or attributable to chance.

The quantitative data gathered from the multiple answers in section V of the questionnaires were firstly submitted to the frequency count. According to the frequency distribution of the response items, which represented the potential reasons for the existing communication concerns, the items with the highest frequency were selected as a basis for the further exploration in the follow-up interview sessions. Additionally, a comparison analysis was conducted between Chinese students and German teachers. Since each question and its response items were designed based on the similar content and were slightly modified correspondingly for each specific group. The responses of each group enabled the author to conduct a parallel comparison and to find out the difference among the three groups.

3.4.2.2 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data in this study were obtained from the statements of open-ended questions in the questionnaires, as well as the follow-up interviews. In addition to the quantitative data, which provided objective data for examining the communication concerns, the qualitative data was used as another approach to explore the concerns beyond the questionnaire items.

(1) Data from open-ended questions in the questionnaires

Specifically, the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires involved two parts: the self-reported statements in section II, and the self-stated reasons in section V. All of the data were processed by following a three-step approach.

To begin with, considering the diversity of the self-reported responses, all the hand-written statements in the questionnaires were read through in order to obtain

maximum familiarity with the data contents and the various communication issues mentioned in the statements.

Each concerns statement was categorized according to the key communication problems reflected in the responses and was marked with two codes based on a two-fold classification system. Figure 3.2 presents the main structure of the classification system. As introduced in chapter 2 (see sections 2.1.2.2 and 2.2.3), the first code stood for one of the three categories of concerns: a communication concern caused by self (S), a communication concern existed because of the task (T) of communicating, or the impact (I) that the concerns of communicator upon others. The four categories of the potential communication barriers composed of the second code: whether a statement referred to language (L) ability regarding listening and speaking, to academic knowledge (K) insufficiency, to the verbal or non-verbal behaviors related to personal emotion (E) deriving from one's mood or relationships with others, or to personal perceptions (P) to become aware of something through the sense. Additionally, as introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3), language- and knowledge-related barriers belong to the category of personal capacity-based barriers and culture-based barriers⁶ are primarily reflected on emotional and perceptual activities.

In the end, all the sorted data were computerized and further processed by the software MAXQDA. Each concern or reason was placed into categories that reflected one single theme. After that, the frequency of the occurrence of the key concerns and the reasons for communication difficulties was counted for each subject group. Based on the records, the major communication concerns and the existing reasons for communication problems of each group could be compared and analyzed.

Taking a statement as an example, the code for the response of one Chinese student, *“sometimes I feel difficult to engage in the discussion in class. I have no idea about the cultural background of the topic that other German students talk about*

⁶ The difference between culture-based emotional and perceptual barriers is discussed in section 3.5.1 (3).

(CSGQ04)”, is TP. This concern of communication was about the task of communication (“cannot engage in the class discussion”) and reason of this communication barrier was individual perception about the lack of the corresponding culture understanding (“I have no idea about the cultural background of the topic”). Therefore, the code shows as TP.

Concerns	Potential Barriers
Self	Capacity-based { Language { Listening Speaking Academic Knowledge
Task	
Impact	Culture-based { Emotion { Verbal process Nonverbal process Perception effect

Figure 3.2: The two-fold classification system

Moreover, the self-reported statements collected from the open-ended option of each item in section V were classified first under the common themes, and then supplied as the supplemental results for the communication problems listed in this section.

The whole process of selection and classification were in strict accordance with the criteria that “categories should reflect the purposes of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, independent, and be derived from a single classification system” (Holsti, 1969:101, in Riff, Lacy & Fico, 2014: 63). On the basis of the nature of the statements, the responses that did not fit into the established categories of concerns were either employed as new categories or served as reasons for the communication difficulties.

(2) Data from interviews

Interviews of Chinese students and German teachers were conducted by following the interview log developed by the author, which included the key information

(demographic information of participants, leading questions, estimated process, etc.) and helped to capture the essence of the interview responses. Ten Chinese students and four German teachers participated in the follow-up interview. The interviews were recorded by applying a recording device.

The audio data recorded from interviews were transcribed in separate documents for different interviewees by using the demographic information as the title of each file. In each file, the audio record was listed according to the interview log. In order to make sure that the essence of the interview responses was adequately captured, the information of each document was verified at least three times by listening to the recorded interview playback. The input data were subjected to the similar coding procedure applied for the qualitative responses gathered in the questionnaires.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Considering as the fundamental cornerstones of the scientific method, reliability and validity of the survey instrument were enforced to ensure the high quality of the research.

Reliability refers to “the degree to which the measure is consistent” (Oppenheim, 1992:189), that is, “any significant results must be more than a one-off find and be inherently repeatable” (Shuttleworth, 2008), which deemed as a precondition to validity. Therefore, reliability, or to say self-consistency, is never perfect; “it is always a matter of degree” (Oppenheim, 1992:189). Conventionally, the reliability of the items in a survey instrument is established through the internal consistency method, usually associated with Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient and its variants (Drost, 2011). In the present study, Coefficient alpha was calculated after the pilot study, as well as for the final implementation. According to the result of the

coefficients, moderately high values of coefficient alpha were found on both occasions.

However, it is possible that one could apply the instrument and receive bad results. “The instrument might be reliable, but not valid” (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001:87). Validity indicates “the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed or intended to measure” (Oppenheim, 1992:160), or to put it simply, “appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made from test scores” (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991:30). This shows that issues of validity are a part of research design. In the context of the present study survey, the validity of the instrument implies “whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences” (Creswell, 2003:157) from the results of the survey instrument. In order to achieve this goal, this study made several efforts to get evidence of construct validity, such as applying multiple existing resources to establish the contents and structure of the survey instrument, conducting pilot tests, methodological triangulation and synthesis of data analysis, and so on, for the sake of “how well the survey links up with a set of theoretical assumptions about an abstract construct” (Oppenheim, 1992:162), in this case communication concerns.

Above all, reliability and validity are related to each other. “A measure cannot be valid, if it is not reliable” (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991:81), thereby, reliability is a necessary condition for validity, though not sufficient. However, a measure may be highly reliable and yet invalid, which means “being reliable it is not necessarily valid for the purpose it is designed for” (ibid:81). Hence, both reliability and validity play equally important roles in the development of survey instrument in consideration of insuring the research quality. The following sections describe in detail the efforts and procedures conducted in this study for ensuring the reliability and validity: pilot study (see section 3.5.1), methodological triangulation (see section 3.5.2), analysis tools and synthesis of data analysis (see sections 3.5.3 and 3.5.4), moral and ethical issues (see section 3.5.5), and reliability test (see section 3.5.6).

3.5.1 Pilot study

As a preliminary test of the questionnaire and the interview schedule, a pilot study was conducted in the period from March 2012 to June 2012, aiming to find out deficiencies in the questionnaire and the interview. The pilot testers were asked to give feedback about the response time of the questionnaire and about the unclear expression of items, so as to estimate the time required and reduce the difficulty of understanding.

The pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted in the form of paper-based surveys. The samples were made up of 22 participants. They were a part of the target population of Chinese students and represented different departments of JLU, including five Bachelor students, nine Master students, and eight Ph.D. students. Additionally, among the eight Ph.D. students, an interview pilot study was conducted with two of them, who majored in biology and German literature. To ensure the proper experience of communication with German teachers, all the Chinese participants had been in Germany for over one and half year by the time of the pilot study.

Based on the responses to the questionnaire and interview questions, the items that lacked understanding clarity were re-phrased, the sequence of the questions was reordered, and the methods of data collection were improved. All the modifications in the questionnaire and the interview, as stated below, were integrated into the final survey procedures.

(1) Reorder the structure

In the final version of the questionnaire, section II consists of three main topics. Originally, the open-ended questions were designed in the last section of the questionnaire, which was based on the common format of the questionnaire design

describing that the simplest questions go first, group themes locate together, and leave descriptive questions until last (Taylor-Powell, 1998:11f). However, the author realized that most of the testers in the pilot study left the open-ended questions blank or filled them with very simple words, such as “as mentioned before” and “same as in question No. 29”. By discussing with the participants about the reasons for this reaction, eight of them expressed that they did not have any interest to write or think more after answering all the previous items. Another five participants also mentioned that the content of previous items already expressed what they want to write, so they left the questions blank. Given these reasons, the testers suggested that the items needed to be reordered into a more productive sequence, in order to increase participation of respondents and the rate of answering the open-ended questions.

(2) Adding two extra demographic questions (question No. 7 and No. 8) in section I of the questionnaire of Chinese students

Section I contains the questions regarding personal background information. The data gathered in this section were applied to exploring the relation between demographic factors and communication concerns with the help of statistical analysis software. Six common demographic questions (age, gender, length of residence, academic level, major, and financial status) were listed in this section in the pilot study, which were considered as the main influencing factors to communication.

In addition to the given items, it was also found that some other background information was neglected, such as the language of instruction and social activities besides study, which could have a critical influence on communication in school as well. For instance, one tester mentioned in the pilot study that, before she had a part-time job as a salesclerk, she rarely communicated with her German teachers because she was not confident with her language ability and was too shy to express her own ideas in public. However, after she worked in a bakery, the communication situation between her and her German teachers greatly improved. Another ignored factor at this point in time was the language of instruction. It showed in the pilot study

that Chinese students who were instructed in English represented fewer communication concerns than those who were instructed in German. The tester, who was enrolled in the English-speaking major, expressed that he was not nervous or afraid to talk to his German teachers in English, because English is a foreign language for him, as well as for his German teachers.

In view of these phenomena, two items were added into section I in order to find out whether the influence of these two factors (the language of instruction and social activities) on communication was just an exception or a common phenomenon to Chinese students in Germany.

(3) Reclassify the items in section III and section IV of the questionnaire

The part of the original content of section III and section IV were adaptations of the research instruments applied in the studies of Staton-Spicer (1983), Bauer (1992), Feezel and Myers (1997), and Wang (2008a), which were introduced in detail in section 3.3.2.2 in this chapter. All items in these two sections listed the most common communication problems between Chinese students and German teachers in class and in one-on-one conversations. Each item was marked based on the category of concerns (self, task, and impact), as well as the classification of barriers (capacity- and culture-based barriers). Apart from the categories of concerns, which were defined and verified by the previous studies (see section 2.1.2.2), the classification of barriers was developed by this study on the basis of the literature review (see section 2.2.3) and needed to be further testified.

Considering the adaptability of previous studies to the present study, there was enough space left in these two sections for the testers to write their opinions freely in terms of improving and completing the content of items. According to the comments and opinions provided by the participants in the pilot study, besides some minimal changes of words and expressions, one major problem was pointed out. Except for the items related to capacity-based barriers, the remaining items could be subdivided into

more refined categories, rather than generalized entirely into a category of culture. In view of the factors, which may cause influence on the interpersonal communication process, individual perception and personal emotion are two significant elements that stood out from other factors. This also responded to the emotional and psychological barriers of Chinese students illustrated in chapter two (see section 2.2.3 (1)).

On the one hand, perception is “the mental interpretation of external stimuli via sensation” (Neuliep, 2009:179). In the context of communication, that is to say, perception is the processing, selecting, interpreting and organizing of sensory information, so as to determine how to communicate and how to receive information from another person (Goldstein, 2010:5). During the interpersonal communication, perception normally points to the initial thoughts of a person about others. Therefore, personal past experiences, stereotypes, cultural background, and even bias, can be examples of factors that may affect the process of interpersonal relationships and interactions. As one item in this study presented, “I do not understand the humor my teacher uses during our conversation”, which was shown the perception of personal experience and the influence of different cultural background. In other words, the effect of different perception on the communication process is about how the same message can be taken in, stored, and recalled differently by different people (Neuliep, 2009:153). For instance, the item “my teacher does not enjoy talking with me” expressed the effect of personal negative perception on the communication between students and teachers.

On the other hand, different from the effect of perception on the communication, an emotion can be defined as “a complex affective state that results in physical and psychological changes, with power to impact thoughts and behaviors” (Cherry, 2013). Tracking back to Plato, perception is what we know, while emotion is what we feel (Broscha et al., 2013). During the interaction, when we are aware and in control of our emotions, we can think clearly, manage stress, display empathy and confidence, so as to communicate well with others and enjoy the better relationships.

On the contrary, if we lose control of our emotions, confusion, doubt, and even isolation, we would be filled with the process of the interaction with others (Myers, 2004; Ekman, 1993). In this study, emotions further divided into two sub-processes: verbal process (e.g. “I do not feel comfortable joking with my teacher”) and non-verbal process (e.g. “my hypertension has bad effect to my teacher during our conversation”) in order to better accord with the nature of the interpersonal interaction.

Recently, however, a growing number of scholars tried to explore the relationships and partial influences between emotion and perception (e.g. Phelps, Ling & Carrasco, 2006; Most, 2009; Zadra & Clore, 2011). Nevertheless, the pattern of manifestation of concerns resulted from emotion and perception are different. For this reason, the concepts of perception and emotion used in questionnaire design refer to the initial definitions regarding the process of communication and focused exclusively on their effect on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers. Therefore, the items belonging to the culture category can be further divided into either perception-related barriers or emotion-related barriers. By this mean, the forms of the impact of personal emotion and perception on the communication can be explored. The underlying causes for perception- and emotion-related concerns will be analyzed together in the chapter of result analysis.

In addition, the influence of academic background knowledge on teacher-student communication, as assumed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3(2)), was also confirmed in the pilot study. Four of the testers indicated in the pilot study that, sometimes during the lecture, they were afraid to ask questions and prefer to stay quiet in class because they were not sure whether their previous academic knowledge learned at Chinese universities was adequate to German classrooms. Thus, it can be seen that their worries were neither related to language skill nor cultural background. In view of the suggestions gathered in the pilot study, capacity-based barriers were classified into language- and knowledge-related barriers. Moreover, three

replenishment questions in section III (No.5, No.15 and No.16) and two replenishment questions in section IV (No. 26 and No. 38) were added, with the aim to figure out the impact of academic background knowledge on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

(4) Adding one additional question in section V and re-revision

The purpose of section V of the questionnaire was to explore the causes of the most common communication problems. In the first version of this section, four common questions regarding communication problems between students and teachers mentioned in the previous studies were adapted (e.g. Bauer, 1992; Wang, 2008a; Zhu, 2012). However, the participants in the pilot study claimed that, besides the four items mentioned in the questionnaire, group discussion during lectures also made them feel worried. Sometimes an unsuccessful group discussion could even completely destroy their confidence to participate in the lecture. Given this reason, one additional question was added in section V in order to explore the potential barriers of Chinese students during group discussions. The options of this item were quoted from the comments and suggestions of the participants in the pilot study.

Moreover, due to the ambiguity of original content of options proposed by the testers, the options' content of each item was amended by adding some clear explanations in order to avoid misunderstanding. Take one item as an example: Chinese students were asked about the reasons for remaining silent after German teachers asked them questions. One of the options stated, "I don't want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me." Five testers indicated that this option confused them, because they were not sure if this option was based on the premise that whether they understood the questions of the German teacher or if they did not understand the questions at all. Different premises can lead to different answers. The option of this item was revised as "I don't want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me, even if I understand the questions he/she asked."

(5) Avoiding ambiguity and misunderstanding

Two testers pointed out that the question regarding the degree of respondents was confusing. It was not clear to the testers whether the question referred to the degree they were pursuing or the degree that they had already earned. With regards to this feedback, the item was modified to specify the “academic level you are currently working for”.

Additionally, some other unclear expressions, inconsistent use of pronouns, and grammatical errors were identified and corrected. For instance, some ambiguous terms and choice of words, such as “competence”, “local culture”, and “mutual engagement” were addressed in a different way, corresponding to “communication ability”, “Chinese/German culture (depending on the subject)” and “interaction between Chinese students and German teachers”, in order to be understood clearly. Furthermore, some items were revised to simpler and more direct sentences, so that the respondents can catch the meaning of the questions immediately without losing their focus.

Moreover, manners of items expression were also suggested to be modified in a politer and less direct way. Some participants also pointed out that some items were presented by using abstract concepts, such as “intercultural experiences”, which left the space for speculation. Some concrete examples regarding such concepts were good ways to solve this problem.

(6) Other modifications

One of the testers suggested allowing more spaces between lines to improve readability, use a uniform and clear font style, such as Arial, and add Chinese translation in the questionnaire for students.

The final version of the questionnaires (see Appendix B, Appendix C, and

Appendix D) were developed through multiple revisions in accordance with the suggestions obtained from the pilot test. In order to find out whether the problems or issues raised by the testers had been resolved, all the items were rechecked and proofread by some of the pilot participants before the final version could be finalized, which is known as the concept of member check⁷. Although the member check is a technique often used in qualitative research, it was also useful in the quantitative research in order to ensure the effectiveness of the survey instrument (Vaterlaus & Higginbotham, 2011; Clarson, 2010). After the member check was applied by 17 participants of the pilot study, the indeterminate issues and inaccuracy items in questionnaires were revised before the final version of the questionnaires came into service.

3.5.2 Methodological triangulation

The mixed methods (methodological triangulation), involving questionnaires and interviews, enabled the author to collect not only qualitative as well as quantitative data for the data analysis, which increased the credibility of this empirical research. Moreover, the questions raised by the author in the questionnaires were applied later in interviews once again. By comparing the data achieved from both quantitative and qualitative resources, the credibility and sufficiency of the results were facilitated.

3.5.3 Tools for analysis

Quantitative data gathered in the questionnaires were analyzed by the software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel 2013, which is widely used for statistical analysis, survey authoring, and deployment in social science (Argyrous, 2005). In addition, qualitative data acquired from interview transcriptions were processed by MAXQDA, known as a software program designed

⁷ Member check is “a procedure largely associated with qualitative research, whereby a researcher submits materials relevant to an investigation for checking by the people who were the source of those materials” (Bryman, 2004).

for computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (Lewins & Silver, 2007). By employing different analytic tools to analyze different types of data, the objectivity and validity of the final results of this study were increased.

3.5.4 Synthesis of data analysis

Considering that this research involved three target groups during the procedure of data collection, the synthesis of data analysis played an important role in this study. On the one hand, the data collection was carried out parallel among Chinese students and German teachers in Germany in order to ensure the productivity. On the other hand, the quantitative analysis was conducted while the initial qualitative data were collected, so as to improve the objectivity and timeliness of the information. Comparison, integration, and synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative data among different groups of participants contributed to increasing the reliability and validity of the research under the limited conditions.

3.5.5 Moral and ethical issues

Before conducting the questionnaire for each target group, all the participants were clearly informed in written form about the purpose of this study. Participants would remain anonymous according to their preferences. In terms of interviews, taking the characteristics of an interview into consideration, such as interactivity and directness, interviewees were contacted before the interview and informed that they could refuse to answer any question that they regard as offended in order to show respect to the rights and interests of the participants.

3.5.6 Reliability test of survey instrument

After the pilot study, it was necessary to evaluate the consistency and stability of the survey instrument for the purpose of ensuring the reliability in the future use of the

instrument. The reliability of ordinal scale items in section III and section IV of the questionnaires was estimated by means of the procedures for Cronbach's Alpha, which is a measurement of inter-item consistency determined by the SPSS program for reliability. Values of Cronbach's Alpha range from 0 to 1.0. A high score between 0.6 and 1.0 indicates that the instrument formed by the items is reliable, while the value below 0.6 represents the internal consistency of the instrument is poor or unacceptable (Cortina, 1993).

Based on the responses of 22 participants in the pilot study, reliability coefficients of section III (communication concerns in class) and section IV (communication concerns in one-on-one conversations) were calculated as .977 and .798, respectively, which confirmed the feasibility of the instrument. After the completion of data collection, the reliability of each domain of the questionnaire items was calculated again. The detail results are presented in chapter 4 (see section 4.2).

3.6 Framework of the investigation

With the purpose of helping the readers to have a better understanding of this study and also to summarize the research methods and procedures illustrated in this chapter, a brief framework of this research is presented in this section.

As shown in Figure 3.3, with the purposes to examine the communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers, three target research groups participated in this study, namely Chinese students in Germany, Chinese students in China, and German teacher in Germany. By employing research methods, such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, both at German and Chinese universities, this study attempts to identify and compare the intercultural communication concerns perceived by Chinese students and German teachers in two instructional settings, namely, in class and in one-on-one conversations.

Data analyses based on the two-fold classification system were applied among the three groups comparatively in a pair in order to observe the different concerns of each group and the corresponding reasons. The qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions and interviews were resorted to the content analysis, whereas the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed statistically. A series of semi-structured interviews was designed as a follow-up to the questionnaires for the purpose of uncovering more in-depth the concerns and information discovered in the questionnaires.

The results of data analysis addressed the six research questions and further verify the research hypotheses. The intended findings of this study will provide strategies for developing the intercultural communication sensitivity of both Chinese students and German teachers and further improving the effectiveness of their communication with each other.

Communication Situation 1: **In-Class/ In-Group Meeting**

Communication Situation 2: **In One-on-One Conversation**

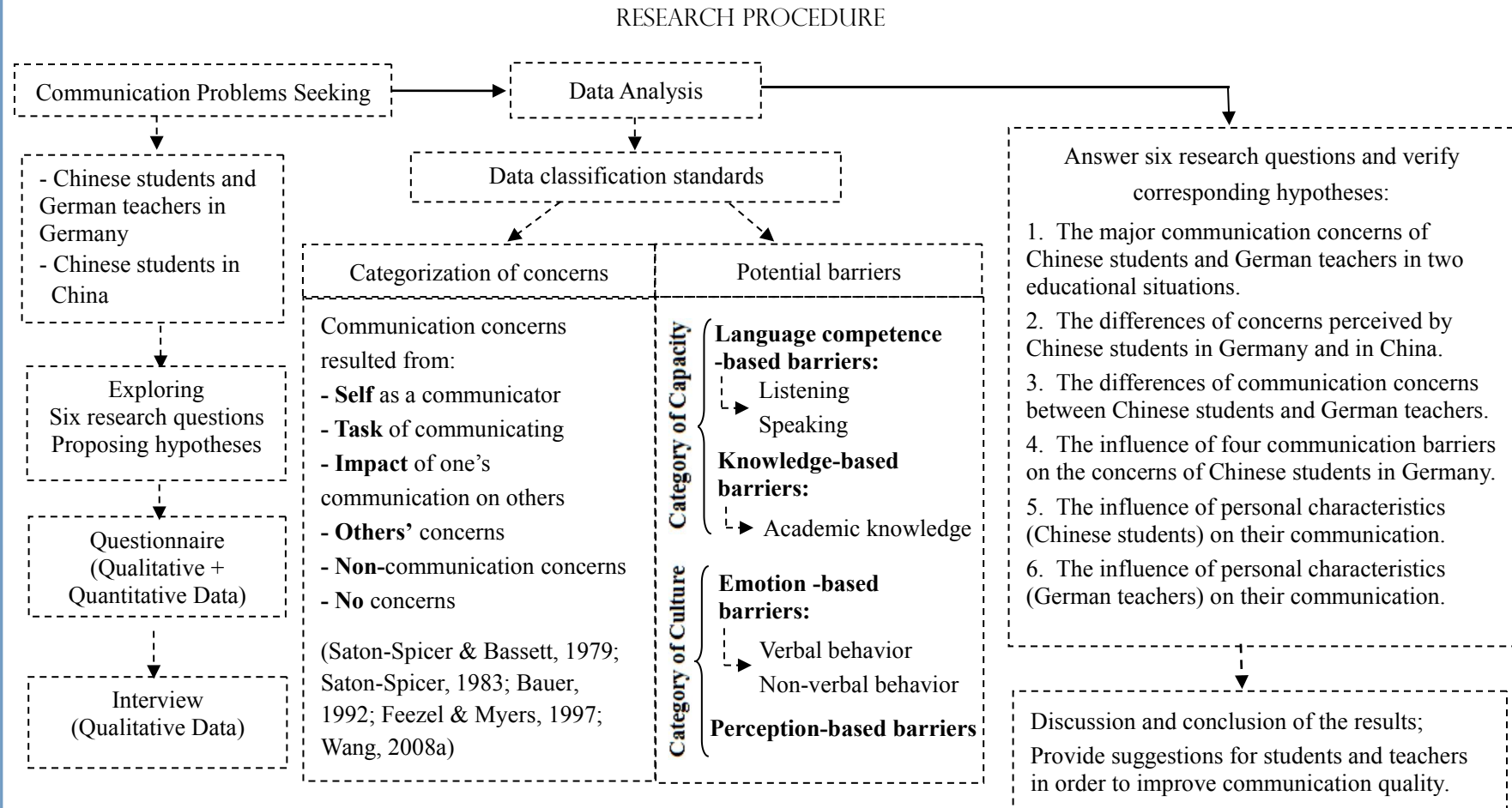


Figure 3.3: Framework of the research

Chapter 4: Major Communication Concerns and Differences between Chinese Students and German Teachers

Chapter 4 and chapter 5 present the findings of the current study. The results of the first and second research questions are discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 5 demonstrates the findings of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth research questions.

In the beginning of this chapter, the statistic description of participants and the reliability of items in the questionnaire are presented (see sections 4.1 and 4.2). Furthermore, the results of the data analysis in accordance with the first and second research questions are reported respectively in two subsections: the major communication concerns of Chinese students and German teachers (see section 4.3) and the concerns resulted from the differences between Chinese students and German teachers (see section 4.4). All the tables in regard to data results were created with the aid of statistical software SPSS and Excel. Different statistical approaches, such as frequencies indication, percentage indication, reliability evaluation, analysis of variance, One-Sample T-Test, Paired-Sample T-Test, and ANOVA, were applied for analyzing the data in this chapter.

Statistic Description of the Participants and Reliability

4.1 Statistic description of the participants

The participants in the investigation of this study consisted of 123 Chinese students in Germany, 42 Chinese students in China, and 34 German teachers who have had

Chinese students in Germany. The demographic information of each group is outlined in Table 4.1 (Chinese students in Germany), Table 4.2 (Chinese students in China), and Table 4.3 (German teachers). Among the demographic characteristics obtained, eight personal factors (gender, age, length of residence in Germany, academic level, financial aid, field of study, work experience, and accommodation condition) of Chinese students as variables involved in data analysis, while five characteristics (gender, experience of advising Chinese students, field of study, language of instruction, and overseas experiences in China) of German teachers were analyzed.

4.1.1 Chinese students in Germany

Of the 123 Chinese students studying in Germany, 56.1% of them (n=69) are male, and 43.9% (n=54) are female. In terms of the age, the students were distributed evenly in two age groups: about 50% of participants were under 28 years old, and the rest were 28 years old or older. Among them, 45.5% (n=56) of these students were between 23 and 27 years old and 36.6 % (n=45) were between 28 and 32 years old, who constituted the two main age groups of the participants. Regarding the length of residence in Germany, the distribution was approximately even. Each age group contained around a quarter of the population of this sample.

In addition, some academic characteristics of Chinese students were also surveyed, such as their academic level, the field of study, financial aid, etc. As shown in Table 4.1, over 80% of the participants were enrolled either in a master's degree program (43.1%, n=53) or in a doctoral degree program (43.9%, n=54). Additionally, 52.1% of Chinese students (n=64) were almost all master students and were supported by their family for their study in Germany. Meanwhile, 38% of the students (n=47), of which mostly were doctoral students, studied in Germany with the aid of a scholarship. The rest of the participants studying in Germany either supported by themselves or by a bank loan.

The distribution of the field of study clustered around humanities and social sciences (36.6%, n=45), natural sciences (30.9%, n=38), and agricultural sciences (21.1%, n=26). 50 students in this sample communicated with their German teachers in English, while the other 73 students used German as their communicative language. This was not consistent with the ratio of the entire population of Chinese students at the Justus-Liebig-University Giessen. Given that some undergraduate and first-year graduate Chinese students did not have many German teachers to communicate with very often due to the different course arrangement, these Chinese students were excluded from the sample. 82.1% of Chinese students (n=101) expressed that they had work experience during their studies. Concerning the accommodation in Germany, 70% of Chinese participants (n=86) lived in a student dormitory with only German students or students of other nationalities excluding speakers of the Chinese language. Since these Chinese students communicated with their roommates in a foreign language (German or English), these 86 Chinese students were classified as one group. In addition, 24 Chinese students (n=19.5%) lived either only with Chinese students or with students of other nationalities including speakers of the Chinese language. Considering that these 24 Chinese students had the chances to communicate with roommates in Chinese, they were regarded as a group.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of Chinese students surveyed in Germany (N=123)

Individual demographic characteristics	Sample size (N=123)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	69	56.1
Female	54	43.9
Age		
Under 23	6	4.9
23-27	56	45.5
28-32	45	36.6
Over 32	16	13.0
Length of residence in Germany		
2 years and less	32	26.0
2 years to 3 years	36	29.3
3 years to 4 years	28	22.8
More than 4 years	27	21.9
Academic level		
Undergraduate student (Bachelor)	7	5.7
Graduate students (Master)	53	43.1
Ph.D. student (Doctor)	54	43.9
Post-Doctoral student	9	7.3
Financial aid in Germany		
Support by family	64	52.1
Support by self	9	7.3
Scholarship	47	38.2
Bank loan	3	2.4
Field of study		
Natural sciences	38	30.9
Agricultural sciences	26	21.1
Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing	10	8.1
Engineering	4	3.3
Humanities and Social sciences	45	36.6
Language of instruction		
English	50	40.7
German	73	59.3
Work experience during study		
Yes	101	82.1
No	22	17.9
Accommodation in Germany during study		
Living alone	10	8.1
With family	3	2.4
In student dormitory with Chinese students	24	19.5
In student dormitory with non-Chinese students	86	70.0

4.1.2 Chinese students in China

With respect to the Chinese students, who participated in this study in China, as shown in Table 4.2, of the 42 respondents, 34 participants (81%) are female and only eight of them are male (19%). This is the common phenomenon at Chinese universities, as well as at German universities, that more female students than male students study in the academic field of linguistic. In regard to the age distribution, a majority of participants (90.5%) were in the range of 18 to 23 years old. According to the Chinese education system, this is the age range (18-23) for undergraduate study. Few students (9.5%) were in the age group of 23 to 28 years old. 23 participants (54.8%) had overseas experiences in Germany, of which 17 students had less than three months residence and six students stayed in Germany longer than three months but less than one year. The rest participants (45.2%, n=19) had no overseas experiences in Germany.

All 42 participants in China were undergraduate students in major of German language and were in their fourth or sixth academic semester during the survey. The majority of the participants (64.3%, n=27) were supported by their family for their studies. Eleven students were supported either by themselves (14.3%, n=6) or by bank loan (11.9%, n=5). Only four students (9.5%) were with the support of a scholarship to continue their studies. Regarding work experience, 20 participants (47.6%) indicated that they had part-time jobs experience during their studies, while the rest (52.4%, n=22) expressed that they wanted to pay more attention to their studies instead of working. Since the surveyed Chinese city, Tianjin, is a relatively developed city in China, the ratio of work experiences could be different than in other Chinese cities. Ten participants (23.8%), who are from Tianjin, lived with their families during their studies. Since dormitories at Chinese universities were divided either for international students or Chinese students, the remaining 32 participants (76.2%) lived in a residence hall with other Chinese students of the university.

Table 4.2: Demographic information of Chinese students surveyed in China (N=42)

Individual demographic characteristics	Sample size (N=42)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	8	19.0
Female	34	81.0
Age		
Under 18	0	0.0
18-23	38	90.5
23-28	4	9.5
Over 28	0	0.0
Length of residence in Germany		
no experience	19	45.2
Less than 3 months	17	40.5
3 months to one year	6	14.3
1 year to 1.5 year	0	0.0
More than 1.5 year	0	0.0
Academic level		
Diploma	0	0.0
Undergraduate student (Bachelor)	42	100
Graduate students (Master)	0	0.0
Ph.D. student (Doctor)	0	0.0
Field of study		
Natural sciences	0	0.0
Agricultural sciences	0	0.0
Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing	0	0.0
Engineering	0	0.0
Humanities and Social sciences (Majoring in German)	42	100
Language of instruction		
German	42	100
English	0	0.0
Financial aid in China		
Support by family	27	64.3
Support by self	6	14.3
Scholarship	4	9.5
Bank loan	5	11.9
Work experiences during study		
Yes	20	47.6
No	22	52.4
Accommodation in China during study		
Living alone	0	0.0
With family	10	23.8
In dormitory residence with Chinese students	32	76.2
In dormitory residence with non-Chinese students	0	0.0

4.1.3 German teachers in Germany

With respect to the German teachers, who participated in this study, as shown in Table 4.3, the majority (85.3%, n=29) of them are male, while only five (14.7%) are female teachers. Slightly less than half (47.1%, n=16) of these teachers had experiences supervising five or more Chinese students till the time of this survey. About 60% of the participated teachers (n=20) came from the fields of natural (17.6%, n=6) and agricultural sciences (41.2%, n=14). The rest of teachers were from the fields of medicine, humanities, and social sciences.

Considering that some study programs are instructed in the English language instead of in German, the instructional language between German teachers and Chinese students was also inquired. 58.8% of the participated teachers (n=20) communicated with their Chinese students in English. According to the obtained data, most of these teachers were supervisors of Chinese doctoral students and mainly from the fields of natural sciences, agricultural sciences, and medicine. Moreover, 38.2% of teachers (n=13) had China-related overseas experiences. Some teachers also specified the city that they worked or visited, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Hongkong, etc. The rest of the participants of German teachers did not have any overseas experiences in China.

Table 4.3: Demographic information of German teachers surveyed in Germany (N=34)

Individual demographic characteristics	Sample size (N=34)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	29	85.3
Female	5	14.7
Experience of advising Chinese students		
More than 5 students	16	47.1
Less than 5 students	18	52.9
Field of study		
Natural sciences	6	17.6
Agricultural sciences	14	41.2
Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing	4	11.8
Engineering	0	0.0
Humanities and Social sciences	10	29.4
Instructional language		
German	14	41.2
English	20	58.8
Overseas experiences in China		
Yes	13	38.2
No	21	61.8

4.2 Reliability of the items in section III and IV of the questionnaires

After all required data was obtained from three target groups, the reliability of ordinal items in section III and section IV of their questionnaires was estimated by means of the procedures for Cronbach's Alpha, which was determined by the SPSS program for reliability. As shown in Table 4.4, the computed Cronbach's Alpha for the items in section III and section IV was .963 for the questionnaire of Chinese students in Germany, .977 for the questionnaire of Chinese students in China, and .963 for German teachers' questionnaire. Meanwhile, Cronbach's Alpha of each communication situation for every target group displayed over .900 as well.

Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha was applied also for the items according to different concerns domains. First of all, in terms of the categories of communication

concerns applied in this study, the alpha coefficients in accordance with the sequence of target groups were .888, .933 and .899 for the items of Self category; .921, .948 and .916 for the items of Task category; .873, .913 and .870 for the items of Impact category. Cronbach's Alpha for these three domains all exceeded .800, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The figures were also similar to the alpha coefficients of concerns categories in previous studies (Staton-Spicer, 1983; Bauer, 1992; Wang, 2008a; Cho et al., 2011). The reliability of the items according to the communication concerns model (Station-Spicer & Bassett, 1979) was ensured.

Furthermore, in regard to the four domains of potential communication barriers, most of the Cronbach's Alpha for each domain exceeded .800, which presented as .892, .925 and .811 for language-related barriers; .792, .841 and .763 for knowledge-related barriers; .842, .875 and .877 for emotion-related barriers and; .896, .945 and .872 for perception-related barriers. Although the items regarding knowledge-related communication barriers for Chinese students in Germany and German teachers was .792 and .763, it was still within the acceptable range of the alpha coefficients. Hence, the internal consistency of the instrument was established.

Table 4.4: Reliability coefficients of survey instrument (section III and section IV of the questionnaires)

Domains of items	Cronbach's Alpha		
	Chinese students in Germany	Chinese students in China	German teachers in Germany
Overall	.963	.977	.963
Communication situations			
In Class (Section III)	.931	.944	.916
In One-on-One conversations (Section IV)	.930	.967	.939
Communication concerns categories			
Self	.888	.933	.899
Task	.921	.948	.916
Impact	.873	.913	.870
Items of language-based barriers	.892	.925	.881
Speaking	.792	.899	.802
Listening	.815	.807	.730
Items of knowledge-based barriers	.792	.841	.763
Items of emotion-related barriers	.842	.875	.877
Verbal process	.722	.807	.777
Non-verbal process	.743	.707	.735
Items of perception-related barriers	.896	.945	.872

**Results of the First Research Question: The Major Communication
Concerns of Chinese Students and German Teachers**

4.3 The major communication concerns of Chinese students and German teachers

Since Chinese students and German teachers have different cultural backgrounds and speak different language, the communication between Chinese students and German teachers is a complex process, which may involve not only the misunderstanding caused by cultural differences, but also the adjustment of language. However, although the communication problems may have come in a variety of shapes, some problems commonly occurred in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers and aroused both groups high levels of concerns

The findings reported in this section focus on the major communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers from an overall perspective. In addition to the major concerns expressed by the students and teachers (see sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.3), the related reasons behind their concerns will also be discussed (see section 4.3.4). The results stated in this section answer the first research question: *what are the major perceived communication concerns of Chinese students and German teachers during their interaction in class and in one-on-one conversations?*

4.3.1 Major communication concerns across communication domains

The items in section III and section IV of the questionnaires were ranked according to categories of communication concerns with the purpose to acquire an ensemble of data distribution of three target groups. The statistic results listed in Table 4.5 present

the means and standard deviations of concerns reported by three groups.

Table 4.5: Mean and standard deviations of the items in section III and section IV of the questionnaires

Domains of communication	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers in Germany(N=34)	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Communication situations						
In Class	3.047	1.120	2.086	1.284	3.121	1.089
In one-on-one conversations	2.996	1.182	2.610	1.338	2.663	1.188
Communication concerns categories						
Self	3.170	1.124	2.341	1.308	2.782	1.047
Task	2.755	1.120	2.326	1.372	2.881	1.303
Impact	3.262	1.176	2.574	1.316	2.922	1.355
Communication barriers						
Language-based barriers						
Speaking	2.956	1.103	2.466	1.292	2.790	1.143
Listening	2.612	1.108	1.500	0.848	3.103	1.169
Knowledge-based barriers						
Emotion-related barriers						
Verbal process	3.094	1.061	2.429	1.350	3.294	0.988
Non-verbal process	2.805	1.160	2.173	1.375	2.956	1.173
Perception-related barriers						
	3.348	1.165	2.696	1.345	2.341	1.101

On the basis of the mean value of overall communication concerns, the top three concerns responded by Chinese students in Germany were their perception-related concerns (M=3.348), concerns caused by the impact of their communication on German teachers (M=3.262), and self as a communicator (M=3.170). Additionally, the mean value of Chinese students' concerns with respect to their communication with German teachers in class (M=3.047) showed a slightly higher level than the mean of their concerns in one-on-one conversations with German teachers (M=2.996). This can be explained that communication with German

teachers in class and in one-on-one situations caused Chinese students to have an almost similar level of concerns. Among the three categories of concerns (self, task and impact), the impact of Chinese students on the communication with German teachers ($M=3.262$) brought Chinese students (in Germany) themselves most concerns, while the task of communication concerned them least ($M=2.755$). Considering the potential communication barriers, Chinese students expressed more concerns about culture-related barriers (perception and emotion) in their communication with German teachers than capacity-related barriers (language and knowledge). This result also corresponds to the findings of previous studies, in which Chinese students were more likely to emotionally respond to the insecure situation by restraining their emotion, as discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3 (1)).

Different from the Chinese students in Germany, Chinese students in China presented slightly different results. According to the mean value of their concerns, the top three domains of concerns of Chinese students in China were perception-related concerns ($M=2.696$), concerns caused by their impact on their communication with German teachers ($M=2.574$), and their speaking skills ($M=2.466$). Concerning the communication settings, the communication with German teachers alone ($M=2.610$) seemed to make Chinese students in China more worried than the communication in class ($M=2.086$). Regarding the rest domains, Chinese students in China and in Germany appeared to have similar results.

With respect to German teachers, their worries about Chinese students' knowledge ($M=3.382$), emotion-based verbal communication barriers ($M=3.294$), and listening skills ($M=3.103$) occurred to be the three domains of concerns that bothered teachers most in communication. Moreover, the data also showed that German teachers voiced more concerns in communication with their students in class ($M=3.121$) than in one-on-one conversations ($M=2.663$). However, the three categories of concerns (self, task, and impact) caused by Chinese students in communication had a similar degree of influence on German teachers. Moreover, the

data also stated that Chinese students' knowledge- and emotion-related communication barriers caused German teachers to have more concerns than language- and perception-related barriers.

In sum, in order to compare the concerns distribution among three groups, Figure 4.1 provides an intuitive understanding of the statistic findings shown in Table 4.5. As shown in Figure 4.1, the indicatrices of Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers met in a similar range. However, the indicatrix of Chinese students in China located lower than the indicatrices of other two groups. Therefore, it can be seen that, Chinese students had a higher level of concerns in communication with German teachers in Germany than in China.

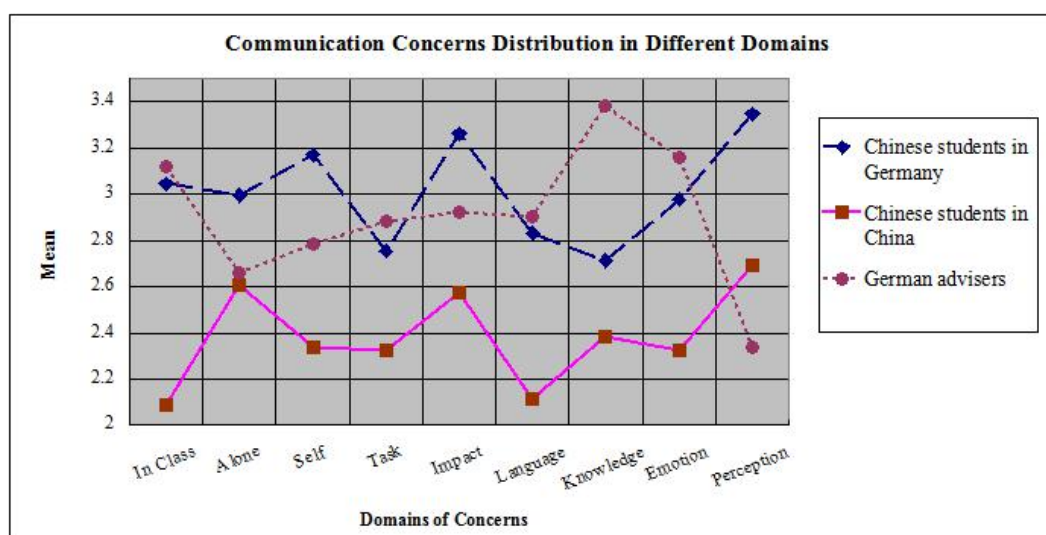


Figure 4.1: Communication concerns distribution in all domains of the three groups

Specifically, concerning the communication situations, Chinese students in China experienced fewer communication problems in class than interacting with German teachers alone, while Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers stated the opposite opinions. This shows that different cultural and language circumstance of communication could be an influencing factor in causing Chinese students different degrees of concerns.

Moreover, Chinese students all expressed the common concerns regarding the impact of their communication on German teachers. Concerns based on Chinese students' initial thoughts about communication with German teachers, in other words, perception-related concerns based on the cultural background were also shown as the major communication barrier of Chinese students. From this result, it can be seen that Chinese students, whether in Germany or in China, cared more about the reaction of teachers to their communication behaviors than other domains of concerns. Moreover, Chinese students' characteristics, such as their personal past experiences, cultural background, and stereotypes, affected the process of their interaction with others. Thus, it can infer that the deeply ingrained Chinese cultural values and attitudes of Chinese students played a key role in their communication with German teachers. However, unlike the concerns of Chinese students, German teachers seemed to consider students' academic knowledge, expressive ability, and communication tasks as the serious problems in communication, rather than focus on the communicative behavior of Chinese students based on a different culture.

4.3.2 Hypotheses testing of the first research question

The findings listed above offer an overview of the communication concerns among three target groups based on the basic data statistics. The results of hypotheses testing by applying the professional statistical analysis software further provide an accurate evidence of the concerns distribution within each group.

Hypothesis 1a) Chinese students in Germany express a higher level of communication concerns in one-on-one conversations than in class or in group meetings.

Table 4.6: *T*-test results of communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations (Chinese students in Germany)

Communication situations	<i>t</i> -test of communication concerns			
	Mean	S. D.	<i>t</i> value	P value
In class/group meetings	3.047	1.120	1.870	.064
In one-on-one conversations	2.996	1.182		

A paired *t*-test was employed among the responses acquired from Chinese students in Germany in order to test this hypothesis. According to the results shown in Table 4.6, *p*-value ($p > .05$) indicated a weak relationship between the two communication settings. There was no difference between communication concerns in class/group meetings and in one-on-one conversations for Chinese students in Germany. Therefore, although the mean values presented are slightly different, if only for the concerns of communicating with German teachers, Chinese students expressed a similar degree of concerns in class, as well as in one-on-one conversations. This hypothesis was not fully accepted.

Hypothesis 1b) Chinese students in China express a higher level communication concerns in class than in one-on-one conversations.

Table 4.7: *T*-test results of communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations (Chinese students in China)

Communication situations	<i>t</i> -test of communication concerns			
	Mean	S. D.	<i>t</i> value	P value
In class/group meetings	2.086	1.284	9.616	.000
In one-on-one conversations	2.610	1.338		

A paired *t*-test was also applied to test the hypothesis with respect to the responses of Chinese students in China. As shown in Table 4.7, a significant relationship existed between the communication in class and in one-on-one conversations because the *P* value is less than .001. However, Chinese students in China expressed a significantly

higher level of communication concerns in one-on-one conversations with their German teachers than in class or group meetings at .001 level. Therefore, the hypothesis that Chinese students in China had more communication concerns with their German teachers in class than in one-on-one conversations was considered not to be supported. On the contrary, the result of this hypothesis test certified that Chinese students in China expressed a higher level of communication concerns in one-on-one conversations with German teachers than in class.

The potential causes for the differences between the results of hypothesis 1a and 1b will be discussed in section 4.3.4.1 (Main concerns No.1).

Hypothesis 1c) German teachers express a higher level of concerns regarding the communication quality of their Chinese students in class/in group meetings than in one-on-one conversations.

Table 4.8: *T*-test results of communication concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations (German teachers in Germany)

Communication situations	t-test of communication concerns			
	Mean	S. D.	<i>t</i> value	P value
In class/group meetings	3.121	1.089	11.979	.000
In one-on-one conversations	2.663	1.188		

Table 4.8 presents the results of the paired *t*-test for testing the hypothesis 1c regarding German teachers' responses. A significant relationship was existed between the teachers' concerns in the two academic communication settings ($p < .001$). Hence, German teachers stated a significantly higher degree of concerns in class/group meetings than in one-on-one conversations with their Chinese students. The above hypothesis was supported.

4.3.3 Overall results of the questions in section V of the questionnaires

In addition to the statistical results of section III and section IV, the descriptive findings of the questions in section V of the questionnaires display the main causes of the common concerns expressed mostly by Chinese students and German teachers. A summary of the findings of section V is listed in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Summary of the findings of section V of the questionnaires

Description of the main concerns	Chinese students in Germany	Chinese students in China	German teachers in Germany
<i>Concerns domain: Behavior in communication</i>			
Chinese students are afraid to give German teachers a negative impression. (German teachers worry about this concern of Chinese students.)	×	×	×
Chinese students are too shy to ask German teachers and prefer to ask other students or think alone	×	×	×
Chinese students are afraid to express own opinions to German teachers directly.	×	×	×
<i>Concerns domain: Language in communication</i>			
German teachers speak too many unfamiliar words to Chinese students.	×	×	×
German teachers speak too fast.	×		
Chinese students are unfamiliar with the cultural references of the German/English language.		×	
Sentences said by German teachers are too long for Chinese students to catch the key points.			×
<i>Concerns domain: Participation in communication</i>			
Chinese students do not like group discussions and have no interest in taking part	×	×	
Chinese students prefer to keep out of the affair.			×
Chinese students cannot keep pace with the rhythm of other students in discussions.	×		×
Chinese students have no interest in discussion topics and have nothing to say.		×	

First, regarding the concerns caused by personal behavior, both Chinese

students and German teachers held similar opinions. They considered that “to give teachers a negative impression”, “too shy to ask questions”, and “to express own opinions to teachers directly” were three main worries of students and teachers in their communication. Thus, in general, all participants in three groups recognized that the reserved behaviors of Chinese students were one of the primary reasons for the communication concerns which appeared.

Additionally, regarding the concerns of language, three groups regarded the amount of vocabulary that Chinese students mastered, especially the subject-related terms, as one of the reasons for their communication problems. Moreover, the responses of Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers both reflected the concerns about Chinese students’ listening comprehension. Students noted that “teachers speak too fast” and teachers were also aware of “their sentences are too long for Chinese students to follow”. However, this was not the worry for Chinese students in China. Instead, students in China were more concerned about the cultural background of the language and topics taught by their German teachers, other than the language itself.

In the end, three groups presented different opinions with respect to the concerns, which occurred in group activities. Chinese students, both in China and in Germany, expressed that group work was not their preferred forms of learning. Their low participation also gave German teachers the impression that Chinese students normally wanted to keep themselves out of the affair. In addition, Chinese students and German teachers in Germany both realized that Chinese students’ low adaptation and assimilation to the German learning context was another reason for the concerns shown in group work. Chinese students found it difficult to follow the rhythm of their peer students in Germany because of their language barriers and different thinking methods. German teachers also shared the same point of view. Conversely, Chinese students in China did not seem to have any trouble in group work with their peer students in China. However, the topics that their German teachers in China discussed

were sometimes unable to stimulate students' thirst for knowledge.

In short, the findings shown above display the general communication concerns expressed by Chinese students and German teachers in academic contexts. Although each group voiced a different degree on the various domains of concerns, some common grounds can still be found among the three groups. In section 4.3.4, the main concerns shared by the three groups will be explained, and the reasons behind the concerns will be further discussed.

4.3.4 Four major concerns of Chinese students and German teachers

By analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the three target groups, the major concerns in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers yielded from the present study can be summarized in the following four points (see sections 4.3.4.1 to 4.3.4.4):

4.3.4.1 Concern No.1: Just being shy or mainly for protecting “Face”?

“人活一张脸，树活一张皮。 *rén huó yī zhāng liǎn, shù huó yī zhāng pí.*” (*Men rest on their face just as trees rest on their bark.*) – Chinese proverb

Chinese student: [4-1] “*I have a ‘thin-skinned’ face.*” (CSGQ18)

German teacher: [4-2] “*They are mostly shy.*” (GTQ07)

“Shyness” as a conventional definition that most of the western people would like to define Chinese children as (Chen & Tse, 2008; Liu, 2010; Zhu, 2012). As shown in the results discovered in section V of the questionnaires (section 4.3.3), it found that shyness as the main cause for stopping Chinese students from actively participating in class activities, such as “to participate in discussion”, “to ask questions”, and even “being kept out of the affair”. This is going to raise the question about why Chinese

students are labeled as “shy”. Where does the shyness of Chinese students come from? Is shyness only a pure individual character problem or something with a deeper cultural background? With all these questions, a few words of a Chinese student inadvertently revealed the crux of the problem (the comment [4-3]).

[4-3] *“I often have many worries. I am a foreigner here and my German is not good enough. Will my lecturer think my questions are ‘silly’? If I say something wrong, will others laugh at me? Such worries make me most of the time upset and stop me from presenting myself. I think they just think that I am shy. Actually, I care about my “face”.” (CSGQ30)*

It can be seen from the comment [4-3] that the worry of losing face in front of others hindered the enthusiasm of this Chinese student (CSG30) to actively communicate with others.

As discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.4), the idea of “face-saving” is always a “curse” that deeply roots in the daily communication of Chinese people and affects their behavior in interaction with others. This conclusion summarized from the previous studies is also confirmed by the findings of this study. According to the results obtained in this study, communication concerns of Chinese students related to the “face” problem can be found all-pervasively in the findings, which became one of the main concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China. The qualitative data reported by Chinese students in the open-ended questions and interviews vividly proved the influence of “face” on their communication with German teachers, especially in class in Germany. For example, as the comment [4-4] shows, a Chinese student in Germany tried to avoid communicating with German teachers because of the fear of losing face.

[4-4] *“Normally, I don’t speak too much with foreign students as well as with my German teachers in class. I just want to stay on the safe side to ensure I will not lose face.” (CSGQ52)*

Under the profound influence of the idea of “face-saving”, Chinese students often mentioned two of the face-related phrases in interviews: “thin-skinned” (in Chinese 脸皮薄, liǎn pí bó) and “thick-skinned” (in Chinese 脸皮厚, liǎn pí hòu). “Thin-skinned” means someone is made easily upset by criticism or insults, while “thick-skinned” refers to the opposite. Chinese students’ “thin-skinned” faces resulted from the worry of losing face not only with German teachers but also with their peer students in Germany. For instance, Chinese students did not want to express their opinions in public because of the anxious feeling of being laughed at by other students, as the comments [4-5] and [4-6] present:

[4-5] *“I always feel nervous when I talked to either German classmates or lecturer, particular in class. I am a kind of “thin-skinned” person. I don’t want to be laughed at in case I make any mistakes.”* (CSGQ29)

[4-6] *“I usually refused to raise my opinions or answer lecturer’s question in class, because I am afraid to be laughed at by others due to my mistakes regarding language or topic-related knowledge.”* (CSGI10)

Furthermore, German teachers also expressed that communication with Chinese students in class brought about more concerns than in one-on-one conversations. Most of the German teachers pointed out that, most of the time, Chinese students “acted very reserved” in class, “did not say much”, “kept in silence”, and “tried to avoid to answering questions”. Such behaviors of Chinese students sometimes caused embarrassment to German teachers and even made teachers confused. One German teacher’s opinion in this regard were expressed through the comment [4-7],

[4-7] *“Some of my Chinese students are relatively passive in communication. They didn’t like to present their ideas unless I asked them. I had no idea about what they think.”* (GTQ13)

Whereas, in one-on-one conversations, Chinese students appeared to be more open and willing to communicate than they did in class, mentioned by one German teacher in the comment [4-8].

[4-8] *“They (Chinese students in Germany) behave more active in office hour than in class.”* (GTQ25)

Thus, it appears that communication in class require Chinese students in Germany in reality more courage to work through their fear of speaking publicly than in one-on-one communications with German teachers, though the statistical significance presented in the result of hypothesis 1a (see section 4.3.2) showed a minor difference between their level of concerns in class and in one-on-one conversations.

As found out in the study of Liu (2010:187), it is often noticed by German students that Chinese students normally go through great lengths to be well acquainted with. Most of the German students just reflexively chalk it up to the shyness of the Chinese students or their inability to speak a foreign language. However, that is only part of the story. In fact, the fear of losing face plays a great role in the Chinese mode of communication.

In view of this study, the majority of Chinese students in Germany considered that it is something challenging to communicate with foreign teachers and peers owing to the potential possibility of losing face, especially in public communication. On the basis of the findings, the main causes for the concerns of losing face can be presented as following respects.

Even though the communication with German teachers alone brought about Chinese students a certain similar degree of concerns as in class, as shown in the result of hypothesis 1a in section 4.3.2, this contained fewer stress and challenge compared to communicate with German teachers in class. This phenomenon can be

explained in this way. In the German learning context, there are three unfamiliar influential factors of communication that act as three brand-new challenges to Chinese students' face-saving, manifesting as the German class environment, German colleagues, and German teachers. Apart from the threat of losing-face caused by teachers, which is same as in one-on-one situations for Chinese students, another potential challenge come from their German colleagues. Unlike Chinese colleagues, who are considered as peers to Chinese students, German colleagues appear as highly qualified peers because of their language and relevant (cultural and academic) knowledge advantages compared to Chinese students. Under these three potential challenges of losing-face, Chinese students neither want to leave a negative impression on their German teachers in class, nor to be laughed at or slighted by their German colleagues, due to unsatisfactory performances in class. Thus, as shown in the results of this study, Chinese students showed more communication concerns in class than in one-on-one conversations.

As mentioned by two Chinese students in the comments [4-9] and [4-10], they were not confident with their performance in communication. Since they did not want to lose face in front of other students, they felt more pressure and nervous in communication in class than in one-on-one conversations with German teachers.

[4-9] *"My German classmates always give me invisible pressure while I was speaking in class. I don't feel comfortable to talk with my teachers in class because I don't want to be laughed at by others."* (CSGI02)

[4-10] *"There are not only me and the teacher in class, but also many German and European colleagues. All of them, whether their language level, or background knowledge are better than mine. I am not afraid to lose face in front of my teachers, but don't want to lose face in front of my classmates."* (CSGQ01)

Furthermore, the data obtained from Chinese students in China also reflected

the extensive and deep influence of “the matter of face” on their communication behaviors in China. The result of the hypothesis 1b (see section 4.3.2) indicated that Chinese students in China expressed more concerns in one-on-one conversations with German teachers than in class. Additionally, in general, the level of concerns of Chinese students in China was also much lower than the concerns’ level of Chinese students in Germany. The findings displayed not only the different levels of concerns between Chinese students in China and in Germany but also the underlying influence of “face” in communication. The concerns of Chinese students in China regarding the influence of “face” further supplements the reasons for the result of hypothesis 1b.

Specifically, unlike the learning context in Germany, three main communication factors for Chinese students in China are German teachers, Chinese colleagues, and the Chinese class environment. However, instead of three new challenges of face-losing in Germany, communicating with German teachers in the Chinese learning context only contains one new challenge of face-losing for students in China. That is to say, their German teachers are considered as the only one potential face-losing threat for Chinese students, while the context of a Chinese classroom and their Chinese colleagues are considered as the familiar environment and non-threatening peers. Therefore, owing to the influence of Chinese collectivism discussed in section 2.2.1.3, Chinese colleagues in class act more as the alliance of face-protection rather than exist as a threat to face-losing for students in China. This is also one of the reasons why the degree of concerns of Chinese students in China was much lower than that of Chinese students in Germany as a whole.

For example, two Chinese students in China stated that they relied on the company of other Chinese students. The help of other Chinese students could reduce the concerns in communicating with German teachers, as shown in the comments [4-11] and [4-12].

[4-11] *“Communication with my German teacher in class is easier for me than talking to him alone. In class I am not alone, the other classmates can help me*

when I had questions and no one will laugh at me if I did mistakes. I feel somehow “safe” in class.” (CSCQ09)

[4-12] *“I normally don’t go to my German teacher’s office hour, because I am afraid to say something wrong to him. If I have to go, I usually ask one or two classmates go with me. They can help me to relieve my tension while communicating with the German lecturer.” (CSCQ23)*

Without the “support” of other Chinese students, it is then obvious that in order to communicate with German teachers in one-on-one conversations, Chinese students in China experienced more concerns than in class, which also explained the difference between the results of hypothesis 1a and 1b (see section 4.3.2).

To summarize the discussion above, the main reasons for the concerns regarding “face” of Chinese students in China, also the causes of the result of hypothesis 1b, can be interpreted into two points:

First, since most of the Chinese students in China have never been abroad, as the comment [4-13] expresses, to communicate with an ordinary foreign tourist is already a challenge for them, let alone with their foreign teachers. Given that German teachers have a direct relation to students’ academic record, Chinese students treat the communication with their German teachers in one-on-one situations with prudence. They are afraid to make mistakes, linguistically and culturally, which can leave their German teachers a negative impression.

[4-13] *“Although I study the German language, I don’t have many chances to speak with Germans. I always feel very nervous when talking with my German teacher alone because I am not confident with myself.” (CSCQ11)*

Next, Chinese students in China are accustomed to the relative risk-less learning environment with the company of other Chinese colleagues. The Chinese peers virtually provide a sense of security and comfort to them, whereas this is just

what those Chinese students in Germany lack. When Chinese students interact with their German teachers alone in China, without the safe environment created by their Chinese peers, the accompanying anxiety and tension easily cause students communication barriers, which is likely to result in losing face.

In brief, on the basis of the above comments, the “thin-skinned” face brought Chinese students a considerable proportion of concerns and prevented them from bravely communicating with their German teachers, which also further hindered them from turning to their teachers for help. Although Chinese students realized their “thin-skinned” attitude would have a negative effect on communication, since this inherited Chinese traditional value has already become a millstone around their neck, as discussed in section 2.2.1.4, they still could not completely free themselves from this mentality. As a result, the face-saving shyness, misgivings, nervous, and concerns of Chinese students impeded themselves from taking the initiative in communication, which, in turn, plunged their German teachers into the awkward situation of communication. Hence, it illustrates that different cognitive behaviors, values, and practice of politeness based on cultural differences are important factors, which can determine the result and quality of communication across cultures.

4.3.4.2 Concern No. 2: Respect the teacher and the principles taught (尊师重道 zūnshīzhòngdào).

“Only when there is respect for the teacher can there be respect for the principles taught, and only when there is respect for the principles taught can the people know how to respect learning.” — (Pearce, 2014:36)

Chinese student: [4-14] *“I want my supervisor to feel my full respect to him.”* (CSGQ63)

German teacher: [4-15] *“I feel they most of the time over polite to me.”* (GTQ14)

The second concern that needs to be discussed particularly is the attitudes of Chinese students towards their German teachers, namely, the relationship between Chinese students and German teachers. As discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2.2), teachers in China has a very high status in the Chinese society and Chinese students are educated to respect and be obedient to teachers from an early age. Similar characters of Chinese students are also discovered in the findings of this study and going to be discussed in this section.

In view of the different cultural backgrounds of Chinese students and German teachers, each group embodies their social roles according to their own cultural understanding. When Chinese students meet German teachers, their cultural backgrounds come into play. Instead of playing the role of a student alone, any interaction or communication between Chinese students and German teachers requires mixing two different languages and cultures together. Although they use the same language to exchange information, the thinking pattern and language organization form cannot be guaranteed to be the same. More to the point, unintentionally, they treat the role of each other according to the understanding based on their own culture. Therefore, some relevant communication concerns are visible.

To begin with, the quantitative data collected from the items in sections III and IV of the questionnaires were analyzed according to the three categories of communication concerns (self, task, and impact). Chinese students in Germany and in China regarded the impact of their communication on German teachers as their greatest concern. The concerns regarding their behavior as a communicator and tasks of communication follow closely behind the top concern (see Figure 4.2). German teachers also considered the impact caused by Chinese students in communication as the major concerns. It can be seen that Chinese students cared much about how their German teachers react to their communicative behavior in communication. In response, German teachers shared with this concern from the perspective of their own. In other words, the reaction of German teachers to Chinese students' communicative

behavior, to some extent, played a decisive role in the quality of the communication for both sides.

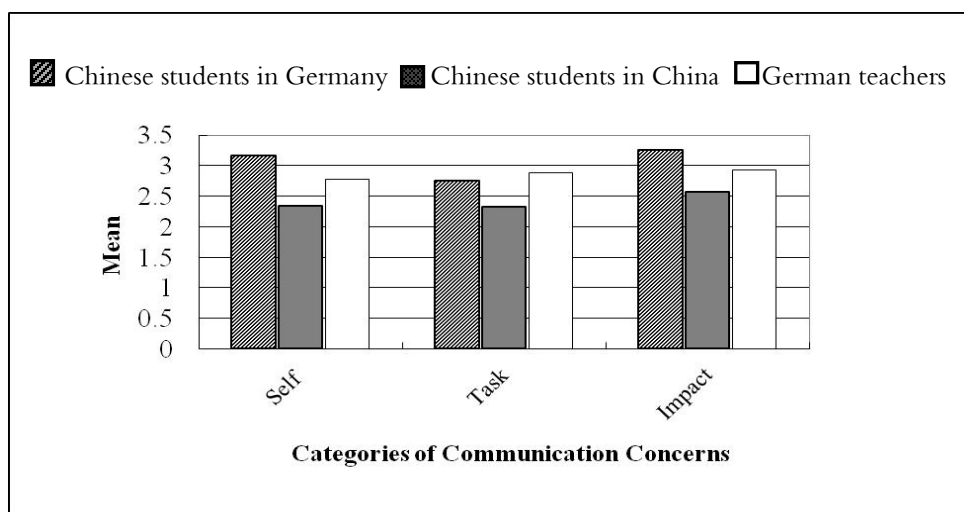


Figure 4.2: Differences of mean in the three categories of concerns between Chinese students and German teachers

Meanwhile, according to the comments obtained from the interviews and open-ended questions of the questionnaires, more than half of the Chinese students expressed that their communication concerns were in respect to the impact of their communicative behavior on teachers. The following comments provide some concrete examples:

As mentioned in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2.2), Chinese students consider that it is important to show full respect to teachers, which is also embodied in the comments of students in this study. For instance, as shown in the comments [4-16] and [4-17], Chinese students stated that they were not used to asking questions to German teachers. Students were afraid that their questions may offend German teachers, which might hinder teachers to feel the full respect of students.

[4-16] *"I normally don't raise questions, because I am afraid I may offend my teachers."* (CSGQ72)

[4-17] *"I want my supervisor to feel my full respect to him all the time."* (CSGI02)

In addition, as described in the comments [4-18] and [4-19], some Chinese students were accustomed to following the instructions of teachers. It is uncomfortable for them to interrupt German teachers during lectures.

[4-18] *“In our laboratory, most of the time I follow what my supervisor told me to do. It is nature for me to do what the boss assigned and follow his instructions.”* (CSGQ08)

[4-19] *“In class, German students interrupt the lecturer quite often. This for me is something unusual and impolite. In the beginning, I was shocked.”* (CSGQ04)

Even some Chinese students, who had been in Germany several years, still could not fully adapt to the communicative mode between German students and teachers. For instance, as shown in the comment [4-20], one Chinese student considered the behavior of German students in class to be “not polite” to the teacher.

[4-20] *“I have been in Germany two years. But I still do not feel comfortable to raise a hand while teachers are talking or make a statement whenever I want in class, just as my German colleagues usually do. I feel this is not polite to the teacher.”* (CSGQ08)

Regarding the results of German teachers (in Figure 4.2), in general, the culture-related communication concerns consisted of most of their concerns in communication with Chinese students. Specifically, their worried about how they were affected by the concerns of Chinese students in communication, which was presented as the top concern. For example, as shown in the comment [4-21] of one teacher, some communicative behaviors that Chinese students regarded as reverence based on the Chinese culture were considered over polite by German teachers in Germany.

[4-21] “*My Chinese students are usually very polite to me. Sometimes, they are over polite.*” (GTQ03)

Although Chinese students had their own ideas and worked hard, they chose to follow the directions of German teachers to show the respect for teachers. It can be realized from the comments [4-22] and [4-23] that Chinese students’ politeness and respect to teachers were sometimes understood by German teachers as obedient and passive.

[4-22] “*In our laboratory, Chinese students are normally diligent and earnest. They did the tasks that I told them very well, but rarely challenged me.*” (GTI03)

[4-23] “*My Chinese students seldom challenge my ideas or express their ideas openly. Most of the time they follow my instructions without a doubt.*” (GTQ07)

Furthermore, the findings of section V of the questionnaire also revealed that the impact of Chinese students’ behavior on German teachers in communication was one of the top concerns of both groups. For instance, most of the Chinese students acted reserved in the interaction with teachers because they did not want “to give teachers a negative impression” or “do something that may offend teachers”. These worries of Chinese students, in return, were displayed as the main worries of German teachers as well. German teachers worried that Chinese students cared too much about the reaction of teachers, so much that it hindered their motivation of communication and enthusiasm of pursuing knowledge.

On the basis of the appearance of the above concerns, the causes behind can be illustrated as the different teacher-student relationship between Germany and China.

On the one hand, as discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.1), Confucianism culture is the marrow of Chinese culture and deeply affects the social life in China. Chinese people strongly believe that only when students respect their teachers and the

teaching of teachers can students truly understand the importance of the skills, knowledge, and the principles that teachers impart to them. This concept is embodied in Confucius¹ idioms such as “the honor and dignity of the teaching profession” (师道尊严 shīdào zūnyán) and “respect teacher and his teaching” (尊师重道 zūnshī zhòngdào) (Pearce, 2014). These idioms guide the behavior of students in China from time immemorial. Students show their respects to teachers, not only by expressing their gratitude for teacher’s hard work, but also by showing their enthusiasm and desire for knowledge.

On the other hand, though the teacher-student relationship exists in all countries, the approaches to the interdependent relationship between them are different from country to country. Germany, as one of the western countries that advocates freedom and equality, encourages its students to innovate, to ask questions, and to challenge their teachers in a way that Chinese students are unaccustomed to (Plake, 2010). German teachers have all grown accustomed to the open and direct means of expression of German students. It is nature for German students to raise a hand in class whenever a question comes to mind without hesitation. Such behavior, however, still remains a big challenge for Chinese students. Although Chinese teens are breaking centuries of tradition to challenge their teachers and express their own opinions in class, it still needs to go through a deep process to emancipate students’ minds from thousands of years of oppression and self-enclosure (cf. Beech, 2011).

Above all, based on the findings of this study, the perception and attitude of Chinese students on how to treat and respond German teachers played a role in causing their concerns in communication. The politeness of Chinese students not only restricted their own performance in communication but also confused German teachers. The comprehension chasm opened by the different understanding and

¹ Confucius (552-479BC) was a Chinese teacher, editor, politician, and philosopher. He lived during a time of great disorder and conflict in China, known as the Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese history (春秋战国, 770-476 BC). He spent his whole life to study and explore how to bring about societal order and harmony. His teachings and theory give full scope to a profound impact on the value of life and ways of behaving of Chinese people. Confucius and his philosophy continue to exert a recondite influence on Chinese society even in modern China today.

identifying of the teacher-student relationship between Germany and China finally resulted in communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers.

4.3.4.3 Concern No.3: Being modest based on “The Doctrine of the Mean” (中庸之道 zhōng yōng zhīdào)

“君子之善德，其道行中庸。 Jūn zǐ zhī shàn dé, qí dào héng zhōng yōng.” (*The goodness and virtue of a gentleman manifest as his practice of moderation in all things.*) — Chinese proverb

Chinese student: [4-24] *“It is not comfortable to reveal myself in front of others.”* (CSGQ34)

German teacher: [4-25] *“Smile, smile, smile. They want to be nice to others.”* (GTQ31)

In addition to the concerns regarding face-saving and teacher-student relationship mentioned above, communication concerns caused by Chinese students’ humble and modest behaviors were also shown as one major concern discovered in this study.

Based on the findings observed, Chinese students both in Germany and in China deemed that the concerns regarding themselves as a communicator agitated them in communication, such as “uncomfortable to interrupt others” and “unwilling to take the initiative to speak”. These concerns of Chinese students reflected the influence of the idea of modesty on their communicative behavior. For example, most of the Chinese students stated that they preferred to stay in a moderate position in class, rather than be over conspicuous. As presented in the following comments [4-26] and [4-27], in order to be modest, Chinese students did not want to express personal ideas actively in class, even if they had good opinions. They did not want to be considered as competition by peers and preferred to be asked by teachers.

[4-26] *“I normally do not compete to answer the questions my teachers ask in*

class, even if I know the answers, unless teachers want me to answer. I do not want to be considered as competitive to others.” (CSGQ10)

[4-27] *“I am usually not talkative in my group. Only when I have questions I go to ask others or my supervisor. Even sometimes I know that I can do better than others, I will not show it. To be modest is important.”* (CSGI08)

Faced with those humble behaviors of Chinese students, German teachers also expressed their corresponding concerns. Most of the comments of German teachers exposed their concerns about the “low participation in group discussions” and “reserved behaviors in communication” of Chinese students. For instance, German teachers noticed that Chinese students “rarely expressed their own ideas in public” (GTQ04), “were seldom against opinions of others” (GTQ09), and “did not participate in the discussion actively” (GTQ04). Some teachers simply ascribed these behaviors of Chinese students to “their shyness” and “language ability”. However, the concept of modesty of Chinese students based on “the doctrine of mean” is the real reason.

As shown in the comment [4-24] in the beginning of this section, a Chinese student (CSG34) did not feel comfortable to be pushed forward. Compared to revealing herself in front of others, seemingly to stay in the intermediate positions was the secure zone for her. In fact, this kind of mentality can also be found in comments of other Chinese students, showing as their unwilling to be considered as “competitive”, “ambitious”, or “arrogant” to others. According to the comments [4-28] and [4-29], two Chinese students expressed that, instead of distinguishing their capability, behaving modestly and humbly among others is a good virtue and is also the best way to present oneself.

[4-28] *“Since I was very young, my parents and teachers have taught me to be humble and modest, otherwise I will lag behind.”* (CSGQ19)

[4-29] *“Modesty is a kind of virtue (谦虚是美德)’. It is one of the traditional*

virtues of the Chinese people.” (CSGQ01)

These comments of Chinese students demonstrate the Chinese rhetoric of modesty and also echo Liang’s understanding of the modesty that “one’s personal knowledge and ability cannot be openly presented” (Liang, 1992:75). As discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.5), humble and modest behaviors of Chinese are the manifestation of their thinking of “The Doctrine of Mean”. The reserved and modest behavior of Chinese students discovered in this study, thus, validate the deep influence of the concept of “The Doctrine of Mean” on their communication. Looking back on the data shown prior in this section, Chinese students in communication neither performed aggressively to response to the opinions of others, nor expressed own views loudly. Instead, they have chosen to “behave in a moderate way and keep the harmony of universal relationship” (Soccio, 2015:36), which reflects their mindset of “Zhong-yong” and the influence of “The Doctrine of the Mean” on their communication with others. On the contrary, unlike the condescension of Chinese culture, in a Western country like Germany, displaying of individuality, the spirit of innovation, and freedom of personality are very well advocated in conversation, especially in an academic context (Guan, 2007; Schroll-Machl, 2013:179f). The concerns of German teachers caused by the reserved communication manner of Chinese students, by contrast, may become comprehensible. Moreover, German teachers’ concerns, in turn, further exacerbated the pressure on Chinese students in communication, which could lead the communication into an impasse.

All in all, when two different kinds of cognition of communication encounter, the subsequent concerns can hardly be avoided for both sides of the communication. An effective method is to confront the problems based on mutual understanding rather than evade them. Only when understanding where the communication problems inhabit, can interpersonal communication and comprehension among different cultures be developed and improved. The related suggestions and countermeasures in this regard will be further discussed in chapter 6 (see section 6.2.1).

4.3.4.4 Concern No.4: Language affects communication subtly but profoundly

“语言不只是沟通的工具，而且是文化的载体。Yǔ yán bù zhǐ shì gōu tōng de gōng jù, ér qiě shì wén huà de zài tǐ.” (*Language is not only a tool for communication, but also the carrier of culture.*) — (Li & Li, 2011:41)

Chinese student: [4-30] “*My concerns are more or less related to my language ability.*” (CSGI10)

German teacher: [4-31] “*We need to first understand each other.*” (GTI01)

The last major concern discovered from the findings manifested as Chinese students’ language ability. Although the language ability has always been a hot topic for the research on Chinese overseas students and considered as one of the major barriers of Chinese students studying board, as summarized in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3.2), due to the extensive language-related concerns found out in this study, it is still worth special discussion in this section.

On the basis of the results of data analysis, although the language-related problems did not list markedly as the top concerns in the overall ranking of quantitative data, language ability was still displayed as a basic, as well as an indispensable, part of the communication concerns in this study. Almost 70% of the comments reported by Chinese students and German teachers contained concerns about students’ language proficiency. In general, these concerns can be presented as the following aspects.

First of all, most of the Chinese students indicated that language ability was one of the main causes that aggravated their communication concerns. For example, as the comment [4-32] shows, even though the cultural differences caused some students mental and behavioral concerns in communication, such as shyness and modesty, the language proficiency still played a key role in improving the quality of

communication.

[4-32] *“For me, the main problem is always the language. It is true that I have some psychological barriers because of the cultural differences, but I think I would have much fewer concerns than now if my German was better.”* (CSGI10)

In addition, some Chinese students also stated that they cannot express exactly what they had in mind to German teachers because of the insufficient language level, which weakened the quality of their communication, as the comments [4-33] and [4-34] describe below:

[4-33] *“Sometimes my concerns come from my poor German. If I could express myself clearer, I think my teacher could understand me better.”* (CSGQ102)

[4-34] *“Sometimes I cannot express exactly the meaning that I had in mind. I can only use simple sentences to describe what I thought. But my original meaning was greatly reduced.”* (CSGQ07)

To be more specific, Chinese students in Germany expressed that they had great difficulty in understanding the lectures and raising questions. Some students mentioned that they failed to catch up on the lectures and participate in class activities, which, in turn, increased their psychological burden based on cultural differences, as mentioned in the comments [4-35] and [4-36].

[4-35] *“At the beginning, I almost understood nothing at lectures. I just saw the lips of my lecturer were moving quickly, but what I could understand were only a few words.”* (CSGI04)

[4-36] *“As often happened in class, I was still thinking about lecturer’s words in the first part and he had already moved to the second part or even further. I turned to other students after a lecture in order to make up what I had missed,*

but I still felt that I missed part of the lecture.” (CSGI09)

Thus, it can be seen that, although all the Chinese students had passed the standard language (German/English) test required by German universities before their studies began, as mentioned in the comments [4-37] and [4-38], their language proficiency was still not sufficient to fully follow the lectures. A similar result also was mentioned in the previous studies discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3.2), such as Wang (2008a:107) discovered that some Chinese students studying in America were not good enough to appropriately use the language in speaking and writing, although they came to the United States with high scores in TOEFL and GRE tests.

[4-37] *“Although I have achieved enough scores of TestDaF², it is still far from enough. In class, I have difficulty in understanding what lecturers say. I have tried my best in class. However, given the same period of time, I simply cannot fulfill the tasks assigned by lecturer compare with my German peers. To be honest, all of my Chinese peers have the same feeling as me.”* (CSGI10)

[4-38] *“We (Chinese students) have all passed the German language test (TestDaF or DSH³) before we started our studies here. But this does not mean that we have no problem with understanding and speaking.”* (CSGI04)

Some Chinese students also noted that when they had difficulties in expressing opinions or questions in the German language, they chose to either use English or draw a diagram in order to convey their ideas to German lecturers or peers.

² The TestDaF, formally Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache ("Test of German as a foreign language"), is a standardised language test of German proficiency for non-native German speakers. It aims at people who would like to study at or academics and scientists who want to work at German universities. The test is run by the TestDaF-Institut. Information is retrieved from Goethe institution official website: <http://www.goethe.de/lrn/prj/pba/bes/tdf/enindex.htm> (last retrieved: 18.04.2015).

³ The “Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang” abbr. DSH is the entry card to studies in Germany. DSH is a language examination which tests whether students are capable of taking on studies at a university in Germany. The exam is taken before studies commence at each of the universities. The exam is in written and oral form. Information is retrieved from DSH official website: <http://en.dsh-germany.com/info/#dsh-generally/> (last retrieved: 18.04.2015).

In addition, compared with the communication in class, communication with German teachers in one-on-one conversations seemed to have less language-related concerns for Chinese students, both in Germany and in China. For instance, students voiced that they “focused more on the topic rather than the language” and “felt less anxious if made grammatical mistake” in communication with German teachers alone. Some students also mentioned that German teachers were more likely to be patient and willing to help students in one-on-one conversations than in class.

Likewise, German teachers also noticed Chinese students’ concerns regarding their own language ability, particularly of German language, and considered the language ability as the main reason that hindered Chinese students to communicate openly and freely. Some German teachers stated that they noticed the different communication behaviors and learning habits of Chinese students, and tried to encourage students to express themselves in order to let others understand them well. However, the realistic situation is not satisfactory. Most Chinese students encountered difficulty in explaining their thoughts and worries clearly because of their insufficient foreign language ability, which would, in turn, only make the process of communication worse.

However, in contrast, Chinese students studying in the English-speaking international master programs stated fewer concerns in communication than the students from the German-speaking programs. Although English-speaking students met some unfamiliar terminologies in English in lectures, the English language alone did not challenge them much in communication. The comment [4-39] displays an example of this point of view:

[4-39] *“Since the teaching language is English, except for some unfamiliar words or slang, generally speaking, there is no serious problem in communication for me to deal with.” (CSGQ65)*

Moreover, considering that English is a foreign language not only for Chinese

students but also for German teachers and peer students, one English-speaking Chinese student stated that it is “fair” and “relieved” to communicate with German teachers and peers in English, as shown in the comment [4-40].

[4-40] *“I am a student of an English-speaking program. I do not think I have any serious problems. I speak English with my German teachers and my international classmates. English is a foreign language for all of us, which makes me feel fair and relieved in communication.”* (CSGQ66)

In short, Chinese thinking method and means of expression are indispensable parts of Chinese students’ mode of communication. It is a big challenge and also a long process for them to adapt to another communicative pattern of thought and custom, which is different from their own. As foreign students, Chinese students need more time than their German counterparts to understand and digest the whole process of information, whether in German or in English. Since thinking is invisible, it is difficult to judge whether the concerns of Chinese students came from their different cultural background or their language ability, and, it is also not wise to dissociate the language from the culture at all. As the carrier of culture, language is closely related to culture and conveys all kinds of cultural information beyond the time and space. But above all, as a tool of communication and the vehicle of human thought, the role of language in interpersonal interaction, though basic, cannot be neglected at all. According to the findings regarding language-based barriers, some corresponding methods are provided in chapter 6 (see section 6.2.2) in order to solve the language-related communication concerns discovered in this study.

**Results of the Second Research Question: The Concerns Resulted
from the Differences between Chinese Students and German Teachers**

**4.4 Concerns resulted from the differences between Chinese students
and German teachers**

“Sometimes we feel we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools.”

— Salman Rushdie

When different groups of cultures encounter and people do not have a deep understanding of the other, concerns such as misunderstanding are inevitable in communication. Just as the saying of Rushdie presented above, cultural similarities would build a platform to make communication among people from different cultural backgrounds possible, whereas cultural differences might also form a steep cliff to affect intercultural communication negatively.

Concerning this part of the study, the two main cultural groups involved were Chinese students and their German teachers in Germany (excluding German teachers in China). In order to find out the differences and further analyze the concerns between Chinese students and German teachers in their communication, the author developed Figure 4.3 to illustrate the different cultural communication contexts that each cultural group were involved in during their interaction in Germany. As shown in Figure 4.3, the similarities between these two groups were that they not merely lived in the German cultural context, but the interaction between them also subjected to the German academic context. In other words, the German academic context was the common denominator. However, the difference between these two groups appeared

that, apart from the influence of German academic culture, Chinese students were also affected by the behavior and etiquette standard based on their Chinese cultural background, while German teachers were not. Therefore, Chinese students needed to negotiate with between the Chinese and German communicative styles in communication with German teachers, and so did German teachers.

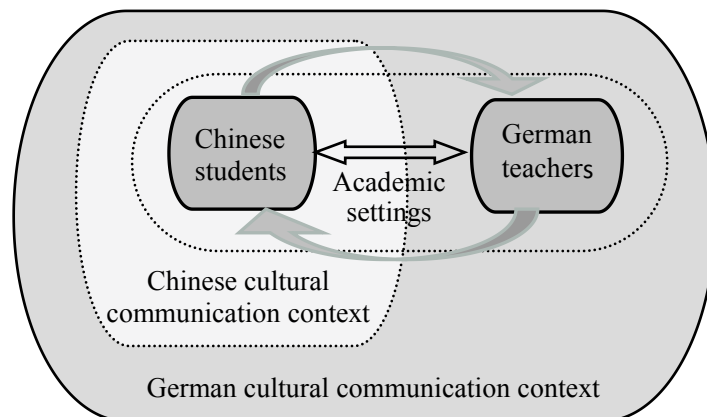


Figure 4.3: Cultural communication contexts of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

If the first research question discussed the general communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers from a globe perspective, then this section mainly focused on the communication between two cultural groups from a specific point of view by comparing the concerns of the two groups. Particularly, the differences between Chinese students and German teachers regarding their communication concerns in every domain of concerns (see sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.4) and the reasons behind the appearance of concerns (see section 4.4.5) will be illustrated in the following sections. The results reply to the second research question: *How do the communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany compare to those of their German teachers in different communication settings?*

4.4.1 Comparison between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

First of all, in order to have an overview of the concerns distribution between Chinese students and German teachers, the ranking order of mean scores of each item in section III and section IV of the questionnaires is listed in Table 4.10.

As shown in Table 4.10, the top three communication concerns expressed by Chinese students in Germany were items No.34, No.14, and No.35, of which No.14 and No.35 are a pair. It can be seen that during the communication, Chinese students in Germany were most concerned with whether their German teachers can feel the full respect of Chinese students (No.34) and whether their behaviors were appropriate to German culture in class and in one-on-one conversations (No.14/No.35). All three items described the perception-related communication concerns about the impact of Chinese students' communicating on German teachers. Moreover, most of the top-ranking communication concerns (top nine items) perceived by Chinese students in Germany were the concerns in the category of self or impact, and related to perception- or emotion-based barriers. Additionally, Chinese students appeared to be least worried about whether teachers would be confused by them in one-on-one conversations (No.26), whether they understood what teachers said in class (No.4), and whether they established direct eye contact with a teacher when they communicate alone (No.31).

Unlike Chinese students, German teachers cared about whether their Chinese students could be able to express their dissatisfaction/requests (No.7), to have their own opinions (No.36), and to participate in class actively (No.16). Therefore, the general academic performance of Chinese students seemed more important to German teachers than whether their students could speak without grammatical errors (No.30), whether behaviors of students integrate into the German culture (No.14), or whether they feel the full respect of students (No.34). This result also responds to the finding summarized from the correlated previous studies that teachers tend to emphasize on

the academic performance and ability of students in interaction, which was discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.1). According to the top ten concerns of German teachers, they worried that Chinese students' knowledge (No.16, No.15 and No.5), language ability (No.6, No.12 and No.4), and mentality (No.7, No.36, No.28 and No.23) would hinder their effective communication. Hence, German teachers cared mostly about how to create successful communication with their Chinese students, rather than how well they would be treated by their Chinese students.

It is not hard to see through the comparison of the results of both groups that some items ranking high in students' responses appeared to be low in the responses of German teachers. For example, Chinese students in Germany were strongly concerned with appearing respectful to their teachers (No.34) and being appropriate in the German culture (No.14), whereas their German teachers considered these items among the least of their concerns. On the other hand, what did not concern most of the Chinese students in some cases were the major concerns of their German teachers. For instance, voicing dissatisfaction (No.7/No.28) was ranked as the first and the tenth concerns by the teachers, but relatively low (the nineteenth and the twentieth) by the students. The concerns rated among the top ten concerns of Chinese students did not seem to be the serious concerns of German teachers, which rated among the lower half of teachers' ranking, and vice versa. Hence, it can be seen that Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers experienced different concerns during their communication. Chinese students paid close attention to the ways to behave themselves and the manners to respond to their teachers, while their German teachers focused mainly on the substance of the communication.

Table 4.10: Items of communication concerns in the ranking order (Chinese students and German teachers in Germany)

Rank	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)			German teachers in Germany (N=34)		
	Item No.	Mean	Domain	Item No.	Mean	Domain
1.	34	4.032	I-P	7	3.911	T-E
2.	14	4.016	I-P	36	3.911	I-P
3.	35	3.853	I-P	16	3.794	T-K
4.	2	3.634	S-E	6	3.764	T-L
5.	22	3.617	S-P	15	3.764	S-K
6.	18	3.577	S-E	5	3.706	I-K
7.	1	3.471	S-P	23	3.705	I-E
8.	17	3.406	S-P	12	3.676	T-L
9.	3	3.341	S-E	4	3.647	S-L
10.	9	3.292	T-L	28	3.647	T-E
11.	33	3.260	I-L	2	3.529	S-E
12.	37	3.252	S-P	13	3.500	I-L
13.	15	3.170	S-K	18	3.411	S-E
14.	36	3.170	I-P	32	3.411	T-E
15.	10	3.146	T-L	33	3.323	I-L
16.	19	3.146	S-P	26	3.294	I-K
17.	23	3.040	I-E	25	3.235	T-L
18.	13	2.983	I-L	10	3.205	T-L
19.	28	2.967	T-E	22	3.117	S-P
20.	7	2.951	T-E	3	3.000	S-E
21.	11	2.935	T-L	1	2.970	S-P
22.	29	2.902	T-P	24	2.941	S-E
23.	8	2.804	T-P	19	2.676	S-P
24.	6	2.748	T-L	29	2.352	T-P
25.	24	2.739	S-E	38	2.352	S-K
26.	16	2.723	T-K	20	2.323	S-E
27.	27	2.715	T-L	21	2.205	S-P
28.	32	2.715	T-E	27	2.205	T-L
29.	20	2.691	S-E	8	2.147	T-P
30.	38	2.658	S-K	17	1.970	S-P
31.	12	2.561	T-L	35	1.912	I-P
32.	30	2.544	T-L	37	1.882	S-P
33.	5	2.512	I-K	9	1.852	T-L
34.	21	2.504	S-P	11	1.852	T-L
35.	25	2.495	T-L	31	1.705	T-E
36.	26	2.487	I-K	30	1.676	T-L
37.	4	2.455	S-L	14	1.617	I-P
38.	31	2.122	T-E	34	1.323	I-P

4.4.2 Hypothesis testing of the second research question

Furthermore, for the purpose of comparing the communication concerns between the Chinese students and their German teachers more precisely, the next step is to find out whether there exists the substantive different level of communication concerns between them, though the mean values of concerns displayed in Figure 4.1 appeared various between two groups. The result of the hypothesis with respect to the second question (*Hypothesis 2a: Chinese students and German teachers in Germany express different concerns in their communication.*) provided the objective answer to this question.

A series of independent t-test was applied to determine whether the communication concerns perceived by Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers are different in each concern-related domain. On the basis of the findings shown in Table 4.11, the responses in some sub-domains of communication concerns displayed a significant relationship between students and teachers. Particularly, there were highly significant differences between students' and teachers' responses regarding the concerns based on capacity-related knowledge and culture-related perception ($p < .001$). Significant differences were also found between two groups about their communication concerns in one-on-one conversations ($p < .05$). Additionally, the results also revealed that Chinese students in Germany differed significantly from their German teachers in respect to the concerns of self and impact categories ($p < .05$). However, Chinese students and German teachers expressed a similar level of concerns with respect to their communication in class, task-related concerns, concerns based on language ability, and emotion-related concerns. Thus, this hypothesis was received partial support.

Table 4.11: *T*-test results of communication concerns perceived by Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

Domains of communication concerns	t-test of communication concerns					
	Students in Germany		Teachers in Germany		Results of <i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t value	P value
Communication situations						
In class	3.047	1.120	3.121	1.089	-.674	.503
In one-on-one conversations	2.996	1.182	2.663	1.188	2.528	.012
Communication concerns categories						
Self	3.170	1.124	2.782	1.047	2.982	.003
Task	2.755	1.120	2.881	1.303	-1.110	.271
Impact	3.262	1.176	2.922	1.355	2.403	.017
Communication barriers						
Capacity-based barriers						
Language	2.831	1.117	2.904	1.161	-.606	.546
Knowledge	2.714	1.126	3.382	1.055	-4.921	.000
Culture-based barriers						
Emotion	2.978	1.111	3.159	1.077	-1.442	.151
Perception	3.348	1.165	2.341	1.101	8.647	.000

P < .05 indicates significant differences

P < .01 indicates very significant differences

P < .001 indicates highly significant differences

Therefore, to put it simply, the difference between Chinese students and their German teachers regarding their communication concerns did not show extremely significantly in general. However, in some domains of concerns, both groups still perceived different concerns to a certain extent. The content of Table 4.12 presents a brief overview of the result of this hypothesis. According to the mean values of the domains of concerns that showed significant differences, it can find out that Chinese students' degree of concerns was mostly higher than German teachers' degree. However, German teachers showed a higher level of concerns about Chinese students' knowledge barriers than the level Chinese students estimated themselves. Among these domains, the concerns in relation to students' knowledge and perception

appeared remarkably different between Chinese students and German teachers. On the contrary, communication in a lecture, concerns regarding the task, language, and emotion did not reveal as the main difference between the two groups.

Table 4.12: Differences and similarities of communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

	Differences	Similarities
Concerns regarding...	* In one-on-one conversations (CG>GT)	In class
	* Impact of communication on others (CG>GT)	Task of communicating
	** Self as a communicator (CG>GT)	Language ability
	*** Knowledge reserves (CG<GT)	Emotion on communication
	*** Perception on communication (CG>GT)	

- * stands for significant different CG: stands for Chinese students in Germany
 ** stands for very significant different GT: stands for German teachers
 *** stands for highly significant different

In short, the results of the comparison between the concerns reported by Chinese students and German teachers revealed that the two groups not only expressed a similar degree of concerns in some domains, but they also possessed varying degrees in some other concerns domains. In the concerns domains, which displayed significant differences between two groups, Chinese students generally stated a higher degree of communication concerns than their German teachers did. However, the responses to the items of knowledge-related concerns revealed that German teachers expressed a higher level of concerns than their Chinese students did.

4.4.3 Comparison of communication concerns within each research group

The results of the hypothesis 2a presented the superficial aspects of the differences between Chinese students and their German teachers. That is to say, that the results can only prove that Chinese students and German teachers expressed different concerns in some communication domains, but did not specify the differences within each group. Hence, the deeper causes behind the appearances remain to explore further.

In addition to discussing the ranking order of the items between both groups, Tukey's pairwise comparison was carried out within each group in order to examine the differences among all the concerns, and further to find out the major distinctive concern(s). The results are shown in Table 4.13. The findings revealed that perception-related communication concerns displayed a remarkable significant difference compared to the most domains of concerns within each group. Therefore, it confirms that the concerns about the perception of communication contained certain different influencing factors to the most categories of concerns for all three groups (including Chinese students in China). Furthermore, apart from perception-related barriers, knowledge-related concerns also appeared to be an important factor that may cause a difference to some of other domains of concerns for both Chinese students and their German teachers in Germany. Even more noteworthy is that, as shown in Figure 4.2, the mean of items about perception and knowledge shown as the most and least concerns of Chinese students, while displaying as the least and most concerns for German teachers, respectively. Hence, concerns regarding knowledge and perception were considered to be key factors that may cause a different level of communication concerns between Chinese and German teachers in Germany, which is worth further discussing.

To understand the situation intuitively, Table 4.14 and Table 4.15 list the overall statistic results of the items with respect to perception- and knowledge-related barriers of the two groups. Unlike the answers to items about language- and emotion-related barriers, in which Chinese students and German teachers expressed very a similar level of concerns⁴, the responses to knowledge- and perception-related items expose the different degrees of concerns between Chinese students and German teachers in their communication (see Table 4.14).

⁴ The similar levels of concerns of Chinese students and German teachers in Germany manifested as they sometimes/often had concerns related to language, and rarely/sometimes expressed concerns related to emotion.

Table 4.13: A summary of significant relationships of communication concerns domains within each research group

Concerns Domains	Overall	In class	Alone	Self	Task	Impact	Capacity	language	Knowledge	Culture	Emotion	Perception
Overall concerns									1* 2*			1* 2*
In class									1**			2*** 3*
Conversation alone									2***		2*	1**
Self					1***		1**	1*	1*** 2**			
Task						1***			2*	1***		1*** 2**
Impact							1***	1***	1***			2**
Capacity										1**		
Language									2* 3*	1**		1*** 2** 3*
Knowledge										1*** 2***		1*** 2***
Culture												
Emotion												1** 2***
Perception							1*** 2***					

- 1: Chinese students in Germany * Significant at 0.05 level
 2: German teachers in Germany ** Significant at 0.01 level
 3: Chinese students in China *** Significant at 0.001 level

On the basis of the data in Table 4.14, it is evident that some knowledge-related concerns, which rarely or only sometimes bothered Chinese students in Germany, nearly often brought their German teachers certain anxiety in communication.

Table 4.14: Communication concerns related to knowledge-related barriers perceived by Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

Content of items	Frequency (unit=n, %) ^{1,2}					Target groups (N=123; 42)
	1	2	3	4	5	
No.15: I feel nervous to speak in class because I may ask something sounds stupid due to my lack of knowledge of the topics.	7	20	51	35	10	Chinese students
	<i>5.7</i>	<i>16.3</i>	<i>41.4</i>	<i>28.5</i>	<i>8.1</i>	
	0	2	9	18	5	German teachers
		<i>6.1</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>52.8</i>	<i>14.6</i>	
No.16: I cannot engage in class because my knowledge is not enough for the discussion in lectures.	8	58	30	14	13	Chinese students
	<i>6.5</i>	<i>47.2</i>	<i>24.3</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>10.7</i>	
	0	0	10	21	3	German teachers
			<i>29.4</i>	<i>61.8</i>	<i>8.8</i>	
No.38: My knowledge is not enough for a comfortable discussion with teachers alone.	25	41	26	16	15	Chinese students
	<i>20.4</i>	<i>33.3</i>	<i>21.1</i>	<i>13.0</i>	<i>12.2</i>	
	7	13	10	3	1	German teachers
	<i>20.6</i>	<i>38.3</i>	<i>29.4</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>2.9</i>	
No.5: My knowledge about the lecture/topics makes my teachers confused in class.	20	49	30	19	5	Chinese students
	<i>16.3</i>	<i>39.8</i>	<i>24.4</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>4.1</i>	
	0	3	8	19	4	German teachers
		<i>8.8</i>	<i>23.5</i>	<i>55.9</i>	<i>11.8</i>	
No.26: My knowledge about the lecture/topics makes my teachers confused in our one-on-one conversations.	21	48	32	17	5	Chinese students
	<i>17.1</i>	<i>39.0</i>	<i>26.0</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>4.1</i>	
	5	3	7	15	4	German teachers
	<i>14.7</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>44.1</i>	<i>11.8</i>	

Note:

1. The above number on the frequency column indicates the number of students/teachers, and the below number with italic style indicates the valid percentage.

2. The frequency was counted based on the 5-Likert-Scale indicating: 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= always a concern of the participants.

As shown in Table 4.14, 41.4% of the Chinese students in Germany (n=51) sometimes felt nervous to speak in class because of their worries about the lack of knowledge, while more than half of their German teachers (52.8%, n=18) regarded this often as making them worry (item No.15). In addition, concerning to talk with teachers alone comfortably based on enough knowledge (item No.38), most of the

Chinese students in Germany and their German teachers expressed the similar degree of concerns, which shows that over 30% of each group rarely considered it as a concern.

However, some items disclosed the significant different degrees of concerns between these two groups. To be specific, most of the Chinese students in Germany (47.2%, n=58) expressed that to engage in class with certain knowledge was rarely their concern, but most of their German teachers (61.8%, n=21) had contrary opinions (item No.16). Teachers voiced that they often worried that Chinese students could not actively participate in class due to their insufficient background knowledge. In addition, the concern about whether students confused their teachers in interaction also reflected a different degree of concerns (items No.5 and No.26). 39.8% of the Chinese students in Germany (n=49) rarely worried that their teachers were confused by them in class and 39% of the students (n=49) had such concerns during communicating with teachers alone. However, unlike Chinese students, about half of German teachers presented that they were often confused by their Chinese students in class (55.9%, n=19), as well as in one-on-one conversations (44.1%, n=15).

In sum, activities related to background knowledge, such as speaking in lectures, engaging in discussion, and talking with teachers about academic topics, did not cause most of the Chinese students in Germany as many concerns as it did their German teachers. On the contrary, for most of the German teachers, they did consider that relevant academic background knowledge is a necessary capacity of Chinese students to ensure their conversation going smoothly.

Another significant difference between the two groups manifested in the domain of perception-related concerns. The results of responses on the corresponding items are shown in Table 4.15. It can be noticed from the results that Chinese students and German teachers not merely expressed similar degrees of concerns to some of the items, but, more notably, they also responded diverse and even polarized answers to most of the items, which reflected their various communicative mentalities.

Table 4.15: Communication concerns about perception-related barriers perceived by Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

Content of items	Frequency (unit=n, %) ^{1,2}					Target groups (N=123; 42)
	1	2	3	4	5	
No.1: I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared to my teachers in class.	2	12	55	36	18	Chinese students
	<i>1.6</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>44.7</i>	<i>29.4</i>	<i>14.6</i>	
	0	5	25	4	0	German teachers
		<i>14.7</i>	<i>73.5</i>	<i>11.8</i>		
No.17: I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared to my teachers in one-on-one conversations.	3	11	58	36	15	Chinese students
	<i>2.4</i>	<i>8.9</i>	<i>47.2</i>	<i>29.3</i>	<i>12.2</i>	
	8	19	7	0	0	German teachers
	<i>23.5</i>	<i>55.9</i>	<i>20.6</i>			
No.19: I cannot be honest with my teachers without being uncomfortable.	2	17	74	21	9	Chinese students
	<i>1.6</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>60.2</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>7.3</i>	
	4	10	13	7	0	German teachers
	<i>11.8</i>	<i>29.4</i>	<i>38.2</i>	<i>20.6</i>		
No.29: I do not understand the humor my teachers used during our one-on-one conversations.	2	48	42	25	6	Chinese students
	<i>1.6</i>	<i>39.1</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>4.9</i>	
	5	17	9	1	2	German teachers
	<i>14.7</i>	<i>50.0</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>5.9</i>	
No.8: I do not understand the humor which my teachers used in class.	6	46	42	24	5	Chinese students
	<i>4.9</i>	<i>37.4</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>19.5</i>	<i>4.1</i>	
	9	14	8	3	0	German teachers
	<i>26.5</i>	<i>41.2</i>	<i>23.5</i>	<i>8.8</i>		
No.21: My teachers do not enjoy talking with me.	36	43	6	22	16	Chinese students
	<i>29.2</i>	<i>35.0</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>17.9</i>	<i>13.0</i>	
	8	14	9	3	0	German teachers
	<i>23.5</i>	<i>41.2</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>8.8</i>		
No.22: My teachers would underestimate me because of my defective communication ability.	7	18	24	40	34	Chinese students
	<i>5.7</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>19.6</i>	<i>32.5</i>	<i>27.6</i>	
	3	5	13	11	2	German teachers
	<i>8.8</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>38.2</i>	<i>32.4</i>	<i>5.9</i>	
No.37: My teachers would underestimate me because of my lack of knowledge for the subject.	11	18	46	25	23	Chinese students
	<i>8.9</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>37.5</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>18.7</i>	
	12	15	6	1	0	German teachers
	<i>35.4</i>	<i>44.1</i>	<i>17.6</i>	<i>2.9</i>		
No.34: My teachers cannot feel my full respect to him/her.	2	9	21	42	49	Chinese students
	<i>1.6</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>17.1</i>	<i>34.1</i>	<i>39.8</i>	
	26	5	3	0	0	German teachers
	<i>76.5</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>8.8</i>			

No.36: Showing respect to my teachers by following her/his opinions, which makes she/he think that I am not assertive.	9	18	59	17	20	Chinese students
	<i>7.4</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>47.9</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>16.3</i>	
	0	3	7	14	10	German teachers
		<i>8.8</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>41.2</i>	<i>29.4</i>	
No.14: I may offend my teachers because my behaviors are not appropriate in a German classroom.	4	3	29	38	49	Chinese students
	<i>3.3</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>30.9</i>	<i>39.8</i>	
	20	7	7	0	0	German teachers
	<i>58.8</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>20.6</i>	0	0	
No.35: I may offend my teachers in one-on-one conversations because of my behaviors are not appropriate in the German culture.	13	7	17	34	52	Chinese students
	<i>10.6</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>13.8</i>	<i>27.6</i>	<i>42.3</i>	
	16	9	5	4	0	German teachers
	<i>47.1</i>	<i>26.5</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>11.7</i>	0	

Note:

1. The above number on the frequency column indicates the number of students/teachers, and the below number with italic style indicates the valid percentage.
2. The frequency was counted based on the 5-Likert-Scale indicating: 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5= always a concern of the participants.

More specifically, in regard to appearing knowledgeable and well-prepared to teachers (item No.1), 44.7% of the Chinese students in Germany and 73.5% of the German teachers presented that this sometimes made them concerned during the interaction in class. In one-on-one conversations (item No.17), almost half of the Chinese students in Germany (47.2%, n=58) indicated that their wishes for appearing well-prepared and knowledgeable in front of teachers sometimes was a concern of them. Nevertheless, more than half (55.9%, n=19) of the German teachers voiced that they rarely minded whether their Chinese students would appear knowledgeable and well-prepared for an individual meeting. This also shows that whether in class or in one-on-one conversations, most of the Chinese students cared much about how their German teachers thought about their academic performance, whereas German teachers cared much about the performance of Chinese students in class instead of in one-on-one conversations.

Regarding the item related to the honesty of students (item No.19), more than half of the Chinese students in Germany (60.2%, n=74) complained that they were sometimes uncomfortable if they were totally honest with German teachers. With respect to German teachers, only 38.2% of them (n=13) were concerned that their

Chinese students sometimes or even often cannot feel free to be honest in the interaction. Moreover, over 30% of the Chinese students in Germany indicated that they were rarely worried whether they understood the humor German teachers used in lectures (37.4%, n=46) and in one-on-one conversations (39.1%, n=48), shown in the items No.29 and No.8. Likewise, about the similar amount of the German teachers also rarely considered that the Chinese students' understanding of the German-style humor could be a serious problem, that could have a negative effect on their communication after class (50%, n=17) and in class (41.2%, n=14). Therefore, concerns regarding being honest and humor did not show a great difference between these two groups.

The responses of Chinese students in Germany regarding whether their teachers enjoy talking to them displayed two extremes (item No.21). 64.2% of them never (29.2%, n=36) and rarely (35%, n=43) thought that their teachers did not like talking to them, but still 30.9% of them often (17.9%, n=22) and always (13%, n=16) felt German teachers did not enjoy talking to them. Similar to Chinese students, 67.7% of the German teachers never (23.5%, n=8) or rarely (41.2%, n=14) had the impression that their Chinese students felt they were treated coldly by teachers. Only a very small amount of the German teachers (8.8%, n=3) often had certain concerns in regard to their attitude to Chinese students. Based on this result, it is known that German teachers are usually kind and friendly to Chinese students, so that no serious concerns caused in this regard for both groups.

Over 60% of the Chinese students in Germany stated that whether teachers would underestimate them because of their communication ability often (32.5%, n=40) and always (27.6%, n=34) bothered them (item No.22). Slightly differently, more than half of the German teachers (70.6%, n=24) were sometimes (38.2%, n=13) and often (32.4%, n=11) worried that their Chinese students would think they were underestimated by teachers due to the communication ability. Moreover, only 23.5% of Chinese students in Germany replied that they were never (8.9%, n=11) or rarely

(14.6%, n=18) worried about whether teachers would underestimate them because of their insufficient academic knowledge (item No.37). However, differently, this concern never (35.4%, n=12) or rarely (44.1%, n=15) bothered 79.5% of the German teachers. This displays that most of the Chinese students were concerned much about the impact of their background knowledge on the communication with their teachers, whereas many of the German teachers held exact opposite opinions.

More than 70% of the Chinese students (73.9%, n=91) in Germany were often (34.1%, n=42) and even always (39.8%, n=49) worried about whether their German teachers could feel their full respect during the interaction (item No.34). Unlike Chinese students, 76.5% of the German teachers (n=26) never considered that the full respect of students would have any serious positive or passive influence on their communication. In this sense, most of the Chinese students greatly emphasized the importance of etiquette on conversations, but their teachers preferred to focus on the substance of the talks rather than emphasize on the behavior or style. In spite of this, students' patterns for showing respect to teachers did bring some of their teachers certain concerns. Likewise, some Chinese students also realized the potential consequences of their "over" discreet behavior to some degree. For example, about half of the Chinese students in Germany (47.9%, n=59) sometimes had a certain concern that their teachers would look down on them if they followed ideas of teachers for showing respect (item No.36). Given this kind of behavior of Chinese students for showing respect, 70.6% of the German teachers were often (41.2%, n=14) and always (29.4%, n=10) worried that Chinese students, instead of thinking on their own, would follow ideas of others in order to show respect.

Finally, concerning the appropriate behavior in the German academic context (items No.14 and No.35), most of the Chinese students in Germany were often (30.9%, n=38; 27.6%, n=34) or always (39.8%, n=49; 42.3%, n=52) not confident with their performance. They worried about whether they performed in the correct way of a German academic settings, not only in class but also in one-on-one conversations.

Unlike Chinese students, the other way around, around half of the German teachers never considered that it is important for Chinese students to behavior in line with the German communicative way, neither in class (58.8%, n=20) nor in the individual meetings (47.1%, n=16). The different answers stated by these two groups expose that the German academic context acted as a considerable influencing factor that affected Chinese students severely in their communication. Conceivably then, Chinese students faced the challenge of the collision and blend of two kinds of attitudes based on two types of cultures.

In sum, as can be seen from the above analysis, most of the Chinese students attached great importance to the influence of culture. They were mostly worried whether their Chinese-style of communicative behavior, learning habits, and thinking mode would be fit for the interaction in the German academic context, and how their behavior would further affect their German teachers in communication. Compared to the concerns regarding the cultural collision between Chinese and German perceptions, Chinese students had less worry about their knowledge-related barriers than had German teachers. As for German teachers, on the contrary, they cared more about Chinese students' capacity and qualification in communication rather than worried about how polite or appropriate the students reacted. In spite of this, German teachers did mind that the potential pressure based on Chinese students' sensitive cultural perception may influence on students themselves negatively, and thus further influence the quality of their interaction with others.

4.4.4 Summary of the analysis results

The second research question emphasizes on the comparison of the concerns discovered in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany.

To begin with, the results of data analysis displayed that Chinese students and

German teachers expressed a similar level of communication concerns in class, especially the concerns about task-, emotion-, and language-related communication concerns. Both groups stated that these concerns sometimes made them anxious in communication. They both realized that language acted as an important factor in their communication, particularly in class. Students were fully aware of the limitations of their communication skills in a linguistically and cultural foreign academic environment. German teachers also expressed their understanding for Chinese students' language limitation, although teachers valued the verbal communication ability highly.

Likewise, Chinese students also recognized that they were sometimes not confident enough in communication emotionally, such as to be silent in class or express own opinions fearlessly, which were also noticed by their German teachers. One teacher mentioned in the interview that: [4-41] *“Although my Chinese students tend to be quiet in our lab meeting, some of them have the excellent analytical ability in our laboratory team (GTI03).”* Recognizing Chinese students' different cultural background was something German teachers were well aware of and reportedly endeavored to make the students feel more comfortable and relaxed during the interaction. Thus, German teachers expressed a similar degree of concern about students' uneasiness or non-confidence as the students did.

Additionally, the results of the t-tests also indicated significant differences of some concerns between these two groups. The most salient differences were found in the concerns discovered in one-on-one conversations, concerns resulted from self as a communicator, concerns caused by the impact of self-communication on others, and knowledge- and perception-related concerns. The major results and differences between the concerns of Chinese students and German teachers were listed in Table 4.16.

As shown in Table 4.16, Chinese students generally showed a higher level of concerns about their own perception of communication than their German teachers

did. Most of the Chinese students were concerned more about their own behavior (self as a communicator) and performance in communication (impact on teachers) because they wanted to give a good impression to their teachers, whereas German teachers considered such problems less serious than their Chinese students did. Chinese students typically replied that showing respect to teachers was the most fundamental thing that a student should do, while some German teachers replied that they want to talk with Chinese students in a “more casual way” (GTQ02).

Table 4.16: Major results and differences of the comparison between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany

Communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany				
No significant differences		Significant differences		
Communication in class		Communication in one-on-one conversations		
Domain	Task of communication	Domain	Self as a communicator	Impact of self-communication on others
Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A similar degree of distribution between two groups • Mostly SOMETIMES a concern of both groups • Chinese students were not confidence about self-behaviors • German teachers' empathy for students 	Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various degrees of distribution between two groups • German teachers concerned more about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge - Influence of students' concerns on students themselves • Chinese students concerned more about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their correct perception to communication - Negative reflection of teachers 	
Language		Perception		

Moreover, the cultural appropriateness of Chinese students' communication in the German learning contexts also appeared as a different concern between the two groups. On the one hand, Chinese students were concerned with whether their behaviors were appropriate to German communicative manner, so as to not offend to German teachers. On the other hand, German teachers appeared to understand Chinese students' limited command of culturally appropriate communication

behaviors and, thus, expressed less concern in this regard. This discrepancy is apparently related to the different conceptions of teacher-student relationship in German and Chinese cultures.

Although Chinese students generally reported a higher level of concerns than teachers, German teachers appeared to regard students' knowledge as a highly important factor to affect communication, while Chinese students did not express the same opinion. German teachers often wished that Chinese students could participate in class actively with sufficient background knowledge. On the contrary, compared to the essential contents of conversations, the form of expression and the reaction of teachers caused Chinese students more concerns. Chinese students considered that [4-42] "*a good impression lasts for a long time*" (CSGQ108), and [4-43] "*it is hard to recover from a bad impression to a good one*" (CSGQ74). Thus, Chinese students emphasized on their communicative manners. However, since the university is a place for learning knowledge, Chinese students took for granted that teachers will not have a negative impression of them if they did not appear to have relevant background knowledge.

Regarding the concerns level within each group, Tukey's pairwise comparison was conducted among domains of concerns for each group. The results revealed that concerns related to knowledge and perception were the most significant different concerns not only between two groups, but also within each group. Chinese students voiced a remarkable different degree of concerns for the items regarding perception and knowledge compared to their responses to the other items, as well as did German teachers. However, the knowledge-related concerns appeared to be the least of students' concerns, while the perception-related concerns shown to be the most. The ranking order of German teachers' concerns was just shown the opposite. Therefore, the responses to the concerns with respect to knowledge and perception are the good points of penetration for further discussion.

4.4.5 Explanation of the results

4.4.5.1 “For me it is right, but for you it is wrong.” -- Concerns caused by the different understanding of learning and communication style

On the basis of the results of quantitative data analysis presented above, it can realize that the main difficulties of Chinese students during their communication with German teachers were how to negotiate and integrate their Chinese educational belief with the current requirements in the German academic settings. That is to say, most of the Chinese students felt frustrated in managing the different expectations between Chinese and German learning contexts. It was quite challenging for them to find what they considered as “correct” at Chinese universities as what turned out to be “incorrect” in the German learning context. This can be represented through the following comment [4-44] of one student:

[4-44] *“Being a low-profile (低调) person is my principle of conduct, which is valued highly in the Chinese academic environment. My humble behavior and respect for teachers sometimes were taken by German teachers as a sign of inability and lack of talent.”(CSGQ10)*

This comment raises the thinking about the differences between the Chinese and Western learning style. According to the previous research introduced in chapter 2 (see sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.2.3), many Western teachers considered that, unlike Western students’ active participation in class, East Asian students, particularly Chinese, Japanese, and Korean students, chose to avoid participating in class activities and stayed quietly in class, which forms the impression that East Asian students are “silent learners” (Guan, 2007; Zhu, 2008; Chalmers & Volet, 1997). Focusing particularly on Chinese students, on the basis of Chinese communicative features and the learning and teaching habits discussed in chapter 2, harmony in a group and respect for teachers are highly valued in the Chinese society (see sections 2.2.1.3 and

2.3.2.2). Chinese students' full respect to teachers and their restraint from criticism or aggressive arguments reflected these cultural features from one aspect (Bond, 1996; Lin-Huber, 2006). As mentioned in section 2.3.2 in chapter 2, the teacher-student relationship is authoritarian and hierarchical in China. Learning in Chinese schools normally implies that students accept and take over the personal wisdom of lecturers (Lee, 1996; Guan, 2007). Learning is teacher-oriented. Lecturers, therefore, must give an answer to every question that students raise. Under this belief, most of the students have been formed passive behaviors of learning gradually, which are manifested as memorization, obedience, and initiation rather than the competence to analyze, argue, and promote individual standpoints (Song, 2009; Liu, 2010).

However, unlike studying at Chinese universities, students in Germany are encouraged to question and sometimes challenge the viewpoints of their teachers in order to understand the impersonal truth by themselves. Other than being considered as disrespectful to teachers, students' questioning and even disagreeing are considered as responsible and constructive learning methods, which is usually interpreted as a sign of their healthy interest in the course and high personal capacity, whereas "quietness" is equated with the inability to analyze and solve problems (Schroll-Machl, 2003; Song, 2009).

The different learning style results in a different understanding of learning behaviors. When Chinese learning practices meet German learning style, the "correct" ways in China are not always suitable for the German learning environment. This transformation brings not only Chinese students but also their German teachers frustration in their interaction. The main performances of the changes are as follows:

First of all, according to the results of data analysis, the main causes for the occurred concerns between Chinese students and their teachers can be presented as their different perceptions. In other words, some behaviors are considered "correct" by one group, whereas "wrong" by another group on the basis of different cultural contexts. Hence, the perception of communicative behavior in various learning

contexts is the crux of the problem.

More specifically, the major perceptual differences about self- and impact-related concerns between Chinese students and German teachers are shown in Table 4.17. The content of this table is divided into two dimensions: Chinese students' certain behaviors that often caused concerns in their communication with German teachers; and the different understanding of the corresponding behavior according to different cultural learning contexts. The behaviors listed in the table are the primary manifestation of Chinese students' perception-related concerns, mainly from the aspect of students as communicators and the impact of students' behaviors on teachers during their communication, through which a significant difference between students and their German teachers exists.

As presented in the upper half of the table, it can be found that communicative behaviors can be understood differently according to different cultures. As most of the German teachers noticed, Chinese students were usually reserved and shy in communication, such as "staying in silence" and "avoiding answering questions" (GTQ13). Those behaviors left German teachers the impression of Chinese students that they were apathetic, indifferent to the lecture, think passively, and participated negatively, which are regarded as "incorrect" ways to communicate in German academic settings.

Table 4.17: Different interpretations of perception-related concerns based on the Chinese and German leaning contexts

Perception Manifestation	Learning context in China	Learning context in Germany
Concerns about Chinese students themselves as communicators		
Reserved behavior	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be modest and prudent • to show respect to others (when they talk) • “Silence is gold” (deliberate thinking is valued) • saving face 	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to think passively • apathetic to the topic/lecture • low participation • indifferent attitude to lecture
Active behavior	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to show disrespect to lectures • to waste time of other students • to show off 	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high involvement • open and active thinking • to cooperate with teachers’ teaching
Concerns about impact of Chinese students’ communication on their teachers		
Showing respect to teachers	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese traditional culture • to challenge the authority rarely • to respect teachers’ instruction • to fulfill the task according to teachers’ advice 	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to study dependently • few personal definite ideas • poor self-learning ability • without innovation ability
Students self-presentation	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be self-righteous • to challenge the traditional concept • to be a potential threat for others 	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to study independently • to be creative • to think critically

On the contrary, in China, a country with a far-reaching influence of Confucianism, as discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.1), such reserved behaviors are exactly highly praised in the Chinese learning context. Chinese students in the interview reported that their reserved performance was simply an inertia that they had developed naturally from Chinese traditional culture of education. Since the primary stage of education, students in China are expected to keep quiet during a lecture. Only when teachers agree can students answer the questions raised by teachers or express personal opinions. This mainly because of the idea of “face-saving” of Chinese

students and their hierarchy-oriented ideology resulted from the influence of Confucianism, which were discussed in section 2.2.2.4 and 2.2.1.1 in chapter 2 and also reflected in the findings illustrated in section 4.3.4.1 and 4.3.4.2 in this chapter. For thousands of years, Chinese students have been taught to show their respect to the teacher and other students in class, rather than raise personal opinions or question the opinions of teachers, which are considered as an interruption in class or waste others' time (Lee, 1996; Zhu, 2012). For example, one student voiced the concern about speaking in class in the comment [4-45]:

[4-45] *"We have been taught since childhood to respect the teacher and his teaching (尊师重教). Thus, I found it is embarrassing to ask questions or stop the teacher in class in Germany. From my point of view, such behaviors are impolite, because the lecture was interrupted and teacher's teaching was sidetracked. I expressed my own opinions only when I was asked by the teacher." (CSGI09)*

Being a student studying in Germany, some Chinese students also indicated that they fully understand the communicative manners that advocated in the German learning environment. In Germany, students are encouraged to highly involve in teachers' instructions, which means to ask questions and express personal opinions actively and openly. However, this is just the contrary to what Chinese students have learned in China since they were young. They hold the belief of "silence is gold" (沉默是金); if a student wants to speak in class, then the student should raise high-quality questions and opinions rather than indicate "unnecessary" ideas. This also reveals the modesty of Chinese students. Some Chinese students reported that some non-Asian students in their class were active and often raising "unnecessary" questions or mentioning "simple" knowledge that known universally, which appeared to Chinese students as not worth saying at all (CSGI01, 04, 06, 09 & 10). Those "incorrect" behaviors perceived by Chinese students, however, were considered as "normal" or even "encouraged" in a German lecture. For example, such concerns of

Chinese students can be seen in the comments [4-46] and [4-47].

[4-46] *“I noticed that some questions or opinions raised by my non-Chinese class fellows were sometimes ‘unnecessary’ or even ‘dumb’. For example, they asked something what the lecturer just mentioned, or spoke something about very basic knowledge that certainly everybody knows. I will never do that, because I don’t want to waste other students’ time and make my teacher think I was not concentrating on the lecture.” (CSGI01)*

[4-47] *“The other students in my class are really active. They ask questions or express opinions very often in class at any time they want to. I don’t feel comfortable when they interrupt the lecture. But the other students seem to consider such behavior is normal and held a neutral, or even supportive, attitude toward it.” (CSGI04)*

As shown in the lower half of Table 4.17, different standpoints to the impact of Chinese students’ communicative behavior on German teachers are presented. Most of the Chinese students were concerned much about whether their full respect would be acknowledged and accepted by their German teachers. As introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.1), growing up in the substantial influence of Confucianism, Chinese students are expected to show respect for their teachers and value highly teachers’ teaching (Pearce, 2014), which is also regarded as the standard for assessing a “good” student in China. Students in China follow the instruction of teachers for fulfilling tasks and rarely challenge the authority of teachers. For instance, before doing an academic task, from writing a dissertation at large to as small as preparing a presentation, Chinese students usually first ask their teachers for advice to guarantee that they are in the right direction agreed by teachers. Otherwise, Chinese teachers will probably think those who fulfill the task without consulting are self-righteous and impolite.

Such “obedient behavior” of students is regarded as positive in the Chinese

learning context, whereas as negative in Germany. Unlike the situation in China, students in Germany, except for following teachers' teaching, are also strongly encouraged to study independently, think creatively, and being critical to the traditional theory. Therefore, Chinese students' "correct" behavior turn out to be "wrong" according to German lecturers' perspective. One German teacher stated in the interview that Chinese students in the laboratory team normally have a good working capacity, yet, poor self-learning ability. Most of the Chinese students usually trust and follow strictly what teachers asked them to do and seldom question whether it is valid or fit into their experiment (GTQ03). The similar opinions were also recognized by the comments of Chinese students. Two Chinese students said that they were unwilling to "question the authority of teachers" (CSGI02) and be an "assertive" member in the team (CSGI07).

In short, it can be found that culture-based different viewpoints of Chinese students' learning behaviors act as one of the main reasons for causing concerns in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

Secondly, another major difference discovered between Chinese students and German teachers is their different attitudes toward the interpretation of knowledge. Chinese students expressed a much lower level of concerns than German teachers did. That is to say, the understanding of knowledge acquisition is different from Chinese students than it is to their German teachers. The crux of the problem, thus, lies in the different standpoints of Chinese students and German teachers with respect to the methods of obtaining knowledge.

Many German teachers pronounced that the most noticeable difference regarding learning knowledge between Chinese and Western students was their approaches to asking teachers questions. German teachers noticed that most of the Chinese students would like to "*solve problems alone*" (GTQ08) or "ask other students for help" instead of turning to teachers when they encounter problems, whereas their western peer students regarded asking for teachers' advice as the first

resort (GTQ37).

Inspired by these comments of German teachers, the different understanding of asking question in class based on the Chinese and German learning contexts deserves to be discussed. On the basis of the introduction and theoretical basis of the current study, chapter 1 and chapter 2 introduced several previous research on Chinese students in Germany in the field of intercultural adjustment and integration. For example, Zhu (2012) in her study studied the academic adjustment of Chinese students in Germany and briefly discussed the different perspectives of classroom questioning between Chinese and German cultures. Taking her research as a reference for the present study, Table 4.18 presents the primary ways of approaching knowledge of Chinese students and the respective attitudes according to the Chinese and German cultures of learning.

Table 4.18: Different interpretations of knowledge-related concerns based on Chinese and German leaning contexts

Knowledge manifestation	Learning context in China	Learning context in Germany
Concerns about the epistemic motivation of Chinese students		
Do not ask teachers questions in class and think alone	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smart and capable • high self-learning ability • high understand-ability about the knowledge taught 	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow/unfocused thinking • low self-exploration ability • poor comprehension ability
Asking teachers questions proactively	<p>“incorrect” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • slow thinking • low self-learning ability • not smart enough to understand teachers 	<p>“correct” behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active thinking • willing to learn • to participate in class actively

As shown in Table 4.18, many western students consider asking teachers questions as a preferred and heuristic method of acquiring knowledge (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Likewise, German teachers also welcome and encourage students to question

and challenge their ideas. Therefore, asking questions proactively stands for active thinking, being eager to learn, and positive participation, which is perceived as “correct” behavior in the German learning context. Nevertheless, the “correct” methods appear to be the “incorrect” approaches according to the viewpoint of Chinese students. At Chinese universities, asking teachers questions normally means one thinks too slow to catch up with certain knowledge taught by lecturer immediately, which testifies one’s low self-learning ability (Ho, 2007). Therefore, as shown in this study, Chinese students did not ask questions often to German teachers because they were not willing to present their weakness to teachers. When they had questions regarding the lecture, as some Chinese participants voiced, they preferred first trying to solve problems alone and then turning to their peer students for help (CSGI09 & 10). One Chinese student even wrote that if the peer students did not know the answers either, she would rather ask other students to ask the lecturer instead of asking herself (CSGQ42). Only when there were no other ways, Chinese students tended to ask German teachers as the last resource.

It is also noteworthy that Chinese students gradually realized that their questions could be better answered by asking the lecturer during the office hours rather than asking fellow students. As shown in the comments [4-48] and [4-49], they understood that German teachers would never take the initiative and come to them first. Students should always hold the initiative of acquiring knowledge in the German learning environment. However, despite all of that, it still took a long time for Chinese students to behave actively and integrate into German learning contexts because they could not easily get rid of the old bondage of the deep-rooted Chinese learning habits.

[4-48] *“I realized that at a German university, if I don’t take the initiative, nobody will take care of me. This is quite different from studying in China. I have to change to be an active person.”* (CSGI06)

[4-49] *“In China, lecturers normally first come to us to offer help and advice. German lecturers will never come to me first. But as long as I ask them, they*

will help me as much as they can. I understand this, but it still takes time for me to become a proactive person.” (CSGI08)

In other words, the different approaches of acquiring knowledge and different understanding about the corresponding behavior based on Chinese and German culture can be identified as one of the causes that formed the concerns of Chinese students and German teachers in their interaction.

Above all, on the basis of the analysis described above, it can be learned that the main causes of the concerns revealed in the interaction between Chinese students and German teachers were their different cognitive values regarding learning habits, particularly, their different interpretations of the same learning approaches.

For Chinese students, the learning behavior that they once regarded as correct in the Chinese learning context turned out to be incorrect in the German academic settings. They were aware of the standard of a “good” student in the German learning context and were willing to meet this standard. However, they also struggled with their prior learning habits, sets of cultural viewpoints, traditions, and learning conceptualizations. It was more than a simple decision either to stick to their inherent Chinese learning tradition or to switch to German-style communication. Chinese students realized that their known “correct” Chinese behaviors were not “propitious” to the German learning context. Although they were willing to change, the cultural conflicts made them feel unaccustomed, shy, and uncomfortable to behave in the “correct” German way. Wandering between two different learning cultures and being judged by two behavior standards, left Chinese students feeling often confused and lost in the resulting concerns. Nevertheless, from another perspective, Chinese students also acquired bi-cultural learning competences along with in-depth learning and communication with German teachers.

Regarding German teachers, although most of the teachers stated that Chinese students’ language ability sometimes throw them into concerns, their major concerns

then came from the reticence and reserved behavior of Chinese students. German teachers agreed that some of Chinese students' behaviors, such as failure to raise questions and to participate in class, were likely attributable to the different cultural background and learning habits. Some teachers expressed that they empathized with Chinese students' difficulties in communication and tried to encourage students to participate actively in the class. Nevertheless, teachers also indicated that they would not force Chinese students to do anything that they did not feel comfortable due to the sensitivity of culture.

The communication between two cultures is never an easy thing. As stated above, the inner contradiction and mental conflict based on cultural and behavioral differences act as the submerged rocks hide behind the normal communication between Chinese students and German teachers. Once they hit the rocks, their concerns emerge. Therefore, in order to reduce communication concerns of both sides, the key is to help Chinese students to reasonably coordinate their prior Chinese learning habits with the current German learning environment. The further interpretation in this regard and the corresponding suggestions for both students and teachers based on the findings in this section are discussed in section 6.1.2.3 and 6.2.4 in chapter 6.

4.4.5.2 “Hard but passive learners.”- Concerns caused by the different expectations from the educational system, society, and family

„少壮不努力, 老大徒伤悲。 shào zhuàng bù nǚ lì, lǎo dà tú shāng bēi。” (If one does not exert oneself in youth, one will regret it in old age.) -- Chinese proverb

Throughout the comments of German teachers revealed in this study, the most part of Chinese students were titled “quiet” learners due to their restrained behavior in class. Their learning behavior was also considered as “passive” learning strategy because they most of the time preferred to accept knowledge from teachers rather than require

knowledge through asking and questioning. In addition to the reasons mentioned above that the learning style of Chinese students were not completely appropriate to the German learning context, the causes that contribute to the Chinese learning approaches are also worth exploring.

Although the reasons that bring Chinese students into “passive” learners resulted from various causes, based on the socialization of Chinese students in China discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.3), the main inducements can be regarded as the following: the impact of the Chinese educational system as well as the expectations from society and family.

(1) *The impact of the Chinese examination and evaluation system* - [4-50] *“I got used to work hardly but quietly.”* (CSGQ44)

On the basis of the learning and teaching situation in China discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2), the Chinese educational system puts certain pressure on Chinese students in their process of learning. The sources of pressures can be illustrated as the following aspects expressed by Chinese students, which has formed the passive learning style of them gradually.

As two students described in the comments [4-51] and [4-52], given the intense competition among a large number of candidates in China, the competition among Chinese students is very high. Additionally, the examinations of some subjects in China are also more complicated than the corresponding exams in Germany used to select the superior and eliminate the inferior. Chinese students need to study hard by strictly following the instruction of teachers instead of developing their own ideas.

[4-51] *“The stress of entering a good university was very high. I didn’t have much time to think about my own ideas, what I did everyday was to study what our teachers assigned for us.”* (CSGQ52)

[4-52] *“I feel that some exams at Chinese universities are more difficult than at German universities, such as mathematics and chemistry. Since there are too many students in China, students needed to be grouped by raising the difficulty of exams.”* (CSGQ71)

Secondly, some Chinese students also complained about the limitations of the college entrance examination system in China. According to the content of section 2.3.2.1, the Chinese Gao Kao (the college entrance examination) plays a decisive role in the development of Chinese students, which can decide to which way a student should proceed, such as at which university to study, how much tuition to pay, and even which major to learn. Even if Chinese students may have their own innovative ideas, in order to achieve a good score in Gao Kao, students must follow the instructions of teachers and be obedient to textbooks, which has been formed their passive learning habits gradually. This kind of thoughts of Chinese students can be found in the comments [4-53] and [4-54].

[4-53] *“During my high school time, I was very obedient to the instructions of our teachers. I studied what teachers ask me to study, without questioning.”* (CSGQ29)

[4-54] *“I had to follow the requirements of teachers in China, which was the habit that I acquired during the high school time. Because the college entrance examination was too important, it can decide my whole life.”* (CSGQ36)

Additionally, since the results of exams are the most important way to evaluate students in China, as discussed in section 2.3.2.1, Chinese students bear overwhelming homework and tests on their shoulders and sacrifice all of their time and interests for studying. Although the heavy pressures of examinations and schoolwork contain some benefits, such as encouraging students to work hard and accumulation of knowledge, the impact of the pressure on students is more negative

than positive. Most of the Chinese students study for passing the examination rather than for personal interest of subjects. The comment [4-55] displays the attitude of a Chinese student toward the learning stress in China.

[4-55] "*The pressure of study and exams were very high in China. The burden of schoolwork was also heavy. My purpose of the study was to pass exams and enter a university.*" (CSGQ65)

In order to give correct answers and get high scores, Chinese students mainly repeat what the textbook said without innovation and integrating theory with practice, which leads to their poor practical ability and self-expression skills. As one student mentioned in the comment [4-56], it was not necessary to ask teachers because he can solve the questions by studying the textbooks and handout.

[4-56] "*Since the answers of exams at Chinese universities are normally unified, I only needed to study and prepared the exams according to the textbooks or handouts. I didn't have many chances, and actually there was no need, to communicate with teachers.*" (CSGQ92)

In turn, the learning style of Chinese students were also perceived by their German teachers during their communication. As two teachers mentioned in the comments [4-57] and [4-58], although their Chinese students normally work hard, their lack of initiative and independence hindered their studies and the communication with teachers.

[4-57] "*I realize that Chinese students are hard workers. They can complete the tasks that I assigned very well. But at the most time they need someone to guide them.*" (GTI03)

[4-58] "*The majority of Chinese students didn't want to take the initiative to talk.*" (GTQ11)

Moreover, Chinese students also voiced their opinions about the German examination system. Unlike in China, German students have more power and choices of choosing universities. The educational admission in Germany is not dependent only on one-shot examinations. Although each institution has its own admission system and evaluation methods, the common feature shared among all German educational institutions is a “comprehensive selection system”. According to the information and supports that Kelo (2006) offers to international students in Germany, students at German universities are evaluated not only by the average scores on the diploma, but also according to their overall quality, which mainly includes three parts: the final entrance examination scores, ordinary achievement, and the comprehensive ability. Specifically, in addition to academic achievements, a student’s leadership skills, foreign language proficiency, work experience, community service experience, and honor awards, etc., are also valuable factors for admission consideration. Therefore, this evaluation form weakens German students’ stresses of examination in some degree, and further encourages students to develop personal interests and competence. Chinese students also realized these features of the German education and evaluation system. The examples of their ideas in this regard are shown in the comments [4-59] and [4-60].

[4-59] *“I think the pressure of German students is less than Chinese students. The competition among German students is relatively low. German schools value the comprehensive ability of students rather than focus on just grades.”*
(CSGQ15)

[4-60] *“Compared to Chinese students, German students don’t have much academic pressure and worries. Therefore, they can express themselves without concerns.”* (CSGQ10)

Above all, “examination-oriented” is still labeled as a particular feature of Chinese education, especially in elementary and secondary education stage. Growing up in this competitive education environment, the heavy academic pressure leads most

of the Chinese students to lose the self-independence for studying and learn passively. To a degree, the lack of initiative of Chinese students negatively affected their communication with German teachers.

(2) Different roles of teachers - [4-61] *“No one takes care about me in Germany.”*
(CSGQ04)

In addition, the different roles that teachers play in the life of students also contribute to one of the causes for the passive learning behavior of Chinese students.

In China, based on the features of Chinese university organizational system presented in 2.3.2.2, Chinese teachers are normally deemed as “the parents” of students in school. A Chinese teacher has the power of supervision and management of students’ study life, as well as daily life, such as what kind of haircut to have, what kind clothes to wear, and even what kind of people to date, etc. (Huang, 2012:42ff). On the contrary, in Germany, unless a student wants to develop a personal relationship with a teacher, generally speaking, a teacher’s identity is limited to the level of imparting knowledge (Schweer, 2000). Even though German teachers want to affect students on a more personal level, most of the teachers prefer to avoid doing that, which would be seen as a non-professional conduct (Ittel & Raufelder, 2008). The comments [4-62] and [4-63] present the opinions of two Chinese students about the different roles of teachers in students’ learning activities in China and in Germany.

[4-62] *“In China, our class teacher takes care of almost everything for us. I just followed the instructions and didn’t need to worry about many things.”*
(CSGQ22)

[4-63] *“I was unsuited to the study life in Germany in the beginning, because I needed to arrange everything by myself.”* (CSGQ61)

In German schools, the administrative department creates rules and regulations and provides suggestions for students regarding their studies (Kleo, 2006; Benner, 2008). Most of the German students take the information offered by the school as recommendations for their personal planning. However, the situation is different in China. In view of the influence of Confucianism on the Chinese education system and the full range of management scope of Chinese teachers, as mentioned in chapter 2 (see sections 2.2.1.1 and 2.3.2.2), teachers have a relatively high status in the Chinese society and the guidance of teachers plays an important role in the growth and development of students. Students and their parents usually adjust the developing direction of students according to the suggestions of teachers. Chinese teachers also have the authority and obligation to correct the behavior of students, which is considered by teachers as inappropriate to other students in class or to Chinese values (Song, Luo & Chen, 2014). Therefore, considering that teachers are regarded as an extension of the parental role in schools in China, Chinese students get used to the all-around supervision of teachers and gradually lose their initiative and independence in learning. Such opinions were also noted by Chinese students in this study, which can be perceived from their comments [4-64] and [4-65] shown below:

[4-64] *“To study in China is relatively easy, because most of the things are arranged by school and teachers.”* (CSGQ29)

[4-65] *“German universities emphasize on self-support and independence of students. Chinese universities take care of students very well; hence, Chinese students have a relatively strong dependency.”* (CSGQ03)

(3) Expectations from the society and families - [4-66] *“I am carrying the honor of the whole family.”* (CSGQ08)

In addition to the pressure resulted from the evaluation system and the role of teachers, the sense of social recognition and the expectation of parents are also remarkable factors that lead to the passive behaviors of Chinese students.

As introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.1.2), Chinese students normally grow up under the heavy pressure of families and the society. This viewpoint is also reflected in the comments of some Chinese students in this study. As two students mentioned in the comments [4-67] and [4-68], in order to realize the expectations of their parents and the glory of families, they needed to follow the ideas and direction of the parents. They learned passively according to the requirements of parents. The initiatives of students in studying gradually faded away.

[4-67] *“My parents want me to win the glory of the family. I had to follow the ideas of my parents since I was young, otherwise, I got chided. I became passive and obedient, but lack independent consciousness.”* (CSGQ34)

[4-68] *“I obey the arrangements of my parents. They also arranged for me to study abroad.”* (CSGQ15)

In addition, because of the deep influence of the “one-child policy” on the Chinese society, as discussed in section 2.3.1.1, the four-two-one syndrome⁵ is the general family structure in China at present, which results in some Chinese parents spoil their single child excessively. These Chinese parents want to remove all the difficulties and leave a barrier-free way for their children to study and to win the glory in school. Under the “delicate” care of parents, part of Chinese students gradually become passive and lack of independent ability. As shown in the comments [4-69] and [4-70], two students felt lost in Germany without the “protection” of their parents.

[4-69] *“Before I came to Germany, my parents managed most of the things for me. What I needed to do is just go to school and study.”* (CSGQ114)

[4-70] *“I felt lost in the beginning in Germany, because I need to arrange everything by myself.”* (CSGQ37)

⁵ The four-two-one syndrome is introduced in chapter 2, section 2.3.1.1, p.44.

Last but not the least, several Chinese students also pointed out their pressure came from the Chinese society. Since Chinese care much about the “face” and value highly how one’s face is viewed by others, as stated in section 2.2.1.4, the Chinese “face” is never an individual “thing” (Chang, 2008:302). Thus, academic achievements of Chinese students are not only the focus of their families, but also judged by the others in society. Thus, Chinese students need to study hard to win the recognition and praise of the society for their families. As one student stated in the comment [4-71] that,

[4-71] *“In China, I would be judged by the others according to the secular perspectives. People would point fingers at me if I could not enter a good university, or a good major in China. In order to win the face of my family, I had to study very hard, but passively.”* (CSGI03)

Above all, whether the pressures come from the examination-oriented education system, the all-sided management of teachers, the severe competition in society, or the high expectations of the whole family, Chinese students grow up in the layers of pressure from an early age. The pressures from inside and outside school create the Chinese style of learning of students gradually. Although the Chinese ways of learning contain some disadvantages, such as passive thinking and learning, it also has a silver lining. The heavy pressures from all aspects cultivate students’ industrious and hardworking qualities, as well as their strict discipline.

4.4.5.3 “Does he call my name?” -- Concerns caused by the different rules of pronunciation

Apart from the causes of concerns discussed above, the concerns of Chinese students caused by the incorrect pronunciation of German teachers are also worth mentioning.

Almost a third of the Chinese students in this study mentioned the German

teachers' inaccurate pronunciation of their Chinese names. Due to the different rules of pronunciation and spelling between Chinese and German language, some Chinese syllables, such as /j/, /q/, and /x/, are very difficult for Germans to pronounce accurately. Moreover, the Chinese language distinguishes meaning through four tones while the German language does not. All these reasons resulted in the fact that most of the Chinese students' names were miscalled by their German teachers, either in wrong syllables or tones. As described in the comment [4-72] below:

[4-72] *“My Chinese name sounds very funny according to the German rules of pronunciation. Sometimes I do not know that others are calling me.”*
(CSGQ113)

The comments [4-73] and [4-74] also indicate that, although Chinese students showed their understanding in this regard, the incorrect pronunciations of their Chinese names potentially brought students the senses of distance and strangeness, which imperceptibly resulted in an uneasy interaction with German teachers.

[4-73] *“I understand that my Chinese name is difficult for Germans to pronounce. But every time my supervisor calls me, he always gives me a false impression that he talks to another people. This feeling is strange.”* (CSGQ49)

[4-74] *“One of my German lecturers rarely calls my name correctly. I understand that my name is difficult for Germans to say. However, this sometimes makes me uncomfortable.”* (CSGQ57)

Above all, the concerns discovered in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers, with respect to the second research question, are mainly caused by their different interpretation of the same learning habits due to their different cultural backgrounds and cognitive values. The “correct” behaviors of Chinese students based on the Chinese culture were understood as “incorrect” learning habits by German teachers according to the German culture. Thus, the

concerns in their communication were inevitable. Moreover, Chinese students also explained the reasons for their “quiet” and “obedient” learning habits in communication with German teachers. Students stated that the heavy academic pressure in China, the high expectation of the society and families, and the parental role of Chinese teachers resulted in their hardworking but passive study habits. Additionally, some Chinese students also mentioned that they felt uncomfortable in communication when German teachers pronounced their names in a wrong way.

4.5 Conclusion of the findings in this chapter

This chapter analyzed the findings of the first and second research questions by comparing the responses of Chinese students and German teachers.

In general, Chinese students expressed a relative higher level of communication concerns than their German teachers did. This result mainly rooted in the different or even the opposed communicative style between China and Germany. The concerns with respect to the face-management, respect for teachers, modesty, and language difficulties were summarized as the four primary concerns that commonly occurred in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

More specifically, the discovered concerns mainly resulted from the different cognition and interpretations of some communicative behaviors between Chinese students and German teachers. Their different understanding of the communicative behaviors, on the one side, reflected the different teaching and learning methods at Chinese and German universities and, on the other side, revealed the academic pressures of Chinese students resulting from the Chinese education system and the high expectation from their families and the society. Moreover, the names of some Chinese students were miscalled by German teachers because of the different rules of pronunciation between the German and Chinese language, which also caused some

concerns of Chinese students in communication.

Since different countries have different educational values and characteristics, it is more than simply saying whether a learning method is good or bad. However, when two kinds of perspectives and approaches of learning and teaching communicate with each other, communication concerns as consequences are inevitable, which presents the answers to the research questions discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Communication Concerns Comparison between Different Communication Environments and Individuals

In this chapter, the results of the third to sixth research questions are presented. On the basis of the correlation between the questions, this chapter consists of two main parts: the changes in communication with German teachers in China and in Germany (the results of the third and fourth research questions, sections 5.1 to 5.5); and the influence of personal factors on the communication of Chinese students and German teachers (the results of the fifth and sixth research questions, sections 5.6 to 5.9). In each part of the findings, the results of the hypothesis test of each research question are illustrated in the first place. After that, the relevant explanations based on the results and the potential causes for the concerns discovered in the results are discussed.

Results of the Third and Fourth Research Questions: The Changes of Communication with German Teachers in China and in Germany

5.1 Concerns in different communication environments

Communication environment is an essential part of a communication. The cultural background contained in the communication environment cannot only form different communicative standards but also advocate different communicative customs. Several studies (e.g. Neuliep, 2009; Merrigan & Huston, 2014; Miller & Barbour, 2014), pointed out that the change of communication environment, especially in different cultural contexts, can affect the quality and outcomes of the communication.

This study draws lessons from the previous studies to take the influence of communication environment, especially the cultural communication context it contains, on the communication into consideration. Therefore, as discussed in the research objective in chapter 1 (see section 1.2) and research methodology in chapter 3 (see section 3.3.1), this study involved Chinese students both in China and in Germany in the investigation with the aim of exploring the influence of different cultural and language environment on Chinese students in their communication with German teachers.

In order to provide an intuitive understanding and comparison of the involved cultural communication contexts in Germany and in China, the author extended the content of Figure 4.3 (see section 4.4, p.155) to the content of Figure 5.1, which illustrates the cultural contexts of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers both in Germany and in China. As shown in Figure 5.1, although the communication is always between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany and in China, the processes and outcome of the communication can be diverse due to the different cultural context in which the communication take place. For example, a communicative habit of Chinese students (e.g. being obedient to teachers) may conform to the Chinese cultural context (being regarded as respect to teachers) but run contrary to the German communicative standard (being considered as passive and negative learners). Thus, the change of communication environment is more than just the change of the place of the conversation; it represents the collisions, interpretation, and adaptation among the communication behaviors resulted from different communicative cultures. By comparing the concerns expressed by Chinese students in Germany and China, the concerns of Chinese students in communication caused by the change of communication environment can be discovered, which further contributes to a better understanding of the role of the different communication environment in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

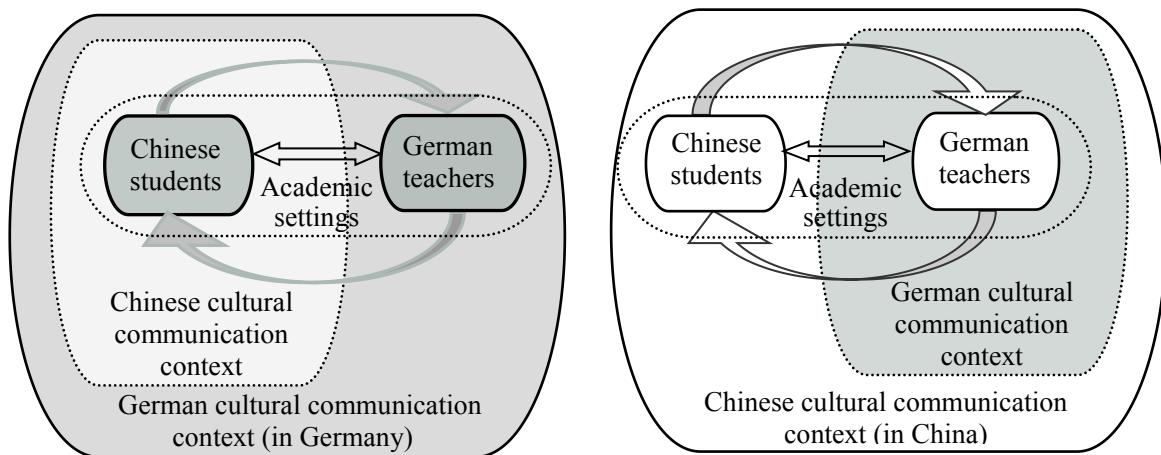


Figure 5.1: Cultural communication contexts of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany and in China

The findings in this section try to find out to what extent different cultural communicative contexts would affect on Chinese students' communication with German teachers. The results refer to the third and fourth research questions: *Are the concerns perceived by Chinese students in Germany similar to those perceived by Chinese students in China regarding communication with German teachers? If not, are the differences more related to the culture-based or capacity-based concerns?*

5.2 Comparison between Chinese students in Germany and in China

First of all, in order to understand the overall distribution of the concerns of two groups, the ranking of all items in section III and IV of the questionnaires were presented.

With respect to Chinese students in China, as shown in Table 5.1, their top concerns included whether they can defend their opinions in one-on-one conversations with German teachers (No.32), whether they can express their dissatisfaction/request in class (No.7), and whether their German teachers would underestimate them due to their communication ability (No.22). This shows that the

communication concerns about the tasks of communicating and based on cultural barriers bothered most of the Chinese students in China. However, throughout the top ten concerns of Chinese students in China, the domains of their concerns involved all kinds of categories. Among the major communication concerns of Chinese students in China, their concerns were not only caused by self-behaviors, communicative tasks, and the impact of their communication on others, but also related to the barriers of capacity (language and knowledge) and culture (emotion and perception).

By comparing the results between the two groups, it can be seen that some communication concerns reported by Chinese students in China were similar to those of Chinese students in Germany, such as the items related to communication ability (No.22), appearing respect to teachers (No.34), and being appropriate in the German culture (No.14). Additionally, the items regarding the least concerns of Chinese students in China (No.31, No.5, and No.20) also appeared in the last ten concerns of Chinese students in Germany. Therefore, generally to say, the concerns that bothered Chinese students in Germany mostly also had a certain influence on the communication between Chinese students and their German teachers in China.

However, it is worth noting a change discovered among the major concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China. Contrary to the evenly distributed concern types of Chinese students in China, the top 15 concerns of Chinese students in Germany were mainly caused by themselves as communicators and the impact of their communication on German teachers. This shows that Chinese students concerned more about “who they are (their performance in communication)” and “how they do (the impact of their performance on German teachers)” in the unfamiliar environment in Germany than in China. In addition, compared to capacity-related communication barriers, perception and emotion-related barriers caused Chinese students more concerns in Germany than in China. Thus, the change of communicative environment reflected the change of concerns of Chinese students.

Table 5.1: Items of communication concerns in ranking order between Chinese students in Germany and in China

Rank	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)			Chinese students in China (N=42)		
	Item No.	Mean	Domain	Item No.	Mean	Domain
1.	34	4.032	I-P	32	3.928	T-E
2.	14	4.016	I-P	7	3.809	T-E
3.	35	3.853	I-P	22	3.809	S-P
4.	2	3.634	S-E	36	3.809	I-P
5.	22	3.617	S-P	38	3.785	S-K
6.	18	3.577	S-E	30	3.666	T-L
7.	1	3.471	S-P	14	3.619	I-P
8.	17	3.406	S-P	34	3.452	I-P
9.	3	3.341	S-E	28	3.119	T-E
10.	9	3.292	T-L	17	3.047	S-P
11.	33	3.260	I-L	35	2.976	I-P
12.	37	3.252	S-P	10	2.952	T-L
13.	15	3.170	S-K	18	2.666	S-E
14.	36	3.170	I-P	27	2.666	T-L
15.	10	3.146	T-L	26	2.500	I-K
16.	19	3.146	S-P	33	2.452	I-L
17.	23	3.040	I-E	6	2.381	T-L
18.	13	2.983	I-L	37	2.333	S-P
19.	28	2.967	T-E	15	2.238	S-K
20.	7	2.951	T-E	2	2.190	S-E
21.	11	2.935	T-L	1	2.166	S-P
22.	29	2.902	T-P	16	2.071	T-K
23.	8	2.804	T-P	29	2.047	T-P
24.	6	2.748	T-L	19	1.881	S-P
25.	24	2.739	S-E	3	1.785	S-E
26.	16	2.723	T-K	25	1.785	T-L
27.	27	2.715	T-L	9	1.738	T-L
28.	32	2.715	T-E	21	1.738	S-P
29.	20	2.691	S-E	23	1.619	I-E
30.	38	2.658	S-K	8	1.476	T-P
31.	12	2.561	T-L	24	1.476	S-E
32.	30	2.544	T-L	4	1.452	S-L
33.	5	2.512	I-K	12	1.404	T-L
34.	21	2.504	S-P	13	1.404	I-L
35.	25	2.495	T-L	11	1.357	T-L
36.	26	2.487	I-K	31	1.357	T-E
37.	4	2.455	S-L	5	1.333	I-K
38.	31	2.122	T-E	20	1.309	S-E

The overall ranking shown above reveals that Chinese students experienced a trend of change among the major concerns in the communication with German teachers in Germany and in China. Therefore, Chinese students' main communication concerns are likely to change with the change of communicative environments.

Table 5.2: *T*-test results of communication concerns perceived by Chinese students in Germany and in China

Domains of communication concerns	<i>T</i> -test of communication concerns					
	Students in Germany		Students in China		Results of <i>t</i> -test	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	t value	P value
Overall	3.017	1.156	2.390	1.341	4.928	.000
Communication situations						
In class	3.047	1.120	2.086	1.284	7.244	.000
One-on-one conversations	2.996	1.182	2.610	1.338	2.993	.003
Communications concerns categories						
Self	3.170	1.124	2.341	1.308	6.433	.000
Task	2.755	1.120	2.326	1.372	3.199	.002
Impact	3.262	1.176	2.574	1.316	5.182	.000
Communication barriers						
Capacity	2.793	1.121	2.199	1.282	4.313	.000
Language	2.831	1.117	2.115	1.240	5.332	.000
Knowledge	2.714	1.126	2.386	1.355	2.105	.037
Culture	3.180	1.155	2.528	1.366	5.235	.000
Emotion	2.978	1.111	2.326	1.364	5.490	.000
Perception	3.348	1.165	2.696	1.345	4.766	.000

After that, a series of *t*-test in every domain of concerns was employed in order to investigate the correlation of communication concerns between Chinese students in Germany and in China. As shown in Table 5.2, the differences between communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China were highly significant in all domains ($p < .01$). Chinese students in China expressed, in general, fewer concerns than those students in Germany with respect to communicating with German teachers. This result revealed that, the levels of Chinese students' concerns

about communicating with German teachers in Germany and in China were notably different from each other in all communication domains.

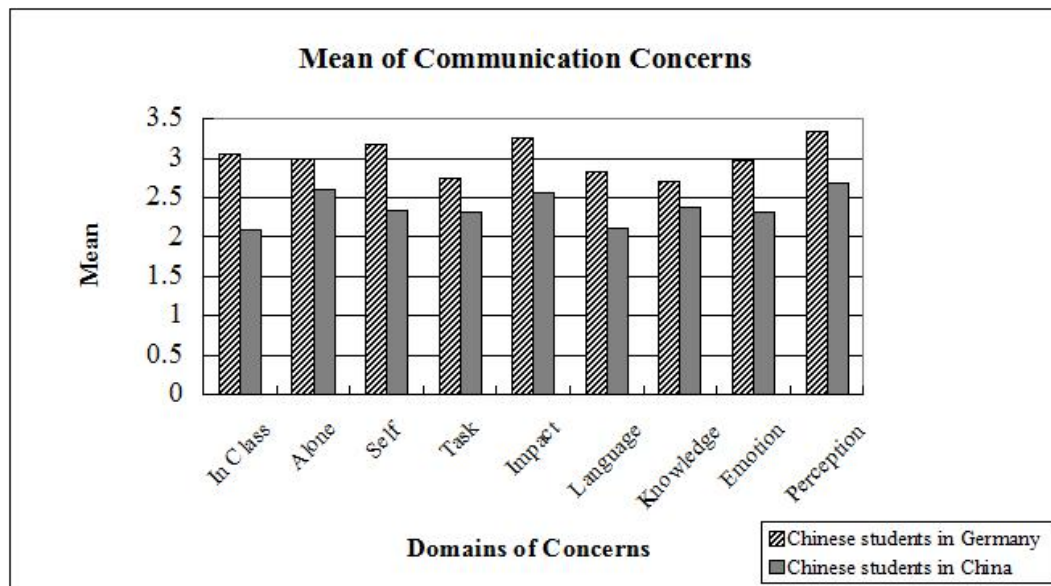


Figure 5.2: Comparison of means of communication concerns in all domains between Chinese students in Germany and in China

Additionally, on the basis of the corresponding mean of each domain of concerns, it can be seen that Chinese students in Germany expressed a relatively higher level of concerns than students in China among overall domains (Figure 5.2). This can be inferred that Chinese students in Germany experienced severer concerns about communicating with German teachers than Chinese students in China did. It can also be seen that the change of communicative environment affected the communication of Chinese students with German teachers to some extent.

5.3 Comparison of communication concerns within each group

The above findings of the ranking order of concerns and the t-tests illustrate the overall changes of concerns' focuses and degrees between two groups of Chinese students. In order to explore the changes of concerns of Chinese students in Germany

and in China, a series of paired t-tests was applied among the culture- and capacity-related concerns in each student group.

A series of paired t-tests was employed on the capacity-related (language and knowledge) and culture-related (emotion and perception) items in the questionnaire of each group. As shown in Table 5.3, Chinese students in Germany expressed a significantly higher level of culture-related communication concerns than the concerns related to personal capacity at .001 levels. Thus, in general, Chinese students in Germany were concerned more about the emotion- and perception-related barriers than the barriers caused by language and knowledge in the communication with German teachers. Specifically, the perception-related barriers brought Chinese students in Germany a significantly higher level of communication concerns than the barriers of emotions did. Compared to the concerns based on knowledge-related barriers, Chinese students in Germany worried more about their language ability.

Table 5.3: Paired *t*-test results of communication concerns perceived by Chinese students in Germany and in China

Domains of communication concerns	<u>Chinese students in Germany</u>				<u>Chinese students in China</u>			
	Mean	S.D.	<i>t</i> value	P value	Mean	S.D.	<i>t</i> value	P value
Communication barriers								
Capacity	2.793	.765	-12.969	.000	2.199	.787	8.940	.000
Culture	3.180	.673			2.528	.764		
Capacity								
Language	2.831	1.117	3.483	.001	2.115	1.240	-6.338	.000
Knowledge	2.711	1.126			2.386	1.355		
Culture								
Emotion	2.978	1.111	-10.378	.000	2.326	1.364	-8.024	.000
Perception	3.348	1.165			2.696	1.345		

Table 5.3 also shows the t-test results of Chinese students in China among the same domains. The results indicate that significant differences were found in the three

pairs of domains of communication barriers perceived by Chinese students in China. Generally, Chinese students in China expressed a similar trend of concerns as the Chinese students in Germany. Both populations voiced stronger worry about culture-based communication barriers than barriers came from personal capacity. In particular, the perception-related barriers presented a greater influence on Chinese students than the barriers caused by emotion did. However, unlike Chinese students in Germany, Chinese students in China considered that the barriers about knowledge would cause them a higher level of communication concerns than language barriers would, whereas Chinese students in Germany expressed the opposite opinion. Language-related concerns became more worrying for Chinese students in Germany than that for Chinese students in China.

5.4 Summary of the findings and hypotheses testing

Throughout the above results of quantitative data analysis between Chinese students in Germany and in China, the main findings can be summarized as the following points in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Comparison of the findings between Chinese students in Germany and in China

Chinese students in Germany	Chinese students in China
Higher degree of concerns in general	Lower degree of concerns in general
Major concerns focus on: Self, Impact, Perception, Emotion	Major concerns involve all domains of concerns
Language barriers > Knowledge barriers	Knowledge barriers > Language barriers
Culture-based concerns > Capacity-based concerns	
Perception barriers > Emotion barriers	

In general, Chinese students in Germany expressed a relatively higher level of concerns than did students in China among overall domains of concerns. The major worries of Chinese students in Germany focused on the domains of self, impact,

perception, and emotion. The concerns of students in China distributed in all domains evenly. Compared to the concerns regarding knowledge-related barriers, Chinese students in Germany worried more about their language ability, while students in China expressed the opposite opinion. Both students in Germany and in China stated more culture-based concerns, especially perception-based barriers, than personal capacity-related concerns.

Based on the content of Table 5.4, three changes of Chinese students' concerns can be discovered:

Change I: Chinese students' levels of communication concerns overall increased in Germany.

The results shown in Table 5.2 illustrate that the degrees of communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China were significantly different from each other. Additionally, the degrees of Chinese students' concerns in overall domains of concerns highly increased in Germany than in China. This result shows that the change of the integrated communicative environment was prone to arouse the change of communication concerns, although the communicative settings remained the same (in class and in one-on-one communications). This result also proves that the hypothesis 3a (*Chinese students studying in Germany and in China express different concerns regarding communicating with their German teachers*) was tenable.

Change II: Chinese students worried more about language-related barriers in communications with German teachers in Germany than in China.

The results listed in Table 5.3 indicate that Chinese students in China were more concerned with knowledge-related barriers than language-related barriers in their communication with German teachers. However, the language-based communication concerns became more severe than knowledge-based concerns for Chinese students in

Germany. In addition, between Chinese students in Germany and China, the degree difference of their language-based concerns was higher than the degree difference of their knowledge-based concerns. Since the degrees of Chinese students' concerns were overall higher in Germany than in China, language-related barriers caused a greater change of Chinese students' concerns than did knowledge-related barriers in Germany. It also reveals that the role of language¹ environment played differently for Chinese students in their conversations with German teachers in Germany and in China.

Change III: Culture-based concerns represented the top concerns of Chinese students, especially more prominent in Germany.

According to the findings of Table 5.3, among all the concerns domains, Chinese students both in Germany and in China, in general, expressed a higher degree of culture-based concerns than capacity-based concerns. In particular, perception-related barriers caused Chinese students a higher level of concerns in communication than emotion-related barriers did. Thus, the hypothesis 4a (*Compared to the barriers regarding language and knowledge, Chinese students' concerns are more related to the barriers involving emotion process and perception of communication.*) was verified.

However, throughout the first half of the ranking list in Table 5.1, especially the top ten concerns, it is not hard to find the difference of major concerns of each group. The top ten concerns of Chinese students in Germany were mostly caused by perception- and emotion-based barriers, and concentrated on self as a communicator and the impact of their communication on German teachers. However, the domains of the top concerns of Chinese students in China contained almost all categories of concerns. Therefore, it shows that culture-based concerns changed as the major types of concerns of Chinese students in Germany and led to the growing degree of their

¹ "Language" refers to the language that Chinese students and German teachers apply in their communication, namely German or English.

concerns. The change of cultural environment presumably had played a part in this process.

According to the findings of the change II and change III, the hypothesis 3b (*Supposing that Chinese students in Germany and in China have different communication concerns, the cultural and language circumstance reflect the main differences between them.*) was supported.

5.5 Expression of the changes and reflection of the concerns

This section focuses on the expression of the changes of Chinese students in communication and the reflection of their changes in specific communication problems. First, by analyzing the comments of Chinese students in Germany and in China, the changes of their concerns in communication with German teachers are explained. Next, the results of five communication problems in section V of the questionnaires will be discussed. These five questions can be considered as five specific examples of concerns occurred in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers. The results of these five questions provide a deep understanding of the differences and changes between Chinese students in Germany and China.

5.5.1 Changes of self-identity and mindset in communication

Zhu (2012:183) claims that the change of learning environment between Germany and China has certain influence on the studies of Chinese students in Germany. Although Chinese students understand the German standard and expectation of students, they use the specific framework of their cultures to interpret and assess other peoples' words, actions, and academic performance (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997:77f), which makes them feel confused between two learning environments. According to the comments

of Chinese students discovered in this study, it can be found that the change of learning environment also caused some changes in Chinese students' understanding and feeling about their communication with German teachers. These changes of Chinese students can be manifested as the following aspects:

(1) The change of self-identity: from a host to a foreigner

The first notable change of Chinese students is the change of their self-identities in communication with German teachers. Chinese students considered themselves as the “host” in communication with German teachers in China, whereas they adjusted their self-identity in communication from a host to a foreigner in Germany, also weakened with it are their confidence in communication.

- *As a host student in communication in China*

At Chinese universities, even though teachers in China are given the highest level of public respect (Coughlan, 2013), as introduced in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2.2), Chinese students still hold the feeling that they are the “hosts”, whereas German teachers are the “guests”, which can be seen in the comments [5-1] and [5-2] shown below:

[5-1] *“In China, I feel that Chinese students are the ‘hosts’ and the German teacher is our ‘guest’. We speak only in class or in the limited office hours. The rest of time we don't meet each other often. So far I haven't really felt that I have serious problems in communications with my German lecturer.”*
(CSCQ35)

[5-2] *“My German teacher is actually the foreigner in our class, my feeling is that he is the one who often tries to cooperate with us in communication.”*
(CSCQ32)

These comments expressed by Chinese students in China show that, under the

familiar language and cultural environment in China, they involuntarily earned a sense of predominance. Chinese students did not express much concerns about communicating with their German teachers in China because, on the one hand, there were limited chances for students to communicate with German teachers, and, on the other hand, their German teachers in China would take the initiative to cooperate with students in communication.

- ***Being a foreign student in communication in Germany***

Some previous studies mentioned in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3) indicated that Chinese students need to face many difficulties in their studies in Germany, such as language and communicative style, especially in the initial phase, most of them feel unfamiliar, helpless, and frustrated (e.g., Zhu, 2012:171; Zhao, 2007:100f). Such feelings of Chinese students were also found in the findings of this study. As shown in the comments [5-3] and [5-4], some Chinese students often defined themselves as “foreign students” (in Chinese: 外国学生) and “foreigners” (in Chinese: 外国人) in their interviews and questionnaires, which emphasized their identity as foreigners and “expectation of understanding and help from others” in communication (Zhu, 2012:206).

[5-3] *“When I was in China, I was not afraid to speak in class or talk to the German teacher, even if that time my German was worse than now. But in Germany, I am a foreigner; I am not confidence to communicate with either teachers or peer students.”* (CSGQ12)

[5-4] *“I am the only Chinese student in one of my classes. In that class, I rarely talk with others. I am just afraid to talk.”* (CSGQ45)

Compared with the comments [5-1] and [5-2], it can be perceived that without the familiar Chinese learning environment and language atmosphere, Chinese students felt more like foreigners instead of hosts in interaction with German teachers in

Germany. The identity of foreigners constrained their courage and also weakened their self-confidence in communication.

(2) The change of the mindset in communication: from secure to insecure

The findings find that the change of Chinese students' cognition of self-identity combined with the change of their mindsets in communication. In China, Chinese students felt "safe" in communication with German teachers, while in Germany the communications with German teachers became insecure for Chinese students.

- *The sense of belonging and safety in China*

According to the comments [5-5] and [5-6], due to the familiar circumstance in China, Chinese students have not only a sense of safety but also a feeling of dependency in communication with German teachers in China.

[5-5] "*Maybe because of the familiar circumstance in China, I have a feeling of safety. Although my German is not very good, I am not afraid to talk with my German teacher.*" (CSCQ18)

[5-6] "*I am not nervous about communicating with German teacher. I am surrounded by Chinese people; this gives me a sense of dependency.*" (CSCQ29)

This result also corresponds to the collective thinking of Chinese discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.1.3). The familiar circumstance and Chinese colleagues give Chinese students the feeling of collective in China. Although they may have some problems in communication, such as the insufficient language ability, the mindset of belonging and safety in Chinese collectives helped Chinese students to relieve their concerns in communication with German teachers.

- *The sense of insecurity in Germany*

On the contrary to the sense of belonging and safety of Chinese students in China, the identity as foreigners in Germany give Chinese students a sense of insecurity in communication with German teachers. To be specific, such as shown in the comment [5-7], being as a foreigner, one Chinese student in Germany cared about the compatibility of her performance with the German communicative environment. Moreover, the comment [5-8] also displays the anxiety and nervousness of one Chinese student resulted from the sense of insecurity of the unfamiliar German communication environment.

[5-7] *“I am one of the few foreign students in our seminar, which makes me most of the time very nervous. Because I am not sure whether I behaved in the correct way or said something silly in the eyes of others.” (CSGQ65)*

[5-8] *“I am a foreign student in Germany. Everything here is new for me. When I say or do something with my German teacher, I always subconsciously feel nervous.” (CSGI02)*

Above all, the change of communication environments changes the identity and the mindset of Chinese students in communication with German teachers. The feelings of “a host” and “safety” in Chinese collectives, that Chinese students had in China, turn into the senses of “a foreigner” and “insecure” of Chinese students in Germany, which explains the higher level of concerns that Chinese students in Germany expressed in the investigation.

(3) Fear of the changes

Besides the changes of self-identity and mindset in communication, the discovered communication concerns of Chinese students were also related to their feelings about the changes that they experienced in Germany. The changes of cultural and communication environment caused Chinese students anxiety in communication to some extent. Their anxiety further turned into the fear of the changes in Germany,

which defeated their courage and motives in communication with German teachers and, in the end, resulted in the high level of communication concerns.

[5-9] *“I feel much more anxious now in Germany compared to the study in China before. Here I need to adjust myself to a completely new communication environment based on a different cultural background.”* (CSGQ37)

[5-10] *“It is very different in communicating with German teachers in Germany and in China. I need to face up to many new customs and challenges in Germany. Sometimes I really want to go back to China.”* (CSGQ71)

It can be seen from the comments [5-9] and [5-10] that the change of the learning and communication environment made Chinese students “live an academic life filled with paradoxes” (Campbell & Li, 2007:389) and caused the change of their communicative status to some extent. Compared to the familiar communication environment in China, Chinese students in Germany were confronted with more “challenge of mediating the difference between learning in China and learning in Germany” (Zhu, 2012:174), especially psychologically and emotionally, in communication with German teachers. Thus, Chinese students expressed a relative higher degree of communication concerns in Germany than in China.

5.5.2 Changes of the role of foreign language: from a “subject” to a “daily tool”

5.5.2.1 Expression of the overall changes

As presented in section 4.3.4.4, language is discovered as one of the top concerns of Chinese students in communication with German teachers in this study. Although the language that Chinese students used to communicate with German teachers was unaltered in Germany and in China, the change of language environment “varied the attitudes of Chinese students toward the language they spoke” (Jackson, 2016:28),

which can be manifested by the following aspects:

(1) Communication with German teachers in China

First of all, some comments of Chinese students in China display that to communicate with German teachers by using a foreign language in China “did not cause crucial concerns” of Chinese students, although the students expressed that they were “not confident about the language ability” in communication (CSCQ37). The following points summarized the attitudes of Chinese students toward communicating with German teachers in the German language in China.

- *No stress about making mistakes*

To Chinese students in China, the foreign language (here refers to the German language) is one of the subjects that they need to study. As a language learner, they do not think that there is any stress to make mistakes in communication. For example, as the comment [5-11] shows, a student in China considered that making mistakes in a conversation in German is not a bad experience, but an opportunity to learn the language. Hence, there is no stress for students in China in this regard.

[5-11] *“The German language is my subject (in China). If I made any mistake in using this language, this is normal because I am a learner and my German lecture can understand me. Sometimes I am glad that I make mistakes so that I can learn something new.”* (CSCQ25)

- *Support and cooperation of German teachers*

In addition, the support offered by German teachers in China is also considered as one of the reasons that reduced the level of Chinese students’ concerns in communication. For instance, two students noted in the comments [5-12] and [5-13] that their German teachers not only tried to accommodate the language level of students, but also to cooperate with the communicative habits of Chinese students in China. Thus, by this

means, the pressure of students in communication was relieved to a certain degree.

[5-12] *“German is a language that I only speak with my German teacher. In our communication, my German teacher usually doesn’t use very difficult vocabulary in order to let me understand all the content. I don’t feel stress when talking with him.”* (CSCQ27)

[5-13] *“Sometimes I have the feeling that our German teacher is more nervous than us at the lecture. She likes to ask us whether we like her way of teaching or whether we have any comments for her.”* (CSCQ01)

- ***Support in the Chinese language environment***

In addition, the learning environment in China provided Chinese students “a feeling of safety” (CSGQ18, [5-5]). They could turn to either “peer students” (CSCQ29, [5-15]) or “Chinese teachers” (CSCQ36, [5-14]) whenever they had questions or concerns in communication with German teacher. If they chose to ask German teachers, Chinese teachers and peer students could still offer help in case the explanations of German teachers cannot solve the problems. This also explains why Chinese students in China expressed a higher level of concerns in one-on-one conversations with German teachers than in class. The comments [5-14] and [5-15] illustrate the possible support that students can receive in communication with German teachers at Chinese universities:

[5-14] *“Sometimes I don’t understand the explanation of the German teacher for my questions. In this case, either I or the German teacher can turn to other Chinese teachers for help. No matter which way, my questions will always be solved.”* (CSCQ36)

[5-15] *“I can ask other students when I don’t understand my German teacher.”* (CSCQ29)

Taking the above aspects into consideration, the communication concerns of Chinese students were released by the support from their German teachers, Chinese teachers, and peer students in the language environment in China. Therefore, the communication with German teachers in China is non-threatening and contains few concerns for Chinese students.

(2) Communication with German teachers in Germany

However, the language circumstance in Germany is different for Chinese students. Compared to Chinese students in China, Chinese students in Germany changed their attitudes toward the role of language and also felt “under stress” (CSGQ06) and “helpless” (CSGQ25) in communication in Germany. The language-based concerns of Chinese students can be characterized by the following points:

- ***Language acts as a tool for daily life instead of a subject***

In Germany, the role of the foreign language (German or English) for Chinese students is more than simply a subject, but a tool, that they need to use for studying and daily life. The requirement of language ability improved, which was followed by the increase of students’ pressure. For example, one student expressed her worries in the comment [5-16]:

[5-16] *“I have only learned German for one and half year. It is for me still a new language which I need to learn thoroughly. But I need to do everything in this language in Germany, which brings me lots of pressure. Language is the basic but also the biggest barrier for me to study in Germany. It is not merely a subject, but everyday life.”* (CSGI10)

- ***Be afraid of making mistakes***

Contrary to the feelings of Chinese students in making mistakes in China, Chinese students in Germany stated that they were worried about making mistakes in

communication. Although Chinese students would achieve more progress in their language ability in Germany than in China, the change of the language environment of the host country increased the level of their communication concerns. The fear of being disgraced in front of German teachers resulted in the non-confidence of Chinese students in communication in Germany. Such kind of concerns of students can be seen in the comments [5-17] and [5-18].

[5-17] *“I am afraid to speak at the lecture or ask questions because I am not confident with my German language, even though my language skill is better than I had in China. I don’t want others to laugh at the mistakes I made.”*
(CSGQ09)

[5-18] *“I communicate in German with native speakers. This gives me lots of stress. My German is better than before, but I am still afraid that I cannot understand my German teachers or I would make any stupid mistake.”*
(CSGQ01)

- ***Feelings of helplessness***

In addition, Chinese students in Germany did not have the similar language supports, such as the support from Chinese teachers and peer students, as they had in China. As the ideas received from the comments [5-19] and [5-20], in the German learning context, Chinese students can neither constantly ask German teachers to accommodate their language level in communication nor ask peer German students to explain lectures in Chinese. As a result, their helplessness in the German communication environment caused their high degree of concerns.

[5-19] *“I am afraid I cannot understand completely what my German supervisor says to me. If I don’t understand him, I do ask him to repeat. But sometimes I still don’t understand after his repetition. I can only pretend that I understood in order to make our conversation go on.”* (CSGQ05)

[5-20] *“In China, if I didn’t understand lectures, I can, at least, ask other classmates in Chinese. Here in Germany, I need to deal with everything in German. Language is the biggest challenge for me.”* (CSGI01)

- ***Misunderstanding caused by Chinese translations***

Two Chinese students also mentioned an interesting point about the concerns resulted from Chinese translations, as presented in the comments [5-21] and [5-22]. Chinese students stated that sometimes they cannot fully take part in communication with German teachers because they were not familiar with some contents in foreign languages, but only in the Chinese language. Because of the understanding of some knowledge is limited in the Chinese language, Chinese students felt “awkward” and “helpless” in communication.

[5-21] *“Sometimes I feel ridiculous that I don’t understand some very well-known things said by my German teachers, such as names of countries and scientific theories, only because I learned these things in the Chinese language according to Chinese translations. Of course, I know Shakespeare and Archimedes principle, but they sound totally different in the Chinese language.”* (CSGI07)

[5-22] *“Sometimes I feel really awkward in communications with my teacher, especially in lectures. It looks as if I lack knowledge to my German teacher, but actually I just don’t know the German translation, because I learned everything in the Chinese language in China.”* (CSGQ06)

This kind of communication concerns about Chinese translation mentioned by Chinese students was also proved by their German teachers. An example can be seen in the comment [5-23] mentioned by one teacher.

[5-23] *“Chinese students sometimes are trapped by Chinese translations in*

communication.” (GTQ17)

- ***Lack of the cultural background of language***

Furthermore, it is worth noticing that some idioms and slang used by German teachers and peer students in communication also contributed to the high level of concerns of Chinese students in Germany. This result is also reflected the previous finding in the United States that “international students occasionally struggle to comprehend the context and meaning of idioms in conversations” (Wang & Frank, 2002:212). As shown in the comments [5-24] and [5-25], some Chinese students in this study indicated that some German teachers and peer students sometimes used slang or idioms in conversations, which were difficult for foreigner students to understand and made Chinese students feel as if they were completely left out of the discussion.

[5-24] *“It is already hard for me to follow the complete lecture. I normally can understand most of the content. But sometimes in a discussion, the teacher and other German students say something, such as slang, idioms, and dialect, which only local people can understand. I felt I am ignored.”* (CSGI06)

[5-25] *“Sometimes I am confused in the communication by the idioms or slang German teachers or students said.”* (CSGQ73)

Some Chinese students also pointed out that some German idioms and slang were beyond their knowledge of the German language, as presented in the comment [5-26], which resulted in them feeling confused and frustrated in communication. The feeling of failure to participate in conversations, therefore, negatively affected their communication with German teachers or peer students.

[5-26] *“Sometimes I don’t understand some words or expressions said by German lecturers or students. Neither can I find the translation in the dictionary. Finally, I realized what they said are some slang. No wonder I don’t understand.”* (CSGQ29)

On the basis of the above comments, Table 5.5 summarizes the comparison between the findings of two groups. As shown in the table, Chinese students in Germany needed to use a foreign language as a tool for their studies and daily life. Compared with the Chinese students in China, the students in Germany needed to encounter more language-based difficulties in study and in communication with German teachers. Contrary to the highly supportive language environment in China, the unfamiliar language environment in Germany and the high demand of the foreign language level resulted in the stress and helplessness of the Chinese students in Germany. Their stress and frustration caused by the limited language ability finally led to their higher level of language-related concerns in communication with German teachers than that of Chinese students in China.

Table 5.5: Effects of language-related concerns on Chinese students in Germany and in China

Influencing domains	Chinese students	
	In China	In Germany
Communicative Context	Mother tongue	Foreign language
Making mistakes	Low stress	High stress
Foreign language	A subject	A tool for everyday life
Language supports	Supports in Chinese of teachers and peer students	Sense of helplessness
Topic participation	No difficulties	Restrained by limited level of foreign language

5.5.2.2 Reflection of the specific concern

The third question in section V of the questionnaires (in Table 5.6) tried to find out the reasons for Chinese students' failure of understanding German teachers based on language barriers. The responses to this question reflect the change of focus on the language-based communicative problems between Chinese students in Germany and in China as a specific example.

Table 5.6: Frequency distribution of the responses to the third question in section V of the questionnaires

Content of questions	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers (N=34)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question No.3: When students do not understand what teachers say, it is because						
1: Teachers use too many words that students are not familiar with.	63	51.2	16	38.1	14	41.2
2: Teachers speak too fast, students cannot follow.	61	49.6	7	16.7	8	23.5
3: Sentences said by teachers are too long, students cannot catch the points.	34	27.6	9	21.4	9	26.5
4: Students are not familiar with the content of lectures.	21	17.1	0	0	5	14.7
5: Students are not familiar with the relevant cultural references.	14	11.3	16	38.1	7	20.6

According to the responses to this question, Chinese students in Germany noted that it was mostly because teachers used too many unfamiliar vocabularies (51.2%) and their speaking speed was too fast (49.6%). German teachers perceived similar answers to their students. 41.2% of the German teachers reported that they used too many unfamiliar words for Chinese students, and 23.5% of the teachers regarded that their speech rate was a major barrier for Chinese students in conversations. Considering the relationship between the length of the sentences and students' concerns, 26.5% of the German teachers considered that the sentences they spoke were too long for Chinese students to understand. Similarly, 27.6% of the Chinese students stated that they cannot focus on the key points because the sentences used by teachers were too long. Chinese students and German teachers expressed similar opinions to this question and both realized the weakness of Chinese students in language.

In terms of Chinese students in China, 38.1% of them reported that unfamiliar words and cultural references their German teachers used were their main reasons for this question. However, none of the students in China mentioned the content issues as a reason for failing to understand their German teachers in China, whereas, 17.1% of the students in Germany noted that they did not understand what teachers said because of the contents of lectures. This can be seen that in China, although Chinese students mentioned some language-related concerns, they had no problem understanding the lectures of German teachers, either in language or in content. In other words, the content and language used by German teachers in class in China were chosen according to the actual understanding and language levels of Chinese students.

On the basis of the answers discussed above, it shows that the attitudes of Chinese students toward this language-related problem changed in Germany and in China. Chinese students in Germany showed more concerns related to language-based barriers compared to the students in China. Although Chinese students in China also stated some concerns about their language level, it seems that they still expressed fewer concerns in communication with German teachers.

5.5.3 Change of teacher-student communicative relationships and methods

5.5.3.1 Expression of the overall changes

In addition to the changes of students' feelings and the role of language in communication, the different teacher-student relations and communicative modes between Germany and China discovered in this study can also be considered as the causes of the change of Chinese students' communication concerns.

(1) Change of the teacher-student relation: from obedient to equal

As discussed in chapter 2, Chinese students respect a hierarchical relationship with teachers based on Confucianism (see section 2.2.1.1). However, in this study, Chinese

students expressed that the relation between teachers and students in Germany is more equal than in China, which challenged their understanding of the hierarchical teacher-student relation. As two students mentioned in the comments [5-27] and [5-28], although they realized that an equal relation with teachers is a good thing, it still took some time for them to accommodate with the equal relation with German teachers in communication.

[5-27] *"I feel the relationship between teachers and students at German universities are more equal than it at Chinese universities. As far as I can see, German students like to ask and discuss various questions with German teachers in class. Most of the Chinese students will not do the same."*
(CSGQ11)

[5-28] *"The teacher-student relation in Germany is pretty equal. This should be a good thing for students. But I was not used to it very much in the beginning."*
(CSGQ74)

Specifically, as discovered in the findings in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4.2), teachers and the teaching of teachers are unchallenged and highly respectable to Chinese students (e.g., Guan, 2007; Mitschian, 1991). However, students in Germany are encouraged to being critical and express different opinions (Zhu, 2012:179) due to the equal relationship between students and teachers. Hence, the findings show that the change of the relationship between teachers and students in Germany caused maladjustment and concerns of Chinese students in communication. As shown in the comment [5-29], a Chinese student expressed his discomfort to the "disrespectful" behavior of his German colleagues at group meetings.

[5-29] *"I was taught to obey the teachers' teaching and direction since I was very young. It is very uncomfortable for me to behave as my German colleagues normally do at our group meetings, such as arguing with the supervisor or questioning the viewpoints of supervisor."* (CSGI08)

Likewise, German teachers also realized the obedient behavior of Chinese students in class. For example, two German teachers mentioned that Chinese students did not like to answer questions or express opinions, but wait passively to be called, as presented in the following comments [5-30] and [5-31]:

[5-30] “*Chinese students do not like to compete for answers*” (GTQ03)

[5-31] “*Most of the Chinese students tended to be called by me rather than speak actively themselves.*” (GTQ09)

Above all, the relative equal teacher-student relationship in Germany challenges the intrinsic communicative approach of Chinese students with teachers, which ultimately led to a higher level of concerns of Chinese students in Germany than students in China.

(2) Change of the means of expression with German teachers: from implied to direct

Another change in communication with German teachers that caused the concerns of Chinese students was the different means of expression between Germany and China.

Having introduced in the second chapter (section 2.3.2) that Chinese students highly value euphemism and restrained expression with teachers in communication, this is one manifestation of their respect for teachers and the obedience to their teaching. This kind of behavior of Chinese students was also found out in the findings of this study. As two Chinese students noted in their questionnaires (the comments [5-32] and [5-33]) that, instead of the direct expression of personal opinions, they were more likely to use tactful and indirect ways to communicate with German teachers in order to show their respect to teachers.

[5-32] “*If I have different ideas than the teacher, I will not directly say. Because*

this may embarrass the teacher, and also discomfort me.” (CSGQ74)

[5-33] *“I prefer to ask or discuss with teachers about my opinions after class or alone, rather than stop the teaching in class straight away.”* (CSCQ20)

However, the communication between German teachers and students in German classes is different from Chinese classes. The direct and realistic ways of communication in German classes challenged the perspectives of Chinese students on the means of expression. The comments [5-34] and [5-34] manifest two examples of the maladjustment that Chinese students confronted in class in Germany:

[5-34] *“I really admire the courage of my German classmates. They expressed their opinions directly and openly in class. I can feel that their questions or statements sometimes even put our lecturer in an awkward position. It is difficult for Chinese students to communicate in this way.”* (CSGI10)

[5-35] *“Sometimes I feel my German classmates and lecturers are unmerciful in their discussions, or rather say realistic, which took me a long time to accommodate.”* (CSGQ58)

Indirect expression is viewed as a central cultural feature of the Chinese manner of thinking and behavior in interpersonal interaction, while indirect communication in the western countries is often considered as “a lack of civil courage or a waste of time” (Lin-Huber, 2001:89). Chinese students also realized the different manners of expression between China and Germany and worried that their implied communicative style may give German teachers a negative impression.

[5-36] *“It is not comfortable for me to communicate with teachers in a direct way, but I am working on myself and trying to change.”* (CSGQ30)

However, according to the idea shown in the comment [5-36], although it is difficult to change the existing communication habits, some Chinese students still

expressed the willingness to adjust themselves to accommodate the German communicative manner.

(3) Change of the communicative approach with German teachers: from passive to active

In addition, the communicative approach between Chinese students and German teachers is worth mentioning. Wang (2010:327) points out in his study that Chinese students, especially at Ph.D. level, value “the guidance and transitional authority of teachers” highly in the process of learning. The more autonomy Chinese graduate students acquired from their teachers in the study, the stronger they desired to receive guidance of teachers. Some comments discovered in this study conform to the findings of Wang (2010). As two Chinese Ph.D. students in Germany noted in the comments [5-37] and [5-38], instead of following students strictly, their German teachers were more inclined to give them freedom in research than Chinese teachers. In order to have the supervision of German supervisors, these Chinese students needed to change their communicative approach from passive to active.

[5-37] *“I am in the field of chemistry, and stay in laboratory most of the time. Comparing with my previous study in China, I feel I have fewer contact with my supervisor in Germany. German supervisor gives me freedom to do my project. I need to be active to ask.”* (CSGQ02)

[5-38] *“I need to arrange appointments with my German supervisor; otherwise we do not meet each other. This is different in China.”* (CSGI06)

In all, the different teacher-student relations, the ways of expression, and communication approaches between Germany and China can contribute to one of the causes for the change of Chinese students in Germany, which resulted in the increase of concerns of Chinese students in communication with German teachers.

5.5.3.2 Reflection of the specific concerns

In addition to the above overall changes discovered in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers, the first, second, and fourth questions in section V of the questionnaires also present three specific communication problems commonly occurred in their communication. The findings of these three questions provide detailed examples of the changes of Chinese students in communication with German teachers with the change of environment of communication. The statistical data of the responses of these questions are first presented. After that, the summary and inspiration of the responses are discussed.

First, Table 5.7 presents the results of the first question in section V. The question was concerning the silence of Chinese students to German teachers' questions in class, which represents one of the common problems in their communication.

Most of the responses of Chinese students in Germany reflected the influence of Chinese cultural background on them, such as that they did not want to give teachers any negative impression (60.2%) and that they were too shy to express own opinions (38.2%). Additionally, content- or language-related problems also played a role in communication, such as that they did not understand questions (23.6%) and did not know how to say their ideas in English/German (28.5%).

The responses of German teachers also centered on culture-related concerns, although they also recognized the limitation of Chinese students' language ability. Almost half of the German teachers thought that Chinese students stayed silent in class because they were too shy to express their ideas (52.9%) and did not want to create a negative impression (47.1%). However, none of the German teachers considered the questions they asked as too difficult to understand or as not interesting enough for Chinese students to answer, whereas some Chinese students held opposite opinions.

Table 5.7: Frequency distribution of the responses to the first question in section V of the questionnaires

Content of questions	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers (N=34)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question No.1: Chinese students choose to remain silent after teachers ask questions in class, because						
1: Students do not understand questions and have nothing to say.	29	23.6	4	9.5	0	0
2: Students understand questions, but do not know what to say.	47	38.2	17	40.5	18	52.9
3: Students do not know how to express their ideas in English/German.	35	28.5	13	31.0	9	26.5
4: Students are not interested in questions so that they do not want to respond.	16	13.0	0	0	0	0
5: Students do not want to give teachers a negative impression.	74	60.2	39	92.9	16	47.1

In regard to Chinese students in China, the main concerns revealed by their answers were similar to the answers of Chinese students in Germany. Students in China were also worried about giving German teachers a negative impression (92.9%), their shyness (40.5%), and language-based problems (31%). However, unlike the students in Germany, none of the students in China regarded the questions teachers asked as not interesting, whereas a few students in Germany (13%) were not interested in teachers' questions.

The second question attempted to explore the potential reasons for the reserved behavior of Chinese students about asking German teachers questions, even if students did not understand what teachers said.

Table 5.8: Frequency distribution of the responses to the second question in section V of the questionnaires

Content of questions	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers (N=34)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question No.2: Chinese students do not ask teachers questions even when they do not understand what teachers say, because						
1: Students do not know how to ask, because they do not understand the questions at all.	9	7.3	0	0	2	5.9
2: Students do not care whether or not they understand the questions.	0	0	4	9.5	0	0
3: Students do not know/are not sure how to express their questions in English/German.	13	10.6	11	26.2	8	23.5
4: Students are too shy to ask and prefer to ask other students or think alone.	74	60.2	29	69.0	20	58.8
5: Students do not want to give teachers a negative impression.	87	70.7	15	35.7	17	50.0

As the results listed in Table 5.8 show, the top two responses given by three groups were students' shyness and worries about giving teachers a negative impression. In addition, language, as a common problem, was also noted by some participants of each group.

7.3% of the Chinese students in Germany expressed that they did not understand the questions most of the time, so that they did not know how to ask teachers. A few of their German teachers also had the same opinion. However, Chinese students in China did not consider that understanding the questions would be a reason for refraining from asking.

Another different response made by Chinese students in China and in Germany

was about their attitude toward whether they understand the content instructed by teachers. Chinese students in Germany indicated that they were dysphoric if they could not understand the lectures, which also won the approval of their German teachers. However, several Chinese students in China expressed the opposite answers.

The fourth question in section V focused on the failure of Chinese students in freely expressing their opinions in communication with German teachers.

Table 5.9: Frequency distribution of the responses to the fourth question in section V of the questionnaires

Content of questions	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers (N=34)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question No.4: When students do not freely express their ideas to teachers, it is because						
1: Students do not know what to say because they have no clue about the topics.	5	4.1	0	0	0	0
2: Students are too shy/do not want to say anything.	16	13.0	9	21.4	16	47.1
3: Students do not know how to express their ideas in English/German.	59	39.0	19	45.2	3	8.8
4: Students do not know if it is appropriate to say what they think to teachers directly.	48	48.0	25	59.5	20	88.2
5: Students do not want to say something that will give teachers a negative impression of them.	79	64.2	32	76.2	12	35.3

According to Table 5.9, Chinese students in Germany replied that their worries about whether it is appropriate to say what they think to teachers directly (48%), their limited language ability (39%), and the unwillingness to create a negative impression to teachers (64.2%) prevented them from expressing opinions. Chinese students in China also noted similar reasons as the Chinese students in Germany. German

teachers considered the Chinese culture-related communicative manner as the reason for restraining Chinese students in communication, such as that the students were too shy to express their ideas (47.1%), students tried to avoid giving a negative impression to teachers (35.3%), and that they did not know whether their ideas were appropriate to say directly (88.2%).

Additionally, it is worth noting that there were several Chinese students in Germany, who (n=5) indicated that they did not express ideas because of their unfamiliarity with the content of topics. Nevertheless, such an option was not considered by their German teachers or Chinese students in China. That is to say, German teachers in Germany did not expect that some topics could be an obstacle for Chinese students to express their opinions, while the topics selected by German teachers in China conformed with the taste and the level of understanding of Chinese students.

It can be seen from the results of the above three questions that the change of communicative environments led to some changes in Chinese students' habits in communication, while some of their habits seemed not to be affected by the change of external circumstance. On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative results of these three questions, the reflection of the discovered concerns can be presented as the following aspects:

(1) Shyness, impression on German teachers, and language as the top three causes for the concerns of Chinese students

The top two concerns stated by Chinese students, both in Germany and in China, were their shyness and worries about giving German teachers a negative impression. Additionally, most of the Chinese students were also not confident in their language ability. Therefore, shyness, impression on German teachers, and language ability appeared to be the top causes for the concerns of Chinese students in communication with German teachers, which also echoes the parts of the results of the first research

question discussed in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4).

Some German teachers also recognized such worries of Chinese students in communication. For example, one German teacher noticed in the comment [5-39] that Chinese students did not ask questions because they were afraid to leave a bad impression to the teacher.

[5-39] *“They (Chinese students in Germany) may afraid that I will remember their non-ideal performance for a long time.”* (GTQ02)

(2) Change of the selection of discussion topics by German teachers

In addition to the common causes pointed out in the point (1), some differences were also discovered between the responses of Chinese students in Germany and in China. As presented in Table 5.7 and Table 5.9, some Chinese students in Germany did not fully understand or have interest in the topics chosen by German teachers. As an example, the comment [5-40] shows that the depth and breadth of some topics chosen by German teachers in Germany were beyond the scope of knowledge of Chinese students. However, Chinese students in China seemed to have no problem understanding the topics posed by German teachers in China. This shows that the selection of discussion topics in class was different between Germany and China.

[5-40] *“Sometimes I keep silence in class because some topics are very strange to me, such as European history in Middle Ages, I don’t know what to say.”* (CSGQ81)

Thus, it can be learned from the finding that, in China, the topics selected by German teachers were normally at an acceptable level of Chinese students’ knowledge, so that students could fully participate in the discussion. However, due to the multicultural background of students in Germany, German teachers could not only care about the feelings and scope of knowledge of Chinese students in choosing topics for discussion in class. The different knowledge backgrounds of Chinese students

hindered them from fully integrating into the communication of some topics, which ultimately increased the level of concerns of those Chinese students in Germany.

(3) Change of the level of difficulty of the questions asked by German teachers

Another difference discovered between Chinese students in Germany and in China is their responses to the second question in section V of the questionnaires. As shown in Table 5.8, some Chinese students in Germany expressed their concerns about understanding the questions asked by German teachers. According to the comments of Chinese students in Germany, they did not ask questions because the questions of German teachers were sometimes beyond the limits of their ability, either in language or in content. Thus, they had no idea about how to ask. One student noted the concerns in this regard in the comment [5-41]:

[5-41] *“Sometimes I don’t understand what my teacher said because of too many new words. Sometimes even if I understand all the words, I still cannot catch the meaning of the questions of some German teachers.” (CSGQ103)*

However, to understand the questions of German teachers did not seem to be one of the concerns of Chinese students in China. Although there were no comments mentioned by students in China regarding the concrete examples or reasons of their insensibility to this problem, it at least can be seen that the difficulty of the questions raised by German teachers in China was within the acceptable limits of Chinese students.

(4) Change of the student management system

The results of the second question in section V also reveal another interesting difference between Chinese students in Germany and in China. All of the Chinese students in Germany indicated that it is important to understand what German teachers said and follow the instruction of teachers. This result echos the influence of the high status of teachers and teacher-dominated teaching and learning style on

Chinese students, which was introduced in section 2.3.2.1 in chapter 2. However, a few of Chinese students in China expressed different opinions. For example, two students in China mentioned in the comments [5-42] and [5-43] that they did not really care whether they caught the information given by the German teacher in class. Their unconcern in this question can be explained that they can either “ask the class monitor” (CSCQ11), or “ask other students” (CSCQ37) when they did not understand what the German teacher said in class.

[5-42] *“I can ask our class monitor if I don’t understand in class.”* (CSCQ11)

[5-43] *“I can find a way to understand, for example, to ask other students or class monitor.”* (CSCQ37)

The above two comments raise the point of the different student management system between German and Chinese universities. As also mentioned in section 2.3.2.1, compared to the relatively independent administrative supervision at German universities, students at Chinese universities are normally supervised under a “triple-care” centralized student management system offered by universities. As shown in the comments [5-42] and [5-43], when any problem occurs, students could not only turn to the counselor but also to the class leader and the class monitor for help, which, on the one hand, reduced the concerns of students in China to some degree and, on the other hand, developed gradually the habit of dependence of these Chinese students.

(5) Change of the communication contexts based on different types of courses

Last but not the least, some students in Germany also reported that the various types of courses in Germany added a lot more stress in communication than they expected. Different kind of courses, such as lecture, seminar, exercise lesson, the field course, and excursion, contain different requirements for reacting to teachers and interacting with peer students. Compared with the relatively monotonous form of courses at

Chinese universities, Chinese students were challenged by the ways of learning and communicating in the unfamiliar types of courses. As two Chinese students in Germany noted in the comments [5-44] and [5-45] that they “jumped” among different types of classes. The transition of learning situations caused them concerns in communication with teachers because they needed to adapt to the different communication contexts of different types of courses.

[5-44] “*Sometimes I need to switch my brain to different communicative models based on different types of courses. When this is the case, my mind is easy to wander.*” (CSGQ39)

[5-45] “*I need to jump to different types of classes. This is not easy for me to adapt and makes me most of the time just too tired to talk with others.*” (CSGQ78)

Above all, it can be seen that the questions and topics selected by German teachers in China are more likely to be accepted by Chinese students than those chosen by German teachers in Germany. Moreover, the various types of courses and relative “free” student management system at German universities also added more pressure on Chinese students in Germany than students in China. Hence, it can be understood that Chinese students in Germany stated a higher level of concerns than students in China did.

5.5.4 Changes of communication concerns in group discussions

Another question worth discussing is the concern of Chinese students regarding their communication in group activities. The answers to the fifth question in section V of the questionnaires provide an overview of the attitudes of three groups toward communication in group discussions.

Table 5.10: Frequency distribution of the responses to the fifth question in section V of the questionnaires

Content of questions	Chinese students in Germany (N=123)		Chinese students in China (N=42)		German teachers (N=34)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question No.5: Students cannot involve actively in group discussions, because						
1: Students are not interested in the topic so that have nothing to say.	13	10.6	13	31.0	2	5.9
2: Students do not like group discussions and do not want to participate in.	57	46.3	18	52.9	6	17.6
3: Students do not have a chance to speak, because the other students in the group are too talkative.	36	29.3	0	0	4	11.8
4: Students do not want to participate in and keep themselves out of the affair.	49	39.8	9	21.4	11	32.4
5: Students cannot keep the pace with others because of different speeds of speaking, thinking, writing, etc.	78	63.4	0	0	23	67.6

As shown in Table 5.10, almost half of the Chinese students in Germany (46.3%) replied that they did not like group discussions in class, despite only 17.6% of the German teachers having considered that group discussions might be not popular among Chinese students. Similarly, more than half of the Chinese students in China (52.9%) considered that the communication in group discussions was not an enjoyable experience.

Another major reason stated by most participants of three groups was the rhythm of different students during the group discussion. Over half of the Chinese students in Germany (63.4%) and German teachers (67.6%) recognized that Chinese students were eliminated from discussions by the other students in the group unintentionally. Since the other students in group discussions normally were native speakers of German or English, the different ways of thinking and different language

mastering degree might slowly result in Chinese students becoming outsiders in group discussions. On the contrary, none of the students in China considered the other students in groups as a reason for their failure of participating in group discussions, neither psychologically nor verbally. The similar results are also reflected in the opportunity of speaking in group discussions. Around 30% of the Chinese students in Germany considered that the other students in group discussions did not give them a chance to talk, while this was not a problem of Chinese students in China.

According to the findings of this question presented above, it is not difficult to realize that almost half of the Chinese students, both in China and in Germany, did not enjoy the discussion in groups. Moreover, Chinese students in Germany expressed more concerns and worries regarding group discussions than the students in China did. According to the comments of students, the reasons can be displayed as the following points:

(1) Approach-avoidance

As discussed in section 2.2.1.2 in chapter 2, in the concepts developed in intercultural motivation with the Chinese culture and society, preserving harmony is one of the central cultural standards in China, which defines wide areas of perceiving, thinking, value, and acting of Chinese. Thus, a conversation in China must basically be designed in a way that no situation would burden or threaten the interpersonal relationship (Liang, 1998:225). Specifically, Chinese do not like to make open criticism of others “in order to avoid appearing embarrassing themselves and threatening the face of conversation partners” (Ding & Fluck, 2001:99).

Similar to other Chinese people, who “usually try to avoid conflict as much as possible by using avoidance strategies in the face of the confrontational situations” (Gao et al., 1996, in Song, 2009:80), some Chinese students emphasized more on the interpersonal feelings rather than focused on the expression of personal opinions in group discussions. Some comments ([5-46], [5-47], and [5-48]) of Chinese students

display this kind of viewpoint.

[5-46] *“It is uncomfortable for me to argue with others.”* (CSCQ25)

[5-47] *“I don’t like arguing with others, which makes me uncomfortable in group works.”* (CSGQ11)

[5-48] *“I do not like group discussion because I do not like to argue with others. If I argue with someone, the unhappy feelings generated from our argument will negatively influence on our relationship subtly. I do not want this happen.”*
(CSGQ04)

As shown in the three comments above, Chinese students felt uneasy to argue with other students in group discussions because they considered that this could destroy the interpersonal relationships in the group. Hence, group discussions were not widely enjoyed by Chinese students.

(2) Change of the pressure from the other students in groups

Compare to the Chinese students in China, it can be discovered from the data shown in Table 5.10 that Chinese students in Germany expressed more concerns and worried about the pressure resulted from the unmatched thinking and speed of speech with the other students in group discussion, which consequently resulted in their lack of self-confidence in communication. However, none of the Chinese students in China expressed any pressure from the other students in group discussions. This result verifies again that the change of cultural and language environment increased the degree of communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany. Some representative worries voiced by Chinese students in Germany can be presented as the following aspects:

- *Unmatched way of thinking and expression with German students*

First of all, some Chinese students in Germany explained that they sometimes could not find a new point of view to present in discussions. Additionally, the active performance of some of their German peers also caused mental pressure on Chinese students, which also restricted the potential participation of Chinese students in group discussions. As two examples, these opinions of Chinese students can be found in the comments [5-49] and [5-50].

[5-49] “*Sometimes it is different for me to find new ideas to present in groups discussion so that I cannot take part in the discussion.*” (CSGQ 41)

[5-50] “*Some of the German students in my class are very active and always have new ideas to say in discussions. I feel under pressure if I am in a group with them.*” (CSGQ20)

Similar opinions were also briefly mentioned by two German teachers. They noted that some of Chinese students chose to remain silent in group discussions. One possible reason was that other students may be faster than the Chinese students to express the same opinions, so that the Chinese students did not have the chance to express themselves.

- ***Language barriers***

Additionally, language was also presented as a concern of Chinese students in Germany in their group discussions. Different from the Chinese students in China, whose peer students are Chinese, Chinese students in Germany expressed their worries about the language difficulties resulted from German peer students in groups.

[5-51] “*I feel that some German students don't like to work with international students because the conversation speed may reduce due to the language barriers.*” (CSGQ52)

As shown in the comment [5-51], one Chinese student also mentioned that the

language barrier was not only a concern of Chinese students in group activities but rather, some of their German peers did not like to work with international students in group discussions because of the potential communication barriers caused by language.

- ***Lack of self-confidence in group discussions***

Moreover, as an example of the concerns caused by face-saving of Chinese students, as discussed in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4.1), the fear of losing face was often mentioned by Chinese students regarding their communication in group discussions in Germany. For instance, as presented in the comments [5-52] and [5-52], two students in Germany mentioned that they were unsure about their opinions and afraid to lose face in front of the other students in the group.

[5-52] *"I am afraid others do not understand me, which would embarrass me."*
(CSGQ10)

[5-53] *"I am not confident with my opinions and am afraid to present in front of others."* (CSG28)

Some German teachers also realized the lack of confidence of Chinese students in group activities and provided similar opinions in their survey, such as their comments [5-54] and [5-55] shown below.

[5-54] *"They (Chinese students in Germany) are usually not confident with themselves and scared of sharing opinions."* (GTQ13)

[5-55] *"They cared too much about what others regard them."* (GTI03)

Above all, it is not difficult to find out that Chinese students need to face more challenges in group activities in Germany than those Chinese students in China. The challenges not only resulted from their unmatched ways of thinking and expression

with German peer students, but also came from their insufficient language ability, which, as a result, hindered their confidence and enthusiasm of the active participation in group discussions.

5.5.5 Stick to Chinese communities in Germany

The last phenomenon that weakened the communication between Chinese students and German teachers, especially in Germany, was not a change of students but a habit of them.

According to the features of Chinese communication style introduced in chapter 2, collective thinking as one of the principles guides the communicative behavior of Chinese people, which is discussed and demonstrated by many studies listed in section 2.2.1.3. Additionally, the research on Chinese students studying in Germany presented in section 2.2.3 also pointed out that Chinese students overcome their fear of the unfamiliar environment by means of staying in Chinese communities (e.g. Guan, 2007; Liu, 2010; Wang, 2011; Zhu, 2012). Similar to the findings of the previous research, this study also found that Chinese students preferred to stay with other Chinese students most of the time and did not have close contact with German peers. The similar ways of thinking and expression bring about a kind of comfort for Chinese students. As mentioned by two students in the comments [5-56] and [5-57], when they had questions, they chose to first turn to Chinese friends, as asking German teachers would be the “last resort”. Thus, the opportunities of communicating with German teachers were virtually reduced by Chinese students themselves.

[5-56] *“I like to stay with other Chinese students in class, which makes me feel relatively eased. We have the similar approaches to the questions and can discuss the topics in the same rhythm.” (CSGQ08)*

[5-57] *“When I have questions, I will first ask my Chinese friends. Only if there*

are no other solutions, I will turn to my German teacher.” (CSGQ05)

Furthermore, it is also found that Chinese students were more likely to stick together in group works. Although they understood the downside of this habit, such as “*speaking only Chinese*” (CSGQ09) and “*no contact with German students*” (CSGQ36), as presented in the comment [5-58], they still wanted to stay in one group to ensure that they can fully understand and participate in discussions.

[5-58] *“I can discuss in Chinese in team work when I was in a group of Chinese students. I know this is not good, but at least I can involve in the discussion. With German students, I normally can't fully participate in discussions.”* (CSGQ95)

Some of German teachers realized such kind of habit of Chinese students in group works and, as noted in the comment [5-59], tried to divide them into different groups to avoid them enclosing in Chinese groups.

[5-59] *“Unless I arrange the groups, my Chinese students nearly always stay together.”* (GTI04)

Some of Chinese students also noticed the reaction of their German teachers in group activities and expressed their understanding in this regard. As one student mentioned in the comment [5-60] that,

[5-60] *“My German teacher usually divides Chinese students into different groups in group activities. He seems to realize that Chinese students will not be active or only speak Chinese if they all in the same group.”* (CSGI10)

Although some of the Chinese students tried to avoid staying together with other Chinese peers, as pointed out in the comments [5-61] and [5-62], the insecurity of language ability and the fear of losing face blocked them in the group of Chinese students.

[5-61] *“I want to work with German students in group works. But I’m not confident with my language skills.”* (CSGQ14)

[5-62] *“It’s better that I stay with Chinese students in group works because I don’t want to lose face in front of the other German students.”* (CSGQ31)

To summarize, in order to feel “comfortable” and “easy to communicate”, Chinese students in Germany often stayed together with other Chinese peers. Although Chinese communities could give Chinese students a sense of safety in Germany, over-dependence on Chinese communities not only caused concerns of their German teachers but also hindered the improvement of self-ability of Chinese students.

Results of the Fifth and Sixth Research Questions: The Influence of Personal Factors on Communication

5.6 Communication concerns based on individual difference

Different cultures can shape different modes of thinking and communicative styles, which subsequently leads to different individual approach and behavior in communication (Wiseman, 2003:192). Holmes (2005, 2006 & 2008) discovered in his studies that the personal cultural background and experiences of Chinese students affected their communication with cultural others at a New Zealand University. Similar findings discovered by other researchers (e.g., Zhao, 2007; Wang, 2009 & Yuan, 2011) also show that the quality of communication of Chinese students with

foreign peer students and teachers, such as in the UK and US, were determined more or less by their cultural characteristics and personal experiences. In this study, Chinese students and German teachers have different cultural backgrounds. Their cultural identities and personal experiences act as influential factors, which may also determine the quality of their communication. Therefore, it is significant to explore the potential influence of individual differences on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

The findings in this section aim to disclose the different manifestation of concerns expressed by Chinese students and German teachers based on their respective cultural backgrounds and personal experiences, and further to find out the relative causes for their concerns in communication. The results reply to the fifth and sixth research questions: *Are the communication concerns perceived by Chinese students and their German teachers related to issues of their personal characters, such as gender, age, academic level and so on?*

5.7 The invariant and variable factors in this study

First of all, it should be noted that this study does not designate personality as the principal criteria for the evaluation of communication. Personality is a complex system because every person possesses completely different characteristics. In view of the diversity of human personality and a multi-dimensional personality of a person, it is impossible to measure the communicative concerns by using the elements of personality as reference points based on the limited number of participants in this study.

However, the impact of some other reference factors on communication is relatively objective and measurable, such as the factors regarding inner drives and demands (e.g. gender and subject), as well as external influences (e.g. personal education and experiences). For example, Chinese students joined in the

communication with German teachers by drawing from their inner drives of gender difference. As a female Chinese student noted that [5-63] “*Male students are more direct than female students in communication. (CSGQ08)*” In addition to the inner drives, the newly acquired external experiences might also have an impact on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers. As a Chinese student stated that [5-64] “*I am no longer afraid of talking with Germans since my new German roommate moved in. (CSGQ05)*” These factors play a considerable role in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers, which manifests not only as the direct influence on the process of communication to varying degrees, but the differentiation of the effect and quality of communication as well.

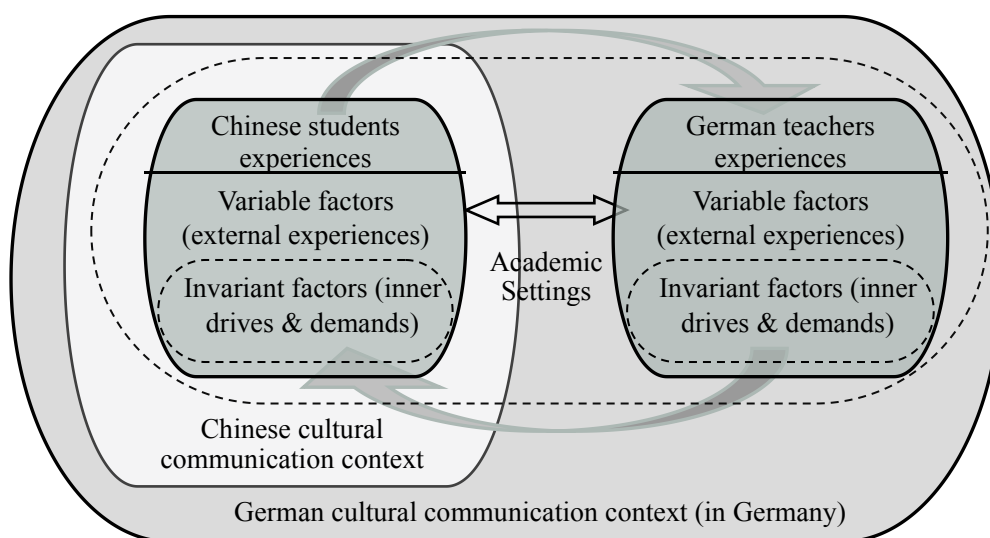


Figure 5.3: Influence of variable and invariable personal factors on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers

In order to distinguish the involved individual factors in this study, two main categories are introduced in this section, namely, variable and invariable factors. As shown in Figure 5.3, the author further developed the content of Figure 4.3 (in section 4.4) by concertizing the component of each target group in order to give a visual representation of the position of these factors. The specific classification and involved factors of the invariant and variant factors can be summarized in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Invariant and variable factors of Chinese students and German teachers

	Chinese students	German teachers	Impact on communication
Invariant factors	<i>Congenital factor</i>		Different communicative preferences and styles
	Gender	Gender	
	<i>Acquired factors</i>		Different communicative contents, forms, and strategies
	Field of study, Language of communication	Field of study, Language of instruction	
Variable factors	<i>Inside school</i>		Different cognition and comprehension level
	Age, Academic level	Length of advising Chinese students	
	<i>Outside school</i>		Different comprehensive degree of cultures and customs of each other
	Length of residence, Work experience, Living status	Overseas experiences in China	

As shown in Table 5.11, invariable factors refer to the factors which are innate or reflect the objectivity of communication in this study, including a congenital factor and two acquired factors. These factors reflect not only the personal perspectives of communication, but also the context and language of communication. The consequent individual experience resulted from these factors will not change essentially over time. The reasons for investigating these factors are to find out the impact of gender-based communicative preference and style, as well as the influence of subject and instructing language, on the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

Variable factors in this study stand for the factors which can cause the growth of individual experience based on the accumulation of time. In the meantime, the increasing experience, in turn, influences on the quality of subsequent communication. Based on this study, variable factors are divided into two categories, inside and outside school factors, respectively. Inside school factors point to students' varying academic level with age and teachers' length of advising. Outside school factors indicate the factors that are rooted in private life, such as students' work experience and teachers' travel experience. The purpose of inquiring into these variable factors is to estimate whether the growth of individual experience and comprehension level are

in proportion to the reduction of communication concerns.

5.8 Hypothesis testing of invariant factors and explanations

A series of analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed using different characteristics of German teachers and Chinese students in Germany as the independent variables for testing the hypotheses of the fifth and sixth research questions.

5.8.1 Congenital factor

5.8.1.1 Gender

Hypothesis 5a) Female Chinese students have a higher level of communication concerns compared to male Chinese students.

In order to test the hypothesis 5a, the gender of Chinese students in Germany was used as an independent variable for the analysis of variance. As shown in Table 5.12, the result of the overall mean of female Chinese students was higher than that of male Chinese students and the relation approached significance at the .05 level ($p = .016$). In terms of other domains of communication concerns, female Chinese students expressed significantly higher levels of concerns than the male students in general ($p < .05$). In particular, the concerns related to the opposite side of the conversation ($p = .004$) and cultural perception ($p = .009$) showed the highly significant levels. However, the difference of task-related communication concerns did not show significantly between female and male students ($p = .055$). According to the findings, this hypothesis was mainly supported.

This result can prove that gender plays a certain function in the communication of Chinese students. Compared to male students, female students tend to be much

more anxious than male peers when communicating with German teachers. However, it is worth noting that communication in regard to tasks assigned by German teachers caused both female and male students a similar degree of concerns.

Table 5.12: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to gender

Different domains of Communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	Male (n=69)	Female (n=54)	F value	P value
Overall	2.885	3.186	5.946	.016
Communication situations				
In class	2.928	3.199	4.278	.041
One-on-one conversations	2.854	3.177	6.890	.010
Communication concerns categories				
Self	3.038	3.339	5.941	.016
Task	2.642	2.900	3.764	.055
Impact	3.095	3.475	8.415	.004
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.659	2.964	4.968	.028
Language	2.707	2.988	4.405	.038
Knowledge	2.554	2.911	5.378	.022
Culture	3.049	3.348	6.238	.014
Emotion	2.871	3.115	4.249	.041
Perception	3.197	3.542	7.023	.009

Hypothesis 6a) Female and male German teachers express different concerns regarding the communication with their Chinese students.

A series of analyses of variance using gender as the independent variable was applied to test the relationship between the female and male German teachers with respect to their communication concerns. According to the results shown in Table 5.13, no significant difference was found between the male and female German teachers among all domains of concerns. This result states that the communication concerns of German teachers were unaffected by their gender. In other words, the variable of

gender did not play a decisive role in causing varying degrees of concerns of German teachers in communication with Chinese students. Therefore, this hypothesis was not accepted.

Table 5.13: Analyses of variance for the concerns of German teachers with respect to gender

Different Domains of Communication Concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	Male (n=29)	Female (n=5)	F value	P value
Overall	2.795	3.210	2.369	.134
Communication Situations				
In class	3.069	3.425	2.101	.157
One-on-one conversations	2.596	3.055	2.421	.130
Communication Concerns categories				
Self	2.711	3.185	2.851	.101
Task	2.823	3.213	2.389	.132
Impact	2.866	3.244	2.389	.132
Communication Barriers				
Capacity	2.993	3.400	2.078	.159
Language	2.853	3.200	1.539	.224
Knowledge	3.303	3.840	3.050	.090
Culture	2.650	3.073	2.502	.124
Emotion	3.107	3.460	1.510	.228
Perception	2.270	2.750	3.364	.076

5.8.1.2 Explanation of the results

(1) Male Chinese students tend to be direct and result-oriented in communication, while female Chinese students are more likely to be emotional and process-oriented.

Although there are many differences between male and female in communication, in light of the studies of Merchant (2012) and Tannen (1990), the different communication traits between male and female students can be primarily embodied in

three aspects: communication styles, the manner of communication, and influence strategies. These three communication traits are also reflected in the qualitative findings of this section, which can explain the different levels of concerns expressed by the male and female Chinese students in communication with German teachers.

To begin with, the reason that the male and female Chinese students in this study expressed different ways to communicate with one another, known as communication style, is because they view the purpose of communication from different angles, which in turn resulted in their different approaches to a conversation. Specifically, it can be perceived from the comments [5-65] and [5-66] mentioned by two Chinese female students, that they were expected to improve self-recognition and enhance the relationship with teachers by using communication as a tool. Therefore, Chinese female students appeared sensitive in communication and worried about whether they gave German teachers a good impression. They also considered that it is a useful way to maintain and enhance the relationship with German teachers by sharing personal experiences in communication.

[5-65] *“I (female) want to give my lectures good impression of me during our communication. Therefore, I am always sensitive when talking with them.”* (CSGQ03)

[5-66] *“For me (female), the conversation itself (with my teacher) is important. I can maintain relationship and connection with my German teachers during our talk. Sometimes I also like to share my personal things with my teachers, such as my family and job experiences.”* (CSGQ04)

However, compared to the Chinese female students, the Chinese male students appeared less sensitive and had a different perspective to their communication with German teachers. As mentioned by two Chinese male students in the comments [5-67] and [5-68], they cared more about the exchange of information with German teachers in communication instead of the process of communication. In other words, Chinese male students tended to consider a conversation with German teachers as a method for

the results and outcomes they quested for.

[5-67] *“It is normal for me (male) if I have some problems with the communication with my German teacher, such as I used the wrong verb or did not understand my teachers immediately. I don’t think this really matters or influence on me negatively. The most important thing is that I catch the main purpose and content of the conversation.”* (CSGI07)

[5-68] *“I (male) only care about what and how my teacher wants me to do the tasks. The rest of information in our communication I normally automatically ignored.”* (CSGI08)

Hence, it can be concluded that the Chinese female students were normally process-oriented, as they defined the quality of communication by the relationship and the impression they established and maintained, while the male students mainly lay emphasis on the final result they achieved in conversation and normally neglected the details of the communicative process.

In addition, it is also found that different communication styles further resulted in different communication manners between the Chinese male and female students. Since the Chinese female students highly valued relationship and interaction during the process of communication, they were expressive, social-emotional, and tended to use tentative and polite language in conversation in order to give German teachers a good impression. Conversely, the male students were more likely to be objective and independent in communication and preferred to use assertive and conclusive means of communication to achieve tangible results.

Due to the unlike communication manners between Chinese male and female students, the approaches that they attempted to respond to and affected their German teachers were appeared dissimilar. Specifically, as two examples shown in the comments [5-69] and [5-70], a female Chinese student used emotional influence strategies in communication with German teachers, particularly with the teachers of

the same gender. She tended to rely on interpersonal relationships and emotional resonance to influence teachers in communication and further achieved personal aims. Differently, a male Chinese student mentioned that he was more inclined to apply unemotional influence strategies in conversation and manifest themselves as impersonal and rational.

[5-69] *“I (female) think that it is a good way to build a close relationship by digression in communication, especially with my female teachers and peers. This is common at a Chinese university. A good relationship is half done.”* (CSGI08)

[5-70] *“Most of the time, I (male) go the points directly with my supervisor in our conversations. Just to judge the matter as it stands. I don’t like to involve sentimental things in a talk. It is not necessary.”* (CSGI07)

In addition, there are still two points with respect to Chinese students, which need to be explained. First, since this study emphasizes on the common concerns in the communication between students and teachers, some special influencing details, such as situational circumstances and individual characters, were not considered. Moreover, both male and female Chinese students expressed a similar level of concerns in regard to the task-related communication. That is to say, for Chinese students, there was not a direct causal relationship between gender-based communicative behaviors and task-based communication concerns.

(2) German teachers were not affected by the communication characteristics of gender in communication with Chinese students.

Last but not the least, on the basis of the results of German teachers, teachers of both genders did not show a significantly different level of concerns in communication with Chinese students. This phenomenon does not mean that the sexual characteristics of German teachers were not evident in communication. However, this can be explained that German teachers usually did not add personal emotion and preference

in communication with Chinese students and attempted to treat both male and female students fairly and equally. Although male and female Chinese students had unlike approaches to conversation and showed differing reactions, German teachers were more likely to focus on the contents of communication rather than be affected by the feeling and emotion of students in conversations. Some comments mentioned by German teachers also supported this view, such as one teacher expressed in the comment [5-71] that,

[5-71] *“In view of the different background of culture and language, I am more patient with Chinese students than with German students in communication. But I do not differentiate between male and female Chinese students because I consider them as a group.”* (GTI04)

Above all, the different approaches and attitudes toward the communication between male and female Chinese students lead to their different responses and reaction in communication. This also proves that gender is one of the factors that affects the progress of the communication in some degree. Female students are more likely to be motivated by emotion, whereas male students tend to be guided by a goal. Although it is reasonable that German teachers are used to treating male and female Chinese students equally, the communication with Chinese students would be more effective if teachers take into account the different communication traits of students of different genders in conversation.

5.8.2 Acquired factors

5.8.2.1 Field of study

Hypothesis 5f) Chinese students majoring in sciences (natural science, agriculture, and medicine) and engineering have a lower level of communication concerns than those students in the fields of non-sciences (social sciences and humanities).

Five study fields of Chinese students in Germany were reported in total in the questionnaire. These five fields were further classified into two main academic disciplines, namely sciences (natural science, agriculture, and medicine) and engineering, and non-sciences (social sciences and humanities). In order to investigate whether significant differences existed between these two groups, a series of analyses of variance using study field as an independent variable was conducted.

Table 5.14: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to the study field

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	Natural sciences (n=38) Agriculture (n=26) Medicine (n=10) Engineering (n=4)	Social sciences and Humanities (n=45)	F value	P value
Overall	2.918	3.189	4.473	.036
Communication situations				
In class	2.946	3.222	4.183	.043
One-on-one conversations	2.898	3.165	4.335	.039
Communication concerns categories				
Self	3.060	3.360	5.551	.020
Task	2.663	2.916	3.409	.067
Impact	3.167	3.427	3.582	.061
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.684	2.981	4.447	.037
Language	2.723	3.018	4.609	.034
Knowledge	2.600	2.902	3.569	.061
Culture	3.088	3.339	4.087	.045
Emotion	2.892	3.127	3.682	.057
Perception	3.251	3.517	3.827	.053

As shown in Table 5.14, the results reveal that students' concerns in the field of sciences and engineering differed significantly from the concerns of students in the

field of non-sciences. Their different levels of concerns manifested not only in the communication with German teachers in class, as well as in one-on-one conversations ($p < .05$). In addition, students in sciences and engineering also tended to have fewer concerns about self as a communicator in communication and language-related communication barriers ($p < .05$). In order domains of concerns, no significant differences were found between the group of sciences and engineering students and those in other disciplines. Therefore, this hypothesis was only partially supported.

Based on the findings, it is interesting to see that no difference was found between sciences and engineering students and non-sciences students with respect to their concerns about tasks of communicating and the impact of their communication on German teachers. Moreover, the levels of communication concerns related to students' academic knowledge and culture-related barriers were not affected by their different study fields. Thus, communication concerns created by a lack of knowledge and different cultural backgrounds performed similar level to Chinese students in Germany regardless of their studying fields.

Hypothesis 6c) German teachers express different concerns depending on their departments in communication with Chinese students

With the aim to correspond to the results of hypothesis 5f, all the German teachers in this study were also divided into two academic groups, namely, sciences (natural sciences, agriculture, and medicine) and non-sciences (Humanities and social sciences). Ten of the German teachers worked in the field of non-sciences, 24 German teachers were from the field of sciences. The testing results of hypotheses 6c are presented in Table 5.15.

The results of a series of analyses of variance revealed that different academic fields only caused significant differences in four domains of communication concerns of teachers: communication in class, communication impact on others, language- and

knowledge-related communication barriers. The relationship was significant at the .05 level of confidence. Teachers in the field of sciences expressed fewer concerns in communication with Chinese students in class and were less influenced by their students' concerns than those teachers in other disciplines. Furthermore, Chinese students' language- and knowledge-related communication problems brought about fewer concerns to the German teachers, who worked in the field of sciences than to those teachers in other disciplines. Therefore, communication concerns of German teachers were not substantially affected by their fields of study. The hypotheses 6c received only partial support.

Table 5.15: Analyses of variance for the concerns of German teachers with respect to academic fields

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	Natural sciences (n=8) Agriculture (n=12) Medicine (n=4)	Humanities/ Social sciences (n=10)	F value	P value
Overall	2.736	3.145	3.974	.055
Communication situations				
In class	2.995	3.425	5.599	.024
One-on-one conversations	2.547	2.941	2.995	.093
Communication concerns categories				
Self	2.686	3.008	2.133	.154
Task	2.779	3.125	3.206	.083
Impact	2.732	3.378	7.539	.010
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.914	3.388	5.076	.031
Language	2.777	3.209	4.274	.047
Knowledge	3.217	3.780	6.039	.020
Culture	2.606	2.968	3.098	.088
Emotion	3.058	3.400	2.402	.131
Perception	2.229	2.608	3.488	.071

5.8.2.2 Language of communication

Hypothesis 5g) Chinese students who communicate with German teachers in English express a lower level of concerns compared to those who communicate in German with German teachers.

The language Chinese students used for communicating with German teachers was also defined as a factor that could cause different degrees of communication concerns. Based on the obtained data, English and German were two foreign languages that Chinese students used for studying in Germany. Among these students, 50 of them communicated with their German teachers in English, twelve of which were master students of an English program and 38 were Ph.D. students in the field of sciences. The other 73 students, including 63 students in the field of non-sciences at various educational levels, as well as ten students in the field of sciences, chose German as their communicating language.

In order to find out whether different communicating languages caused a significant influence on students' communication, a series of analyses of variance was conducted by choosing language as an independent variable. The findings presented in Table 5.16 indicate that English and German, as two foreign languages for Chinese students, did contribute to a significantly different level of concerns ($p < .01$) in the communication between Chinese students and German teachers. To be specific, students who communicated in English expressed a significantly lower level of communication concerns compared to those who communicated in German. This hypothesis was fully supported.

Table 5.16: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to the language of communication

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	English (n=50)	German (n=73)	F value	P value
Overall	2.746	3.203	14.224	.000
Communication situations				
In class	2.777	3.232	12.593	.001
One-on-one conversations	2.723	3.181	14.270	.000
Communication concerns categories				
Self	2.917	3.344	12.251	.001
Task	2.460	2.957	15.027	.000
Impact	3.009	3.435	10.538	.002
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.495	2.997	14.202	.000
Language	2.542	3.029	13.968	.000
Knowledge	2.392	2.929	12.551	.001
Culture	2.929	3.352	12.858	.000
Emotion	2.752	3.133	10.681	.001
Perception	3.077	3.534	10.681	.001

Hypothesis 6d) German teachers whose instructional language for Chinese students is English express different concerns about their Chinese students' communication as compared to those instruct in German.

In addition to the field of study, the instructional language was also defined as an independent variable for testing the influence of language on German teachers' communication. The results of the hypothesis testing are displayed in Table 5.17.

On the basis of the obtained data, 14 German teachers communicated with Chinese students in German and the rest of teachers' instructional language was English. However, between the teachers who applied different institutional languages, the difference of the level of their communication concerns was only found

significantly ($p < .05$) in three communication domains: communication with Chinese students in class, the impact of Chinese students' communication on teachers, and knowledge-related communication concerns. More specifically, teachers who interacted with Chinese students in the German language voiced a higher degree of concerns than the teachers who used English. The level of concerns announced in other communication domains did not show any marked difference between teachers who instructed in English and German. Thus, this hypothesis was only partially supported.

Table 5.17: Analyses of variance for the concerns of German teachers with respect to the language of instruction

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	English (n=20)	German (n=14)	F value	P value
Overall	2.701	3.077	3.906	.057
Communication situations				
In class	2.969	3.339	4.734	.037
One-on-one conversations	2.507	2.886	3.276	.080
Communication concerns categories				
Self	2.642	2.978	2.759	.106
Task	2.756	3.058	2.807	.104
Impact	2.689	3.254	6.553	.015
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.881	3.299	4.548	.041
Language	2.750	3.123	3.652	.065
Knowledge	3.17	3.686	5.880	.021
Culture	2.570	2.916	3.302	.079
Emotion	3.015	3.362	2.978	.094
Perception	2.200	2.542	3.286	.079

5.8.2.3 Explanation of the results

(1) Different communication demands in the field of non-sciences (humanities and social sciences), sciences (natural sciences, agriculture, and medicine) and

engineering resulted in different levels of concerns of Chinese students and German teachers.

A majority of the Chinese students in the field of non-sciences expressed that they were much concerned about their personal performance when talking with their German teachers. This also proves, in response to hypothesis 5f, that a significant difference was found between the students in the field of non-sciences and the students in the field of sciences and engineering in the domain of self as a communicator. For instance, as presented in the comments [5-72], [5-73], and [5-74], some non-sciences Chinese students indicated that they worried about not only the content of the conversation, but also concerned whether their phraseology met the teacher's expectation (CSGI01), whether their questions were appropriate to ask (CSGI08), and whether they catch the rhyme with others in conversation (CSGQ01). These concerns and the sensitive mood, in turn, affected their performance in communication with German teachers. Although such concerns were also voiced by some sciences students, the concerns level was much lower than that of non-sciences students.

[5-72] *“When I talk to my teacher, especially in class, I usually worry about whether the way I present is appropriate.”* (CSGI01_non-sciences)

[5-73] *“Maybe I am too sensitive. I care about whether I ask right questions or raise correct opinions. I am very careful in communication with them, in class and also in office hours.”* (CSGI08_non-sciences)

[5-74] *“My subjects are German and literature. Sometimes I had the feeling that I cannot stay on the same rhythm with the lecturer and German students in class. I need to adjust myself to communicate with them.”* (CSGQ01_non-sciences)

However, the students in the field of sciences expressed a different level of

concerns about self as a communicator in the communication with German teachers. As some sciences students mentioned in the comments [5-75], [5-76], and [5-77], they were more likely to be direct and clear (CSGQ15) in communication. They normally focused on specific content, such as how were the experimental procedures (CSGI07) and what were the experimental results (CSGQ22), other than the form and the performance of communication. Therefore, it can be seen that, unlike the strong influence of personal performance of non-sciences students in communication, a conversation for sciences students is largely oriented by objective facts and results.

[5-75] *“The conversations between my supervisor and me at the university are normally short. We both like to be direct and clear in communication. It is simple and effective.”* (CSGQ15_sciences)

[5-76] *“I do not feel there are serious communication problems among our lab team, or between my German supervisor and me. Our conversations mainly focus on our lab activities, such as experiments and sampling. The contents are normally foreseeable and expected. Basically, I think I am able to manage the communication.”* (CSGI07_sciences)

[5-77] *“Compared to HOW to talk with my supervisor, it is much more important for me about WHAT I should talk. I mean, my supervisor only cares about what I have done and my results. He is not very interested in my language and presentation skills.”* (CSGQ22_sciences)

From the different expressions discussed above, it can be seen that Chinese students in different study fields have different focuses in communication: sciences and engineering students tend to go to the key point directly, whereas non-sciences students are more likely to pay attention to the individual performance. Different focuses, therefore, gradually form different means of expression. Chinese sciences and engineering students tend to be impersonal (focused on the content), rational (relied on the content), and direct (pointed to the result) in communication, whereas

non-sciences students are more likely to be subjective (involved personal emotion), emotional (influenced by personal emotion), and flexible (adjusted conversation according to personal emotion). Thus, because of less emotional effects in communication, the degree of communication concerns of sciences students, especially the concerns resulted from self as a communicator, were relatively lower than the degree of non-sciences students' concerns.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that the results of hypothesis 5a, especially qualitative data, have much in common with the results of hypothesis 5f. The reason in causing the similar results is that most of the Chinese male students (n=64 out of 69) in this study majored in the field of sciences, and the vast majority of the Chinese female students (n=40 out of 54) were in the field of non-sciences. Hence, some communicative traits between Chinese male and female students were also reflected as the causes of the concerns discovered in their corresponding fields of study.

The impact of the subject-related communication approaches on Chinese students, in turn, reacted on their German teachers in communication as well. Teachers in the field of non-sciences generally expressed more communication concerns than those teachers who were engaged in the area of sciences, although the numbers of the former enrolled less than the latter in this study. On the basis of the result, it can be realized that non-sciences teachers concerned themselves more with the impact of students' behavior in communication than the teachers in other fields of study. Most of the non-sciences German teachers voiced that their Chinese students appeared “*coy* (GTQ14)” and “*sensitive* (GTQ14, 17&29)” in conversation, especially in class. For example, one teacher noted that “[5-78] *it seems that they (Chinese students) were not merely concerned with their own tasks but also my (teacher's) reaction to them in conversation* (GTQ07).” However, such worries were not mostly reflected in the responses of German teachers in the field of sciences. In other words, sciences teachers did not regard students' wording and manners as serious problems that could directly affect the process, effect, and result of their communication, while

some non-sciences teachers habitually considered students' ways and means of expression as one of their focuses in conversation.

(2) The higher level of concerns about communicating in German than in English resulted from the high demand of German language and the sense of non-native English speaker of Chinese students and German teachers.

Another cause for the concerns in this section is the role of language in communication. It is interesting to find that all of the 73 Chinese students, who communicated with their German teachers in German, had more communication problems than the remaining 50 students, who communicated with their German teachers in English. This finding raises two possible reasons. First, it seems that Chinese students had better English language proficiency than their German language level. Second, it is perhaps easier and more comfortable for Chinese students to communicate with German teachers in English than in German, because neither Chinese students nor German teachers are native English speakers. More notably, the students who studied in the field of non-sciences all used the German language as the communication language with their teachers and expressed more concerns in some domains than the students who studied in the field of sciences. Such a phenomenon implies a higher requirement on language ability of the subjects in non-sciences than in sciences. Or rather, non-sciences students' high degree of communication concerns, in large part, came from their insecurity about the German language ability. In order to answer these questions, Chinese students' learning experience of English and German, and the requirements of language ability based on different subjects are the two main points that need to be discussed in the following sections.

First of all, for the Chinese students in Germany, English and German are the two main languages for studying and communicating with German teachers. According to the disciplined design of Chinese education system, Chinese children start to learn English, as a compulsory course, beginning when they are ten years old

in primary school. The German language, however, normally comes into the sight of Chinese students either as a college major or a language for studying in Germany. For each case, students are in the much higher level of education than the primary school, which means that their length of time of learning English is generally longer than of learning German. Although the English education in Chinese schools normally lays emphasis on reading and writing relative to listening and speaking (Shi, 2008), Chinese students' basis of English knowledge is commonly higher than their knowledge of German. Thus, this can be one of the reasons to explain why those English-speaking students in this study had fewer communication concerns than the German-speaking students.

However, it is also worth noting that some Chinese participants majoring in German linguistics, who had a relatively higher level of German knowledge than their English, also voiced more communication concerns than the other German-speaking peers majoring in sciences. It seems that the length of learning a language is not the only decisive factor for reducing communication concerns. As shown in the comment [5-79], a German major student who studied German for more than five years and had "better" German ability still did not feel confident in communication with German teachers and peer students. However, the comment [5-80] shows that a one-year German learner majoring in sciences did not show a high level of concerns regarding communicating with German teachers and classmates, although he also acknowledged his relatively low level of the German language.

[5-79] *"Although I have studied German as my main major for more than 5 years, I am still not confident enough to speak freely in class. Actually, my German level is not that bad, I think. The thing that held me back was my fear of the high demand of language competence of my major. Of course, I can use very simple and easy words to present my ideas. But this will make others, also myself, think that I am too 'low'. I need to find a better, or to say, professional way to present myself. "(CSGI03)*

[5-80] *“I communicate with my lecturers and German peers in German. I learned German just for one year. Then I passed DSH and started my study at this university last year. Honestly, my German is not good. I cannot handle deep topics by talking in German. But for my study, so far so good. The talks between me and lecturers, and also German classmates, are mainly about our experiments and exams. As long as I understand the terminology and know the expressions that commonly used in our discipline, I think I am fine with my study.” (CSGI05)*

This finding shows that, apart from the pure language ability, subjects' different standards of language skill also determine the satisfaction of communication, which draws the attention back to the essential distinction between the field of non-sciences, and science and engineering again. As discussed in the explanation of Chinese students' concerns (see section 5.8.2.3 (1)), sciences and engineering students tend to be rational, impersonal, and direct in communication. From another perspective, this also stands for their relatively objective and practical language style. Non-sciences students, however, are more likely to subconsciously emphasize on linguistic sense and pursue the beauty of language in communication. Since they value not only the process of expression but also the outcome of the conversation, a relatively high degree of language proficiency and presentation skill is normally required. Although most of them have good language level, in view of their high expectation of the quality of communication, a certain degree of concerns is unavoidable.

Moreover, the same story can also be found in the findings of German teachers. Teachers who communicated with Chinese students in English expressed a lower level concerns in some domains (in class, impact- and knowledge-related concerns) than the teachers who communicated in German. For one reason, English is a foreign language to German teachers, which leads to German teachers' relatively lower standard and latent sensitiveness of English compared to their mother tongue in communication. More importantly, the English-speaking teachers in this study all

worked in the field of sciences. According to the findings discussed before (see section 5.8.2.3 (1)), they were more willing to focus on the outcome that students need to report rather on students' expression skills. That is to say, Chinese students' English proficiency level in communication was not the primary concerns of the German teachers in the field of sciences. This situation, however, is different in the subjects of non-sciences. Teachers in the field of non-sciences are more likely to pay attention to the practicability of language, which imperceptibly upgrades the standard of communication. In addition, most of the German teachers in this field use German as an official language for communicating with students. A mismatch of the German language between teachers' native-level and Chinese students' level as learners also inevitably caused concerns of both sides in their conversation. Considering all these points, it is not surprising to find that the English-speaking German teachers, who worked in the field of sciences, had fewer communication concerns than the German-speaking non-sciences German teachers.

To summarize, two seemingly independent factors, subject and language, constrained mutually and played a role in the communication between students and teachers. German teachers' various requirements of language based on their disciplines caused different degrees of concerns on students' communication, which also, in turn, reflected on the communication status of teachers themselves. Although it is hard to change the nature of subjects and its corresponding forms of communication, communication between Chinese students and German teachers can still become more effective by better understanding and adapting the communicative manner of each other. The corresponding suggestions are put forward in chapter 6.

5.9 Hypothesis testing of variable factors and explanations

5.9.1 Inside school factors

5.9.1.1 The age of Chinese students

Hypothesis 5b) Older Chinese students have a lower level of communication concerns than younger students.

A series of analyses of variance using age as the independent variable was conducted for examining this hypothesis. The data were recorded into four age groups based on the corresponding items in the questionnaire, namely, less than 23 years old, 23 to 27 years old, 28 to 32 years old, and over 32 years old. The findings listed in Table 5.18 illustrate significant differences among the responses of the four age groups. The older Chinese students in Germany tended to have fewer communication concerns than the younger students. Significant differences among the four age groups were found almost in all the domains of communication concerns, except for the domain of knowledge-related concerns ($p > .05$). In particular, the relation was significant at the .01 level for communication concerns in class, about self as a communicator, communication impact on others, and culture-related communication barriers. In addition, the relationship was significant at the .05 level in terms of the concerns found in one-on-one conversations and task- and language-related concerns. Therefore, this hypothesis was supported by this study.

Considering the knowledge-related communication barriers, there were no significant differences among the responses of the four age groups. Hence, it indicates that Chinese students' communication concerns based on knowledge-related barriers did not reduce with age. In other words, Chinese students in each age group have a similar level of concerns with respect to the knowledge that adapted to their respective academic fields and degrees.

Table 5.18: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to age (four categories)

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean				ANOVA	
	<23 (n=6)	23-27 (n=56)	28-32 (n=45)	>32 (n=16)	F value	P value
Overall	3.469	3.192	2.854	2.692	4.365	.006
Communication situations						
In class	3.636	3.234	2.849	2.731	5.055	.002
One-on-one conversations	3.348	3.162	2.859	2.665	3.614	.015
Communication concerns categories						
Self	3.564	3.358	3.015	2.798	4.689	.004
Task	3.167	2.936	2.574	2.481	3.600	.016
Impact	3.870	3.409	3.121	2.917	4.041	.009
Communication barriers						
Capacity	3.240	2.960	2.625	2.516	3.156	.027
Language	3.318	2.995	2.659	2.557	3.476	.018
Knowledge	3.067	2.882	2.551	2.425	2.238	.087
Culture	3.636	3.361	3.021	2.821	5.096	.002
Emotion	3.467	3.116	2.856	2.656	3.973	.010
Perception	3.778	3.565	3.159	2.958	5.340	.002

In order to determine the specific age limit of Chinese students, the original four age groups were further divided into two age groups, under 27 years old and 27 years old and older. The results listed in Table 5.19 illustrate a highly significant difference between the two groups. Hence, Chinese students in Germany of 27 years old and older reported fewer concerns in communication than those who were under 27. The relationship was significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Table 5.19: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to age (two categories)

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	<27 (n=62)	≥27 (n=61)	F value	P value
Overall	3.331	2.773	11.497	.001
Communication situations				
In class	3.435	2.790	13.017	.000
One-on-one conversations	3.255	2.762	9.495	.003
Communication concerns categories				
Self	3.461	2.907	12.309	.001
Task	3.052	2.528	10.135	.002
Impact	3.640	3.019	8.829	.004
Communication barriers				
Capacity	3.100	2.571	8.519	.004
Language	3.157	2.608	9.168	.003
Knowledge	2.975	2.488	6.276	.014
Culture	3.499	2.921	13.124	.000
Emotion	3.292	2.756	9.059	.003
Perception	3.672	3.059	14.599	.000

5.9.1.2 The academic level of Chinese students

Hypothesis 5d) Chinese students working on a higher academic degree have a lower level of communication concerns as compared to students working on a lower academic degree.

The academic level of Chinese students was defined as an independent variable for conducting a series of analyses of variance to test the hypothesis 5d. Based on the sources of students, four academic levels constituted academic levels of the participant students, bachelor students, master students, doctoral students, and post-doctoral students, respectively.

The findings reported in Table 5.20 show that the effect of academic level on

the communication concerns of Chinese students in Germany was significant in all the domain of concerns. Chinese students studying in different educational levels showed a different degree of concerns in communication with German teachers. Generally, Chinese students' communication concerns level decreased because of the increase of their educational level.

Table 5.20: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to academic levels

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean				ANOVA	
	Bachelor (n=7)	Master (n=53)	Doctor (n=54)	Post Doctor (n=9)	F value	P value
Overall	3.737	2.982	3.036	2.556	4.204	.007
Communication situations						
In class	3.804	3.025	3.047	2.591	3.941	.010
One-on-one conversations	3.688	2.950	3.028	2.530	4.081	.008
Communication concerns categories						
Self	3.758	3.129	3.219	2.658	3.690	.014
Task	3.581	2.719	2.750	2.355	4.145	.008
Impact	3.984	3.235	3.278	2.765	3.824	.012
Communication barriers						
Capacity	3.625	2.751	2.780	2.472	3.560	.016
Language	3.649	2.768	2.832	2.556	3.546	.017
Knowledge	3.571	2.713	2.667	2.289	3.251	.024
Culture	3.818	3.149	3.221	2.616	4.706	.004
Emotion	3.471	2.921	3.056	2.467	3.725	.013
Perception	4.107	3.340	3.360	2.741	5.011	.003

Furthermore, the Scheffe procedure was also employed in the test of this hypothesis to determine whether any two groups were significantly different from each other. The result of this test (Table 5.21) indicates that undergraduate Chinese students (Bachelor) were more likely to have concerns in communication with their German teachers as compared with other graduate students (Master, Doctor, and Post Doctor). In particular, the relationship between bachelor students and post-doctors

was significant at .05 level of confidence in all the domains.

Table 5.21: Results of Scheffe's method of concerns relationship among four academic levels

Scheffe's method				
Dependent Variable	Bachelor	Master	Doctor	Post-doctor
Bachelor	—————	Significant difference in Task, Language	Significant difference in Task	Significant difference in all domains
Master	Significant difference in Task, Language	—————	No significant difference	No significant difference
Doctor	Significant difference in Task	No significant difference	—————	No significant difference
Post-doctor	Significant difference in all domains	No significant difference	No significant difference	—————

Overall, the hypothesis 5d that Chinese students working on a higher academic degree have a lower level of communication concerns as compared to students working on a lower academic degree was, therefore, supported.

5.9.1.3 The length of advising Chinese students of German teachers

Hypothesis 6b) German teachers who had five or more Chinese students express a different level of concerns in communication than those who had less than five Chinese students.

Hypothesis 6b aimed to test whether the experiences of advising Chinese students have a positive effect to German teachers on their communication. In order to test this hypothesis, German teachers' advising experience was used as the independent variable to perform a series of analyses of variance. Their advising experience was divided into two groups, advising less or more than five Chinese students, respectively.

The results shown in Table 5.22 indicate that advising experience had no evident effect on German teachers' concerns in their communication with Chinese students. The few significant differences were found in the domains of self as a communicator and perception-related barriers. In these two communication domains, those teachers who advised more than five Chinese students expressed a relatively lower level of concerns than their colleagues who had less than five Chinese students. In general, this hypothesis was not accepted, with the exception noted.

Table 5.22: Analyses of variance for the concerns of German teachers with respect to advising experiences

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	< 5 students (n=18)	≥ 5 students (n=16)	F value	P value
Overall	3.034	2.656	4.071	.052
Communication situations				
In class	3.281	2.941	4.016	.054
One-on-one conversations	2.854	2.449	3.898	.057
Communication concerns categories				
Self	2.996	2.538	5.712	.023
Task	3.031	2.711	3.299	.079
Impact	3.093	2.729	2.494	.124
Communication barriers				
Capacity	3.211	2.875	2.902	.098
Language	3.066	2.722	3.145	.086
Knowledge	3.533	3.213	2.108	.156
Culture	2.904	2.497	4.940	.033
Emotion	3.344	2.950	4.022	.053
Perception	2.537	2.120	5.332	.028

5.9.1.4 Explanation of the results

The potential impact of inside school variable factors on communication is tested in the section 5.9.1.1 to 5.9.1.3. According to the results presented above, it is interesting to realize that the inside school factors of Chinese students and German teachers show

almost opposite effect on their communication.

To Chinese students, their growth of age and increase of educational level are inversely proportional to their concerns level in communication with German teachers. That is to say, the growth of knowledge and experiences of students with their age and educational level contribute to the decrease of worries and concerns in communication in academic contexts.

(1) The mental maturity of Chinese students with age relieved the concerns in communication.

In terms of Chinese students' age, this result can be interpreted as Chinese students normally need a period of transition for adapting to the new communication and studying circumstances in Germany. They need to first learn how to “survive” in the new environment and then they can start to adjust to the new environment. As time goes by, the more they age, the more life experiences they would accumulate. This process is not only conducive to their mental maturity but also gradually contributes to the improvement of communication competence.

The comments [5-81] and [5-82] mentioned by two Chinese students of different ages give an example of the change of Chinese students in Germany at different phases of life.

[5-81] *“I have been in Germany already one year. But, most of the time I still feel nervous in class and to talk with teachers. I think I still need time to learn and to adapt the new life here.”* (CSGQ37_23-year-old)

[5-82] *“I arrived in Germany when I was 28. Although this was my first time abroad alone, I felt more excited than nervous. I was old enough to handle my study and interpersonal relationship here.”* (CSGQ02_33-year-old)

As shown above, although a 23-year-old Chinese student had been in Germany

one year, she still expressed concerns in class and needed to learn to adapt the new environment. However, a 33-year-old Chinese student showed a different attitude toward the new experiences abroad when she was 28. With the life experiences and mental maturity at age 28, this student did not present any tension to the new environment in Germany in the beginning, but confidence and expectation. Therefore, the growth of age is beneficial to the decrease of the concerns of Chinese students in communication.

(2) Communication ability of Chinese students improved with the development of their educational level.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that the increase of students' academic level is beneficial to improve their communication ability. This trend can be explained in this way. The higher the educational level students obtained, the more opportunities of communication with teachers they had. In this way, students normally can gain relatively rich experience in communication, which can help them to deal with the new problems in communication later on. Thus, students with higher educational backgrounds normally had fewer concerns in communication with teachers. The significant difference between the results of Bachelor students and Post-doctors based on Scheffé test is a good representation of this point.

However, it is noteworthy that although Chinese doctoral and master students studied in different academic stages, they expressed a very similar level of concerns in communication. Thus, it can be known that there was no major difference between master and doctoral students in their communication with German teachers.

(3) The experience of advising five Chinese students was not critical to reducing the concerns of German teachers in communication.

Different from the general inverse proportion between Chinese students' personal experiences (age and educational level) and their communication concerns level, the

degree of German teachers' concerns did not reduce greatly with the increase of their experience of instructing and supervising of more than five Chinese students.

This result can be explained that, in view of the relatively large differences in communication style and culture-based values between Chinese students and German teachers, it would not have been sufficient for German teachers to eliminate most of the potential communication problems by advising five or more Chinese students. The reduction of German teachers' concerns in communication had not yet reached the critical point of quantitative changes to qualitative changes by advising five Chinese students. Therefore, no significant difference of communication concerns can be generally found between the two groups of German teachers (advising less or more than five Chinese students).

Nevertheless, more experience in advising Chinese students can still be helpful for German teachers to gain a better understanding of Chinese students' communication approaches in some respects, which were mainly embodied in the significant differences found in the domains of self- and perception-related concerns between the two groups of teachers. Specifically, communicating with more Chinese students can enable German teachers to acquaint with some common behaviors and concerns of Chinese students caused by Chinese culture-based perceptions, such as students' silence and shyness in class, and then further to find healthy ways to react.

In brief, the growth of age, the consequent mental maturity, and development of educational level played a greatly promoted role in the development of Chinese students' communicative ability, which particularly was reflected in the significant different levels of concerns between undergraduate and graduate Chinese students. In addition, the personal experiences of advising Chinese students helped German teachers to gain an understanding of the usual symptoms of self-reaction that Chinese students reflected in communication, in which way benefited the communication to some extent but not globally.

5.9.2 Outside school factors

5.9.2.1 The length of residence in Germany of Chinese students

Hypothesis 5c) Chinese students who stay longer in Germany have a lower level of communication concerns than recent arrivals.

Table 5.23: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to the length of residence

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean				ANOVA	
	≤2 years (n=32)	2-3 years (n=36)	3-4 years (n=28)	≥ 4 years (n=27)	F value	P value
Overall	3.287	3.119	2.955	2.626	5.324	.002
Communication situations						
In class	3.348	3.153	2.955	2.644	5.471	.001
One-on-one conversations	3.243	3.095	2.955	2.613	4.787	.003
Communication concerns categories						
Self	3.454	3.263	3.069	3.069	5.013	.003
Task	3.002	2.884	2.717	2.331	5.008	.003
Impact	3.552	3.330	3.214	2.877	4.552	.005
Communication barriers						
Capacity	3.088	2.911	2.721	2.361	5.346	.002
Language	3.091	2.950	2.802	2.394	5.177	.002
Knowledge	3.081	2.828	2.543	2.289	5.164	.002
Culture	3.432	3.270	3.125	2.818	4.784	.003
Emotion	3.169	3.108	2.911	2.648	3.981	.010
Perception	3.651	3.405	3.304	2.960	4.870	.003

In order to test this hypothesis, the length of residence (LOR) in Germany of Chinese students was considered as an independent variable for conducting a series of analysis of variance. The findings in relation to each domain of concerns are listed in Table 5.23.

The results presented a highly significant difference among the four LOR groups of Chinese students across all the defined domains of communication concerns.

The overall trend of students' communication concerns level was decreasing as their residence time in Germany extended. In addition, the Scheffe test was also conducted for the purpose to determine whether the significant difference can also be found between every two separated groups. The finding in Table 5.24 clarifies that Chinese students who have lived in Germany for more than four years were less likely to have concerns in communication with German teachers than those who have stayed in Germany less than three years. The relationship was significant at .05 level of confidence in all the domains of concerns. Therefore, this hypothesis was considered to be fully supported by the current study.

Table 5.24: Results of Scheffe's method of concerns relationship among the length of residence

Scheffe's method				
Length of Residence	less than 2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	more than 4 years
less than 2 years	—————	No significant difference found	No significant difference found	Significant in all domains at .01 level
2-3 years	No significant difference found	—————	No significant difference found	Significant in all domains at .05 level
3-4 years	No significant difference found	No significant difference found	—————	No significant difference found
more than 4 years	Significant in all domains at .01 level	Significant in all domains at .05 level	No significant difference found	—————

5.9.2.2 Work experience of Chinese students in Germany

Hypothesis 5e) Chinese students who have work experience during their studies in Germany express a lower level of communication concerns as compared to those without.

Although the participant Chinese students reported several types of jobs that they

engaged in during their studies, all participants were grouped into two main categories, with work experience and without, for verifying the proposition 5e. A series of analyses of variance was conducted by using the work experience as an independent variable. The findings shown in Table 5.25 illustrate that a significant difference was overall found between the responses of the students who had work experience and those did not ($p = .032$). The relationship was significant at the .05 level of confidence. Hence, this can be concluded that Chinese students in Germany with work experience expressed a relatively lower level of communication concerns than those without work experience did.

Table 5.25: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to work experience

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	With work experience (n=101)	Without work experience (n=22)	F value	P value
Overall	2.955	3.304	4.714	.032
Communication situations				
In class	2.993	3.293	3.076	.082
One-on-one conversations	2.927	3.312	5.799	.018
Communication concerns categories				
Self	3.111	3.441	4.176	.043
Task	2.686	3.074	5.173	.025
Impact	3.207	3.515	3.168	.078
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.724	3.111	4.766	.031
Language	2.766	3.128	4.371	.039
Knowledge	2.632	3.072	4.861	.029
Culture	3.122	3.444	4.245	.042
Emotion	2.926	3.218	3.628	.059
Perception	3.286	3.633	4.128	.044

Specifically, Chinese students with work experience pronounced significantly fewer concerns in the most of domains than did those without, apart from the concerns

in class, concerns about the impact on others and emotion-related barriers. Therefore, Chinese students' work experience outside school did not appear to have a direct helpful role for reducing their communication concerns occurred in class, as well as the concerns caused by the impact of their communication on teachers and emotion-related concerns in a conversation. The hypothesis 5e, that Chinese students who have work experience during their studies in Germany express a lower level of communication concerns as compared to those without, was substantially accepted.

5.9.2.3 Living status of Chinese students in Germany

Hypothesis 5h) Chinese students living with international roommates (non-Chinese roommates) express fewer communication concerns than those living with non-international roommates.

The data of students' responses regarding their living conditions were divided into two groups: living with international and non-international roommates. While international roommates refer to non-Chinese students, non-international roommates stand for either family, Chinese roommates, or no roommate. This hypothesis was examined by applying a series of analyses of variance using living condition as the independent variable. Based on the findings shown in Table 5.26, only language-related communication concerns revealed a significant difference between two accommodation groups. No significant difference was found in other domains. The proposition that Chinese students live with international students have fewer communication concerns than those living with non-international roommates was not fully supported. It can be seen from the findings that living with international students had no prominent influence for Chinese students on their communication with German teachers in Germany, except for the improvement of their foreign language ability.

Table 5.26: Analyses of variance for the concerns of Chinese students in Germany with respect to living status (two groups)

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA		
	Non-international:		International: with non-Chinese roommates(n=86)	F value	P value
	Alone (n=10) With family (n=3) With Chinese roommates (n=24)				
Overall	3.171	2.951	2.627	.108	
Communication situations					
In class	3.227	2.970	3.245	.074	
One-on-one conversations	3.130	2.938	2.015	.158	
Communication concerns categories					
Self	3.287	3.120	1.506	.222	
Task	2.956	2.669	4.027	.047	
Impact	3.384	3.209	1.442	.232	
Communication barriers					
Capacity	3.010	2.700	4.379	.038	
Language	3.061	2.731	5.232	.024	
Knowledge	2.897	2.630	2.505	.116	
Culture	3.287	3.134	1.356	.247	
Emotion	3.057	2.944	.752	.388	
Perception	3.480	3.292	1.710	.193	

5.9.2.4 Overseas experiences of German teachers in China

Hypothesis 6e) German teachers who had overseas experiences in China express fewer concerns in communication with Chinese students as compared to those without.

Overseas experiences of German teachers in China was also regarded as a possible influencing factor for affecting effective communication with Chinese students. The results of a series of analyses of variance displayed that the differences of communication concerns between the teachers with overseas experiences in China

and those without were significant in almost all domains of concerns ($p < .05$), except for the concerns caused by students' capacity, such as concerns based on tasks and knowledge-related barriers.

Table 5.27: Analyses of variance for the concerns of German teachers with respect to overseas experiences

Different domains of communication concerns	Mean		ANOVA	
	Experience in China (n=13)	No experience (n=21)	F value	P value
Overall	2.581	3.026	5.602	.024
Communication situations				
In class	2.856	3.286	6.516	.016
One-on-one conversations	2.381	2.838	4.825	.035
Communication concerns categories				
Self	2.485	2.963	5.957	.020
Task	2.659	3.017	4.012	.054
Impact	2.581	3.130	5.986	.020
Communication barriers				
Capacity	2.778	3.223	5.089	.031
Language	2.622	3.078	5.591	.024
Knowledge	3.123	3.543	3.567	.068
Culture	2.437	2.883	5.751	.022
Emotion	2.892	3.324	4.641	.039
Perception	2.058	2.516	6.244	.018

Therefore, on the basis of the findings shown in Table 5.27, German teachers' communication concerns were substantially affected by their overseas experiences in China. To some degree, overseas experiences in China contributes to the decrease in German teachers' concerns in communication with Chinese students in general. This hypothesis received substantial support.

5.9.2.5 Explanation of the results

Although this study focuses on the communication between students and teachers in school, their personal experiences outside school can still be noteworthy factors, which may affect their communication in different degrees. The findings shown in the sections 5.9.2.1 to 5.9.2.4 are good representations of this point.

As far as Chinese students are concerned, their length of residence, work experience, and living status in Germany were considered as the outside school factors, which may have a direct or indirect influence on the development of their communication skills. The results summarized below display the influence of each factor on students' communication, respectively.

(1) Chinese students gradually improved their communication ability during the residence in Germany.

First of all, as expected in the hypothesis 5c, the length of residence in Germany is a favorable factor for Chinese students to improve their communicative competence, from the aspects of cultural identity and the enhancement of personal capacity. For example, the information shown in the comments [5-83] and [5-84] manifests the positive change of Chinese students in communication as their length of residence in Germany extended. A newcomer (CSGQ04) expressed strong concerns in interaction with Germans, while a student, who had more than three years of residence time showed the personal growth in study and life in Germany over time.

[5-83] *"I arrived in Germany just 6 months ago. I am afraid to talk with Germans in school because I am not confident with my German. Also, I don't know how to communicate with them in a comforting way."* (CSGQ04)

[5-84] *"Compared to 3 years ago, at that time I just started my study in Germany, I've grown so much as a student as well as a person. The most*

obvious sign of my change is that I can integrate into the local study and life better than before." (CSGQ08)

The change of Chinese students over time can be explained in two aspects. Firstly, by living in Germany, German culture and lifestyle exert a subtle influence on Chinese students' daily life, which makes Chinese students as the strangers of German culture gradually become not only receivers but also a part of it. Secondly, the independent study and lifestyle in Germany also encourage, or rather, "force" Chinese students to improve their personal abilities. Most of the time, especially in the early stages of residence, Chinese students need to deal with the usual problems of day-to-day living, such as paying the bills and managing relationships. These experiences can virtually enhance students' personal abilities, both in psychological quality and practical language applications. Either the improvement of cultural understanding or the enrichment of personal capacity is indispensable for the improvement of the communicative ability of Chinese students.

In addition, due to the results of Scheffe test, it also shows that the length of three years residence can be considered as a turning point of self-improvement of Chinese students. After one more year (3rd – 4th year) of accumulating-phrase, their comfort level of living in Germany can increase to the qualitative change in the fourth residence year, which also, in turn, improve their confidence in communication with others.

(2) Work experience helped Chinese students to develop personal and interpersonal ability in communication.

Moreover, work experience of Chinese students was also chosen as an outside school variable factor to testify. Communication is an inevitable part of most work. Although this kind of communication takes place mostly outside the school, the experiential knowledge and lessons that students learn at work may have certain positive effects on enhancing the quality of their communication inside the school. As mentioned in

the comments [5-85] and [5-86], some Chinese students mentioned the benefits, which they received from their work experience outside the university, to their communication inside the university:

[5-85] *“I work for a small company... In this company, I need to work in a team. I must learn how to work well with other people, how to communicate with them, especial with foreign people.... This job changes me to an open, communicative, and optimistic person. All of these changes break the ices in my relationships with others at the university, especially with German teachers and peers, which surely helps me with my study.” (CSGI01)*

[5-86] *“I think work experience is very important. Not just because I can support my life economically in Germany. What is more important is that work can help me to integrate into the local life here, psychological and verbally, inside as well outside the school.” (CSGQ06)*

The above comments of Chinese students illustrate that they improved personal comprehensive abilities through their work, such as the language competence, communicative skills, and team spirit of cooperation. All of these personal abilities they achieved at work further contributed to their communication at the university, either with German teachers or with peers, which, therefore, reflected on the lower degree of concerns in communication than those students who did not have work experience.

(3) Chinese students merely enhanced language skill by sharing accommodation with international students.

In addition, given that roommates could be the people who Chinese students contact mostly with outside the school, the influence of roommates on Chinese students was also verified.

The finding shows that Chinese students, who lived with international roommates, had fewer language-related concerns in communication with German teachers than those students who lived with non-international roommates. This result was also proved by the comment [5-87]. As presented in the comment, the improvement of Chinese students' language ability, either of English or German, benefited from the daily communication with their international roommates. However, this advantage of language did not manifest in the answers of students who live with non-international roommates due to the Chinese language environment, which can be seen in the comment [5-88].

[5-87] *"I live in a flat shared with 7 international students from different countries except for China. We meet every day and sometimes cook together in our shared kitchen. It is fun to talk with them. I improve my English by talking with them."* (CSGQ09)

[5-88] *"I have two Chinese roommates. We speak in Chinese and do everything in Chinese style. When I stay at home, sometimes I feel like I am still in China."* (CSGQ05)

Nevertheless, perhaps because of the contents of communication with international roommates normally regarding daily routines, just as mentioned in the comment [5-89], apart from the language support for Chinese students, no other specific advantages were found, which could contribute to the improvement of Chinese students' communication with German teachers through interacting with international roommates.

[5-89] *"I live with three German students in an apartment. Since each of us has a different timetable, we do not have much time to chat. Most of the time we talk only when is necessary. For example, we need to fix the light or share the bills."* (CSGQ10)

(4) German teachers' overseas experiences in China enhanced the mutual understanding and deepened the relationship between German teachers and Chinese students.

Fourth, in terms of the outside school factor of German teachers, their overseas experiences in China was chosen as a potential factor that may affect their communication with Chinese students. The verification results confirm this assumption. There were no significant differences found between the teachers who had overseas experience in China and those had not with respect to their concerns about academic contents, such as task- and knowledge-based concerns. However, it can be realized that, compared to the teachers without overseas experiences in China, the teachers with experiences in China expressed generally a lower degree of concerns in the communication domains that involve the language and cultural background of Chinese students. This can be explained that the stay in China provides German teachers opportunities to experience Chinese culture and language personally, which helps them to gain a deep understanding of the communicative behaviors and patterns of Chinese people. In this way, they are able to understand the reasons behind the concerns of Chinese students in communication and find a way to mitigate the concerns.

What is more, German teachers' experience in China also brought a kind of cordial sense to their Chinese students, which virtually eliminated the underlying concerns of each other in communication. As two Chinese students mentioned in the comments [5-90] and [5-91] that they felt more "comfortable and interesting" to talk with the German teachers who had experiences in China than with those teachers who did not have. German teachers' overseas experiences in China not only "narrowed the distance" but also created "a kind of intimacy" between them and their Chinese students in communication. This shows that the Chinese overseas experiences of German teachers are beneficial to improve the communication with Chinese students.

[5-90] *"One of my German lecturers told us that she was in China several*

times. I can see that she is interested in Chinese culture and language very much. Her experiences in China unknowingly narrow the distance between us. I like to talk with her because I know that she likes my culture. Maybe she also likes to talk with me for exploring more about China and Chinese. Communications between us are always comfortable and interesting. I do not have the same feeling when I talk with other lecturers without Chinese experiences.” (CSGI09)

[5-91] *“My boss (German supervisor) likes the Chinese culture. Once he even asked me to teach him some Chinese words. It is a different feeling for me to talk with him. I have a kind of familiarity with him because he understands me better than other teachers.” (CSGQ04)*

To sum up, the variable factors outside the university, in general, have a positive impact on developing the quality of communication between Chinese students and German teachers at the university. In particular, the longer Chinese students stayed in Germany, the better personal skills and interpersonal relationships they achieved, which contributed to improving the quality of their interpersonal communication. Moreover, work experience in Germany also acted as a positive factor for Chinese students, which can help them to rediscover their self-confidence at work and enhance communication skills with others. Although most of the time Chinese students' impetus of breakthrough were passive and under the pressure, the self-growth and transcendence eventually benefited to their communication and study in the learning context later on. However, even though international roommates were conducive to improve the language ability of Chinese students, the communication in daily life with roommates did not play a decisive role in the improvement of Chinese students' communication with German teachers. Compared to Chinese students' experiences in Germany, some German teachers also benefited from the knowledge of Chinese culture and language they acquired in their overseas experiences in China, which, in turn, facilitated the harmonious interaction with Chinese students.

5.10 Conclusion of the findings in this chapter

To summarize, this chapter presents a detailed analysis of the findings based on the comparison of communication concerns in different cultural environments and individual differences.

In the first place, Chinese students in Germany in general expressed a significantly higher level of communication concerns in communication with German teachers than Chinese students in China did. On the one hand, this result roots in the relative higher level of the requirements of communicative competence in the German academic context than in the Chinese contexts, such as language competence and background knowledge. On the other hand, the communicative perspectives based on the different cultural standards between China and Germany also contribute to the various communication concerns reflected by Chinese students. In other words, Chinese students' communicative principle and mode inherited from traditional Chinese cultural values incongruously adapt to the German communication environment, which thereby cause them barriers and concerns in communication.

Furthermore, some personal-related invariant and variable factors of Chinese students and German teachers also played a role in their communication. The summary of the findings is listed in Table 5.28. According to the content of Table 5.28, it can be seen that all of the personal-based factors of students and teachers chosen in this study had an impact on their communication with each other to a greater or lesser extent. Briefly to say, the more contact with German culture Chinese students had, the fewer concerns they had in communication. Likewise, some understanding of Chinese culture can also help German teachers to improve the quality of communication with Chinese students. Additionally, female Chinese students expressed more communication concerns than male peers did. German teachers were not affected by their gender in communication with Chinese students. Moreover, Chinese students and German teachers working in the fields of sciences (natural sciences, agriculture,

and medicine) and engineering experienced fewer concerns in communication than those working in the areas of non-sciences (humanities and social sciences). English speakers had fewer concerns than German speakers.

Table 5.28: Summary of the findings of the fifth and sixth research questions

Factors	Significant difference		Results
	Chinese students	German teachers	
Gender	Yes	No	•Male students expressed fewer concerns than female students in communication.
Field of study	Partially	Partially	•A higher level of concerns found in the field of non-sciences than sciences and engineering.
Communicative language	Yes	Partially	•English speakers had fewer concerns than German speakers in communication.
Age	Yes	————	•Younger students had more concerns than elder students in communication.
Academic level	Yes	————	•Students who had relatively higher academic degree expressed fewer communication concerns.
Experience of advising Chinese students	————	Partially	•The more experiences of advising Chinese students German teachers had, the better understanding of students' culture-related concerns they could.
Length of residence	Yes	————	•Longer residency involved fewer concerns in communication.
Part-time job	Partially	————	•Work experience helped students to reduce concerns in communication.
Living status	Concerns of language	————	•International roommates were benefited for improving the language ability of Chinese students.
Overseas experiences in China	————	Yes	•Overseas experiences in China enabled German teachers to communicate with Chinese students better than those without overseas experiences in China.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, Inspirations and Reflections

In the last two chapters, the hypotheses regarding the different degrees of concerns between Chinese students and German teachers, the cultural and language impact on communication, and the influences of the personal factors on communication were verified by standardized data surveys. The aim of chapter 6 is to reconsider and integrate all of the findings and further find out the enlightenment learned from this study for future research on intercultural communication between Chinese students and foreign teachers.

This chapter begins by summarizing the major findings. It then refines the general findings into the interpretations of four concrete aspects on (1) the cultural differences, (2) the language ability, (3) the learning and teaching habits, and (4) the impact of personal factors on communication. On this basis, some feasible inspirations are suggested for Chinese students, as well as for German teachers, in the hope of improving the efficiency and the quality of the communication among them in educational settings. In the end, this chapter concludes with a review of the contributions and the limitations of the current study and further provides some suggestions for future research directions.

6.1 Review of the major findings and the interpretations

6.1.1 Review of the major findings

As introduced in chapter 1, this research explored the concerns expressed by Chinese students and German teachers in their communication in German educational settings. Chinese students in China, who had experiences with communicating with German

teachers in China, were also involved in this study as a reference. By analyzing the communication concerns expressed by Chinese students in Germany and in China comparatively, the influence of different communication environments and its cultural backgrounds on communication were discovered. As explained in chapter 2 (in section 2.1.2), a modified *Communication Concerns Model* based on the studies of Staton-Spicer (1983), Bauer (1992), Feezel and Myers (2009), and Wang (2008a) was applied to the communication experiences of Chinese students in Germany and in China when analyzing their communication with German teachers.

On the basis of the analysis results of the quantitative and qualitative data in chapter 4, Chinese students in Germany expressed a high level of Chinese culture-related concerns in communication, such as the concerns caused by “face-saving”, being modest, and respectful to teachers. These concerns of Chinese students also reflected the great influence of central Chinese cultural standards (see section 2.2.1 in chapter 2) on their communication. Chinese students’ concerns resulted from the Chinese culture, in turn, affected the reaction of their German teachers in communication, which also caused the concerns of German teachers to a certain level. Nevertheless, compared to the concerns caused by cultural differences, German teachers worried more about students’ communicative competence, such as the language skills and the background knowledge, especially during the communication in class. Chinese students also expressed widely their concerns about the insufficient language ability in response to the worries of their German teachers. In terms of the source of the concerns, most of the concerns of Chinese students fell into the impact category, which indicates that they cared much about the response of German teachers and also shows their sensibility and lack of self-confidence in communication. The different interpretations between Chinese students and German teachers of the same behaviors of Chinese students in communication were explored as the main reason for the concerns expressed by Chinese students and German teachers in Germany.

In general, Chinese students in Germany tended to express a higher degree of concerns in communication than their German teachers did. Chinese students worried about not only their own communicative performance but also about the response of German teachers to their behavior in communication. However, German teachers considered that Chinese students appeared to be more anxious in communication than they should be.

Additionally, as shown in chapter 5, the findings of the comparison of the communication experiences between Chinese students in China and in Germany proved that the different language and cultural environment of communication did affect the degree of concerns of Chinese students. Chinese students in Germany expressed a relatively higher degree of concerns about the communication with German teachers than the Chinese students in China did. The changes of communication habits, language contexts, and student-teacher communication approaches between the Chinese and German communication environment were discovered as the main reasons for the increase of Chinese students' concerns in Germany.

Moreover, this study also found out that male Chinese students in Germany were more likely to be direct, rational, and goal-oriented with German teachers in communication, while the expressions of the female Chinese students were more inclined to be indirect, emotional, and process-oriented. However, German teachers were unaffected by the students' gender in communication. In addition, Chinese students in the field of sciences (natural sciences, agriculture, and medicine) and engineering tended to have fewer concerns when taking with German teachers in Germany than the students in the field of non-sciences (social sciences and humanities) did. English-speaking Chinese students did not express as many communication concerns as German-speaking Chinese students did. Similar results were also found in the data and expressions of German teachers.

Last but not the least, some personal factors of Chinese students in Germany

involved in this study, such as their age, academic level, length of residence, and working experience, were significantly contributed to the decrease of their concerns in communication with German teachers. However, Chinese students' experiences of sharing accommodation with non-Chinese speaking roommates were not remarkably beneficial to their communication with German teachers in the university. It is also revealed that the personal overseas experiences of German teachers in China were conducive to promoting the relationship between Chinese students and German teachers, which further improved their communication with each other.

6.1.2 Interpretations of the findings

The above discussion indicates that Chinese students and German teachers demonstrate different communicative concerns and worries in the communication. From this angle of origin, those concerns existing in their communication can be highlighted as the following observations.

6.1.2.1 Overemphasis on cultural differences in communication

“Shy,” “quiet”, and “passive” were the adjectives that German teacher often used for describing Chinese students in this study. However, based on the features of teaching and learning in China shown in chapter 2 (section 2.2.3), these types of behaviors were interpreted by Chinese students as “self-restraint,” “careful consideration”, and “modest,” which are considered as “correct” behaviors based on Chinese cultural characteristics. This gap in understanding reflects the different degree of awareness of the cultural differences.

Throughout the overall findings of this study, it is not difficult to find that the concerns related to cultural differences dominate the top concerns of the list, especially the concerns expressed by Chinese students. In addition, the culture-based

communication barriers, such as perception- and emotion-related barriers, were also shown as the greatest concerns of Chinese students in Germany and in China. For instance, the top concerns motioned by Chinese students in the findings of the first research question (see section 4.3.4), such as concerns of face-saving, respecting to teachers, and being modesty in communication, were all resulted from the different understanding of their behaviors between Chinese and German cultures. In particular, the results of the second research question (see section 4.4.5) regarding the communication between Chinese students and German teachers in Germany also reflected the influence of cultural differences on Chinese students. The concerns voiced by Chinese students were in fact caused by their obsession of hierarchy in communication with teachers resulting from the influence of value orientation of Confucianism (see section 2.2.1.1), which is different from the German culture. The role of cultural differences played in the concerns of Chinese students was discussed in section 5.5. The results of the comparison of the statements between Chinese students in China and in Germany illustrate the concerns and fears of some Chinese students when they dealt with the changes and differences in the German communication environment. It thus shows that most of the Chinese students were very aware of the differences between Chinese and German cultures and considered the differences as barriers in communication with German teachers.

German teachers also realized the concerns expressed by Chinese students and, in general, pointed out that Chinese students were more likely to stick to the cultural behavioral patterns while ignoring the nature of communication. Although the communication concerns expressed by German teachers did not show a direct connection to the sensitivity of cultural differences, the culture-based concerns of Chinese students, in turn, affected the reaction of German teachers, which resulted in the concerns of German teachers in communication.

The findings lead to this consideration: whether Chinese students often excessively focus on the cultural differences and particularities in intercultural

interaction, while inadvertently ignoring the internal relations and commonality between cultures? However, it is the existence of commonalities of behavior and emotion among different cultures, which allows intercultural communication to finally come true and be further promoted. Therefore, how to balance the cultural differences and commonalities in intercultural communication between Chinese students and German teachers is the crux of the problem and will be discussed in section 6.2.1.

6.1.2.2 Being restrained by the language ability in communication

The linguistic barrier was discovered in this study as another major factor, which impeded a successful communication between Chinese students and German teachers. For example, the findings shown in chapter 4 (see section 4.4.5.4) discovered that, concerns caused by language barriers of Chinese students subtly affected their overall communication with German teachers in Germany. Both Chinese students and German teachers in Germany acknowledged the concerns caused by Chinese students' insufficient language ability, such as the limited vocabulary, relatively poor listening and speaking ability, and considered language-related concerns as one of the major concerns in their communication. The findings also indicate that, although Chinese students passed the language tests required by German universities, their language ability was still not sufficient for learning and communication in German academic environment.

In addition, by comparing the data between Chinese students in Germany and in China, the findings in chapter 5 (see section 5.5.2) further illustrated the reasons for the high rate of language-based concerns of Chinese students in Germany. The findings discovered that the change of language environment (from China to Germany) caused the change of the mindset and the level of confidence of Chinese students in speaking a foreign language, in this study German or English. Compared with communicating with German teachers in China, the higher requirement of language

ability and the lower supportive language environment in Germany reduced the confidence of Chinese students in communication with others (with German teachers and with non-Chinese peer students). The habit of Chinese students of sticking to Chinese community also explained their insecurity of communicating in foreign language in Germany. Their lack of confidence in the foreign language weakened their desires to express personal ideas in conversation, which consequently resulted in their weak performance. The undesirable performance once again frustrated their self-confidence in communication and finally plunged students into a vicious unconscious circle. This result shows that, although Chinese students had “brilliant ideas” to say or “valuable questions” to ask, they had to remain silent due to the reduced language competences.¹

As a result, most of the Chinese students were contained by their language ability and could not fully participate in the communication with German teachers and other non-Chinese-speaking students¹ in Germany. In order to help Chinese students improve the language ability and overcome the language barrier in communication, some corresponding methods and suggestions will be recommended in section 6.2.2.

6.1.2.3 Misunderstanding caused by different learning and teaching habits

In addition to the cultural differences and language barriers discussed above, the misunderstandings between Chinese students and German teachers caused by the different teaching and learning habits between China and Germany is also a noteworthy point to discuss. As found out in the results in chapter 4, most of the Chinese students’ concerns resulted from their different understanding of the communicative behavior and learning habits between Chinese and German culture. The communicative manners and habits that Chinese students believed are correct in a Chinese learning environment, such as avoid taking the initiative and challenging

¹ [6-1] “Sometimes I think my ideas are brilliant. But I didn’t say what I think because I am not confident to express it in the German language.” (CSG102)

teachers in class illustrated in chapter 2 (see section 2.3.2.2), turn out to be not entirely appropriate for the context of a German classroom. As a result, the “inappropriate” behavior of Chinese students not only made themselves uncomfortable in communication but also confused their German teachers to a high-level of concerns. For example, some German teachers pointed out in the study that they were confused whether the “silence” of Chinese students in class stands for their full understanding or their indifference of the course.

Superficially, the concerns of Chinese students regarding their Chinese-style behavior discovered in this study seem to be caused by their personal communication preferences. However, in fact, the different teaching and learning habits between German and Chinese academic culture are the reasons lying behind. As found out in the results of the third and fourth research questions in chapter 5 (see section 5.5.3.1), the teacher-student relationship is different between Germany and China, which forms different communication approaches between teachers and students in German and in Chinese academic contexts. When Chinese students communicated with their German teachers in Germany while applying Chinese-style communication approaches, as most of the results revealed in this study, the exposed concerns of both sides were caused by their different understanding of the same communicative behaviors.

Although Chinese students and German teachers expressed their misunderstanding about each other in communication, given the reasons of different cultural approaches to teacher-student relationship and communication between Germany and China explained in chapters 4 and 5, the concerns of both sides were inevitable but explainable. In order to weaken the misunderstandings between Chinese students and German teachers and to facilitate the accomplishment of tasks in their communication, some strategies are provided for Chinese students as well as for German teachers in section 6.2.3.

6.1.2.4 Underestimation of personal potentials in communication

The findings of the fifth and sixth research questions discussed in chapter 5 revealed that most of the personal factors of Chinese students and German teachers have a certain influence on their communication. For instance, female Chinese students are more sensitive and process-oriented than male students in communication with German teachers; communication concerns of Chinese students gradually diminish with age; work experience of Chinese students outside the school affected their communication inside the school positively, etc.

The influence of these personal factors, if properly handled, can be regarded as the personal potentials for enhancing the effectiveness of communication between Chinese students and German teachers. However, as found out in chapter 5, most of these personal potentials were underestimated by Chinese students and German teachers in their communication. For example, most of the Chinese students did not fully realize their different communicative approaches based on different genders (see section 5.8.1). Moreover, they did not make good use of their work experience outside the university and the opportunity of communicating with non-Chinese speaking roommates to improve their language ability and the communication with German teachers in the university (see section 5.9.2). The findings in chapter 5 also show that German teachers neglected the potential benefit that they may obtain from their experiences of advising Chinese students. In addition, the different communication preferences between Chinese male and female students discovered in this study can also be applied as a useful reference for German teachers to improve the communication with Chinese students.

In brief, the findings of this study reveal that both Chinese students and German teachers undervalued their personal potentials for improving the quality of their communication. Chinese students, in particular, were sometimes trapped in their concerns and worries in communication and ignored the underlying reasons for their

problems from their own perspectives and experiences. Hence, the methods for arousing individual potentials of Chinese students and German teachers in their communication are worth rethinking deeply and will be discussed in section 6.2.4.

6.2 Inspirations of the findings

6.2.1 Seeking common ground while respecting differences

As in 6.1.2.1 summarized, the findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5 mostly illustrate the various patterns of manifestation between Chinese and German cultures in communication, which stands for one of the key reasons for the communication problems discovered in this study, especially of Chinese students. Although Chinese students wanted to express the same purposes as their German peers, their forms of expression based on Chinese communication standards (see section 2.2.1) concerned not only their German teachers but themselves as well. For example, for the same purpose of showing respect to teachers, German students preferred to participate in lecture and express personal opinions actively, while Chinese students tended to stay quiet and did not challenge the teaching of the teachers. Owing to the differences in culture and modes of expression, the same demand sometimes produces very different outcomes.

Nevertheless, the high-level culture-based concerns of Chinese students did not affect their German teachers to the same degree. Some teachers indicated that Chinese and German students are very similar in nature, in spite of their diverse ways of expression. Most of the German teachers showed their understanding of the communicative patterns of Chinese students, though the behaviors of students also arouse some concerns of teachers in communication.

Therefore, although the different modes of expressions exist between Chinese

and German cultures, under the mutual understanding and inclusion, there is still the possibility of the positive communication between Chinese students and German teachers to be expected. On this basis, the following methods are put forward.

Respecting and facing up to the cultural differences

Due to the different cultural backgrounds, different understanding and cognitive basis between Chinese students and German teachers can be easily found in their communication. For instance, as found out in the results of the second research question in chapter 4 (see section 4.4.5.1), Chinese students stayed quiet in class to show their respect and understanding towards the teaching of German teachers, while German teachers considered that the quietness of Chinese students in class represents their indifference and incomprehension of the teaching. Since the differences exist objectively among cultures, a practical way to alleviate the intercultural communication problems arisen from cultural differences is to envisage it rather than avoid it. Hence, some suggestions are put forward in this regard. The culture in this section refers particularly to the culture of communication.

To Chinese students, their initiative attitude towards cultural differences is the key to unlock the concerns and problems that they have created in communication themselves. Throughout the findings, Chinese students realized and understood their differences in communication with German teachers. That is to say, their communication concerns actually came from their fear of the cultural differences. This conclusion was embodied in the expressions of Chinese students about their fears of the changes of cultural and communicative environment between China and Germany (see section 5.5.1). As a result, they felt “overwhelmed” and “helpless” in the unfamiliar German environment because of their fears, which appeared in the findings that they were “shy” and lacked “the sense of security and motivation” in communication with German teachers

However, this study also discovered that Chinese students not only respect

German culture but that they normally are also flexible and tolerant of ambiguity in communication in Germany. For instance, when facing the communication difficulties in group discussions, Chinese students chose to avoid potential conflicts with others in the group and tried to look for other solutions, such as asking teachers or other Chinese peer students after class (see section 5.5.4). Bennett (2009) points out that these (flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity) are the necessary competencies for the openness to experiences in a new culture. Song (2009) also indicates that such competencies are beneficial to suspend judgment, adjust individual strategies, and accept uncertainties of the new culture during the communication. In other words, Chinese students possess the potential and the ability to adapt to the German learning and communication culture. Therefore, as long as they face up to the cultural differences positively and dare to break out of their own mold for integrating into the German learning style, their concerns resulted from cultural differences in communication will gradually disappear.

In order to help Chinese students accept cultural differences and adapt to the new environments quickly, a certain level of knowledge about the learning and living situation in Germany before the start of the study is necessary. As mentioned in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3), Liu (2010:200ff) found that Chinese exchange students who did not report the extreme sense of strangeness and exclusion in the new culture had done sufficient preparatory work about the host country before arrival. On this base, a two-step preparatory work is recommended in this study, namely, the preparatory before and after the study at German universities.

Many Chinese students in this study expressed that, before they started the study at a German university, they were “too busy with preparing for the application to the German universities”² (in China) and “learning German/English language”³ (in China and in Germany). Thus, they did not have enough time and energy to specialize

² [6-2] “The application procedure was very time-consuming. I took a lot of time to prepare documents and the oral examination of APS (Die Akademische Prüfstelle).” (CSGI02)

³ [6-3] “Before I came to Germany, I used almost all of my time to learn German. I don’t have extra time and energy to think about other things.” (CSGI10)

in knowing the culture and the academic-related information in Germany. This “unready” status forms one of the reasons of their concerns in study and communication later on, especially in the initial phase. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the knowledge of German culture, particularly the German communicative culture, into the stage of language learning of Chinese students both in China and in Germany in order to enhance their overall intercultural communicative competence rather than only the language ability.

In fact, as pointed out in the review of strategies for eliminating concerns in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.3), the intercultural competence as a “soft competence” of foreign language learners has been already discussed in the context of foreign language education controversy (e.g. O'Sullivan & Rösler, 1999; Harden & Witte, 2000; Hallet, 2002; Küster, Lütge & Wieland, 2015). Foreign language teachers are also suggested to instruct a foreign language in combination with its history and culture (e.g. Burwitz-Melzer, 2006; Hallt & Krämer, 2012; Vogt, 2016, in Lügte, 2016). As Lügte (2016:458) suggests, concepts of intercultural language teaching are not to condemn stereotypes of different cultures, but to develop an awareness of cultural diversity and consider the differences among cultures as the standing point of teaching foreign languages. Therefore, by learning the German language on the basis of its culture, Chinese students not just gain the linguistic skills but, more importantly, also can acquire the communication competence in Germany. What is more, it also helps Chinese students to make the best of their limited preparation time before their studies begin. This point of view was also reflected in the suggestions provided by most of the Chinese students in Germany in this study. They mentioned that prospective Chinese students should make full preparation before the departure and try to well understand the programs offered by German universities and faculties, at which they will study. In this way, prospective Chinese students can eliminate the fear of the unknown at German universities, which lays a foundation for their future study and communication.

It is inevitable that Chinese students may feel “lost and confused”⁴ after the study begins because of the academic discrepancy between German and Chinese universities. This is the time that they need to identify the differences and modify themselves to adapt to the new requirements quickly. Hence, it is recommended by some Chinese students in this study to establish an individual support network by making full use of the local resources. Many Chinese interviewees pointed out that the senior Chinese students at the same the university are the best resource for the new Chinese students, because they can provide valuable information about the course choosing, exams arrangement, and efficient communication with German teachers. By learning about the study and life experiences of the seniors based on the same cultural background, the newcomers may avoid many detours later in the study and quickly transfer from the status of study in China to study in Germany.

In addition, as discovered in chapter 5 (see section 5.5.3.2), Chinese students in Germany expressed their maladjustment of the different curriculum model in Germany. The different communication requirements based on different types of courses were also one of the reasons that caused Chinese students concerns in communication with German teachers. As discussed in the review of research on Chinese students studying in Germany (see section 2.2.3), for instance, Zhu (2012) similarly indicates that the lack of cultural knowledge of the host country and university hinders the studies of Chinese students at German universities. Given these findings, the coaching supports offered by universities and faculties, such as official orientation courses and unofficial intercultural events, are considered as another practical recommendation for Chinese students to help them to adapt to the German learning and communication environment quickly. For example, Kelo (2006) emphasizes that it is necessary for international students to attend preparatory programs offered by universities in correspondence to their academic degree levels. Preparatory programs of the university-level, such as the orientation program, can offer Chinese students information such as “university facilities, available services,

⁴ [6-4] “In the beginning, everything around me is new. I feel confused and fully lost.” (CSGI02)

practical issues, safety, and administrative issues” in order to help them fully prepare for the new study life (ibid:159). Moreover, Chinese students can also benefit greatly from orientation events or programs offered by “university faculties, departments or even programs”. The orientation of faculty-level normally “conveys specific information on courses, rules, and staff, and has an important impact on the successful integration of students into the faculty community” (ibid:160). Thus, the information Chinese students receive from the university and faculty bring them to the “*academic, linguistic and study skills level required for their studies*” (ibid:10), which is beneficial to their communication with German teachers in academic settings afterwards. Additionally, some informal events and programs organized by universities and faculties are also worthwhile to recommend. Many Chinese students in this study mentioned that they enjoyed the great benefit of the extra-curricular activities, such as “the welcome party” (in German: Präsidentbegrüßung) (CSGI09), “Study-Buddy program” (CSGI05) and “excursions” (CSGI07). These events enabled them to “access to useful academic information in a relaxing way”⁵ (CSGI07) and further integrate into the German learning environment quickly.

To German teachers, one practical way to help Chinese students to weaken the fear of cultural differences in communication is to give them either verbal encouragement or operational support. As pointed out in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2.3), according to the studies of Jacqueline and Irvine (2002), Yoon and Kerber (2003), and Stojiljković et al. (2012), this can be construed as the empathy of teachers in interaction with students. As discovered in section 5.8.1, Chinese students, especially female students, paid much attention to the emotional exchange in communication with German teachers. Thus, a sincere encouragement of German teachers, such as “speaking slowly (CSGQ60)”, “being patient (CSGQ102)”, “praise (CSGQ18),” and even a reassuring “smile face (CSGQ41)”, can give Chinese students a positive sign that their feeling and concerns are being cared for and listened to. Such

⁵ [6-5] “I like the excursions organized by our university. During the excursion, I can easily make new friends and access to useful academic information in a relaxing way.” (CSGI07)

supports can effectively relieve the anxieties of Chinese students and further encourage them to be active in communication.

Additionally, although the equal attitude of German teachers towards students is praised, considering the different communicative characteristics and habits of different cultures, it is still recommended for German teachers to apply culture specific communication styles in communication in order to understand and meet the needs of students (Ylönen, 2007; Endrass, Rehm, & André, 2009), especially the students coming from a culture much different from the German culture. Therefore, it is suggested that German teachers take the cultural background and communication habits of Chinese students into account and communicate with Chinese students in a targeted way. In this way, the communication between German teachers and Chinese students can become more effective.

Seeking the common cultural grounds

Instead of searching common grounds, as most of the findings indicated, the majority of the Chinese students tended to stay only firmly aware of their differences from German teachers in communication. However, according to the brief review of intercultural communication presented in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.1), apart from the cultural differences, several intercultural communication studies (e.g. Norenzayan et al. 2002; Church et al. 2010; Scollon & Tov, 2012) also bring similarities and intercommunity among different cultures into discussion. Researchers pointed out that differences among cultures can be considered as a starting-point of studying intercultural communication, but the essence of intercultural research is to promote communication among different cultures by finding out the common grounds. An overemphasis of cultural differences or the specific cultural features in intercultural communication can easily lead to the ignorance of the cultural similarities and descend into communication deadlock.

Different perspectives of culture, no doubt, may lead the intercultural

communication into different directions. Regarding Chinese and German cultures, although each ethnic culture has different unique practices, the ways of thinking and language system, both nations share the common life demands, passions for happiness and sorrows despite the respective forms of expressions (Song, 2009; Schroll-Machl, 2013). In fact, most of the time, Chinese students expressed concerns in communication because they believed that they are different from German teachers. For example, Chinese students were very concerned in communication that their ways of thinking and behavior cannot be fully understood by German teachers. However, the findings show that what negatively impacted German teachers was not the action of Chinese students in communication, but the sensitive emotion and concerns about their differences from German teachers. As a result, Chinese students hindered the communication with German teachers by the cultural gap established by themselves. Especially in the unfamiliar environment, Chinese students worried too much about their differences from others while ignoring the common grounds. The so-called cultural differentiation is probably just the excuse for their misbehavior and fear, which should not be considered as the scapegoat for the failure of communication. Hence, the common ground between German and Chinese cultures is the key to promote the communication, which can provide a breakthrough to re-frame the communication between Chinese students and German teachers.

For Chinese students, instead of being restrained in the differences from others, it is necessary to open a conversation with German teachers on the basis of a common goal and expectation, and hold a belief that the common ground can promote a successful communication. Only in this way, can most of their communication problems discovered in this study, such as their shyness, quietness, and reserved behaviors resulted from the sensitivity of the cultural differences, be solved to a certain degree.

For German teachers, their attitude toward the presence of Chinese students in communication plays the role. It is important for German teachers to understand that

Chinese students have the same learning desires and demands as German students, even though they may express in different ways. Holmes (2004:304) notes, teachers should “move from the mind-set of a *deficit* to a difference view of Chinese learning and teaching methods” (Fox, 1994; Kennedy, 2002; Ward, 2001) and reflect their changes on the process and content of their educational practices. When Chinese students do not feel confident about their communicative behaviors, German teachers need to take up a steering role in the communication and steer the conversation into the common points of both sides. For example, it is wise for German teachers to ask for the opinions of Chinese students constantly during the conversation when Chinese students keep quiet and follow the opinions of others without challenge. But the key is to arouse Chinese students’ awareness of the cultural commonality, let them understand that they are no different to other students in the class and help them build up self-confidence in communication.

In all, cultural similarities can improve the communication and, especially, positively affect the emotion and behavior of the communication partners from different cultures. This also corresponds to the idea of social harmony of Confucius, as discussed in chapter 2 (see sections 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.1.2). Harmony cannot exist merely in the form of a slogan, but should reveal itself in the daily interpersonal behaviors of Chinese. When two behaviors conflict, it is suggested to emphasize on commonalities of both sides and believe the principle of “seek common ground while reserving differences (求同存异, qiú tóng cún yì)” is the reasonable and applicable solution. Likewise, the communication between Chinese students and German teachers should represent the harmonious integration of two sides rather than the sensitive avoidance and exclusion. Hence, by using the cultural differences as contributing factors, the commonality and similarity between Chinese and German cultures should be taken as not merely the starting point, but also the ultimate goal of the communication between these two cultures. In this way, the communication between Chinese students and German teachers can be improved positively and comprehensively.

6.2.2 Language is a tool for communication rather than the end

As discussed in section 6.1.2.2, the insufficient language competence of Chinese students restrained their expressive skills and further bounded their desire of communication in Germany, which is shown as one of the major communication concerns between Chinese students and German teachers discovered in this study. Moreover, the restrained language ability and performance of Chinese students were often pointed out by their German teachers, which also caused German teachers a high level of concerns when communicating with Chinese students. Therefore, language is not just a barrier to Chinese students but also a worry of German teachers in their communication. According to the findings, some suggestions are proposed below in this regard.

For Chinese students, it is necessary in the first place to fully realize the right role and status of the German/English language in their studies. Most of the Chinese students, especially those who were in the field of social sciences, strongly recommended the prospective Chinese students do their best to learn the foreign language that they will use for studying in Germany, because [6-6] *“the language ability will directly affect the efficiency of study and the communication with teachers. (CSGI09)”*

As found out in chapter 4 (see section 4.3.4.4), Chinese students realized that the language knowledge and ability that they acquired in the initial stage of language learning for preparing the university entrance language test cannot fully meet the learning and communication needs later in their study life. In spite of the fact that all the Chinese students passed the language test, the language test only provided the Chinese students an opportunity to enter the German university, but cannot signify the barrier-free communication in the study. Therefore, it is well recommended for Chinese students to keep on learning the German/English language throughout the whole course of the study rather than stop after enrolling in the university. Some

suggestions are put forward for improving the language ability of Chinese students before, as well as after the beginning of their studies.

First, it is significant for most of the Chinese students to take part in a preparatory language course to have good knowledge about the academic language requirements before their professional studies start. Kim (1988:135) suggests “knowledge about the host communication systems, particular language, and about relevant norms rules, customs history and art”. Many German universities offer this kind of course, which in German is called *Vorbereitungskurs*, *Vorkurs*, or *Propädeutikum*⁶, for international students to help them build the self-confidence in communication. Particularly, some subjects, such as in the field of natural sciences, require subject-specific language knowledge and ability and offer prospective international students a specialized supplementary language course (in addition to general language classes) by combining language training and professional terminology teaching. Such supplementary subject-specific foreign language courses have been studied and discussed by some scholars. For example, Rösler (2015) discussed in his study the relationship between subject and language acquisition and further illustrated the necessity of attending supplementary German language courses by analyzing the needs of different target groups. He especially points out that subject-specific supplementary German language courses offered by German universities should not only focus on the vocabulary and grammar teaching, but pay more attention to teach and train the spoken language and subject-related daily communication of students. This is because students need to understand not only the subject-related texts in a lecture, but also the conversation excluding the terminology, such as the humor and local references applied by German lecturers in class for activating students’ thinking and making classroom atmosphere active. Only when the teaching of German lecturers is understood by students completely can a lecture receive a good effect. The similar findings also found out in this study, as shown in

⁶ For example, many faculties of the University of Giessen offers free preparation courses (in German *Vorkurse*) for international and national students. Retrieved October 01, 2016, from <https://www.uni-giessen.de/studium/studienbeginn/vorkurse>

chapter 5 (see section 5.5.2.1 (2)), some of the Chinese students in Germany complained that they had problems to understand some local slang and humors used by German teachers in communication, which, as a result, weakened the effect of their conversation. Therefore, it is necessary for prospective Chinese students to be well prepared for the foreign language skill and make full use of preparatory and supplementary language courses offered by German universities.

Secondly, it is inevitable for Chinese students to continue learning the language (German or English) after the starting of their studies at universities. As found out in this study, many Chinese students in Germany still complain that they have difficulties in following the lecturers and understanding the teaching contents in class after they passed the university entrance language test. Thus, this shows that, in order to successfully complete the study in Germany, learning the language is never a one-time test for Chinese students, but a “protracted war (CSGQ09)”.

Supplementary language courses offered by German universities, as mentioned before, are always a good choice for Chinese students to continue learning foreign languages and subject-related communication skills. Additionally, in order to improve the language ability, Chinese students should try to avoid staying in the Chinese community very often. As discussed in chapter 5 (see section 5.5.5), the communicative atmosphere of the Chinese language created by sticking to Chinese community resulted in a sense of security but also the internal inertia of Chinese students, which stopped them from speaking the foreign language and communicating with German teachers and students. Moreover, some language learning methods pointed by Chinese participants in this study are also highly recommended to prospective Chinese students. For instance, a practical, economic, and interactive way to learn a foreign language for Chinese students is to work with a language partner, a method which is known in the German language as “Sprachenlernen im Tandem” (in English: learning a language in tandem). Bechtel (2016) in his study explains that learning a language in tandem means two or more students with different native

languages work together in order to learn the language and culture of each other. Among these students, the mother tongue of one student is the target language of the other student(s). In fact, “Sprachenlernen im Tandem” has more than 50 years of history in the academia of foreign language teaching (Herfurth, 1993) and has been improved and promoted by many scholars in teaching and learning foreign languages (e.g. Bechtel, 2003; Böing, 2007; Hahn & Reinecke, 2013). In particular, due to the “directness, effectiveness, and feasibility” of learning a foreign language in tandem among students at universities, this language learning strategy has also been suggested by some researchers to the Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries for learning English (e.g. Gao, 2003; Li, 2006; Cheng & Erben, 2011). Thus, it is well recommended to prospective Chinese students to keep learning and practicing the foreign language that they need for their studies with language partner(s) in tandem in Germany. Many German universities and language courses offer this kind of program for international language learners to help them learn and practice the language with local students in an informal and relaxed way, such as “the Intercambio-Treffen⁷” provided by Justus-Liebig-University Giessen.

For German teachers, it is necessary in the first place to help Chinese students to set up the view that language is a tool of communication but is one that should not dominate communication. Perfect language skills are appraised, but communications must base on the exchange of information. Thus, German teachers need to guide Chinese students to get over the fear of communication caused by their insufficient language ability and encourage them to communicate actively by focusing more on messages of conversation (refers to the task-oriented communication in section 6.2.3) rather than personal performance of language expression. Considering the different cultural and language backgrounds between German teachers and Chinese students, it is the basic and feasible way to ensure the development of communication between these two groups. In addition, it is also recommended for German teachers to divide

⁷ Retrieved on September 28, 2016, from https://www.uni-giessen.de/ueber-uns/veranstaltungen/sonstige/intercambio_ss16

Chinese students with non-Chinese speaking students into a group during group discussions and group works. In this way, Chinese students can practice their foreign language and also learn to adapt themselves to the different ways of thinking with the most potential.

6.2.3 Task-oriented communication

As discovered in this study, the different communication approaches between Chinese students and German teachers is one of the main reasons which caused them concerns in interaction. It is also learned from the findings that the Chinese communicative habits and traditions, such as avoiding lose face and being modest, constrained the desire of expression of Chinese students and kept them from entirely integrating into the information exchange, which consequently affected the quality of communication. Likewise, the results also show that the Chinese-style communicative behavior of Chinese students in communication caused German teachers a high level of concerns because of the different understanding of Chinese students' behavior between German and Chinese culture. In order to improve the communication, it is suggested for both German teachers and Chinese students to focus on the primary task of their communication, rather than being trapped in the confusion caused by different behaviors and understanding of each other. Therefore, a task-oriented communication approach is recommended, which is a message-focused communication method and aims at fulfilling the information transfer and exchange.

The recommended task-oriented communication approach between Chinese students and German teachers is derived from the instructional approach of task-based language teaching, which is pointed out in chapter 2. As discussed in section 2.1.2.3, the main functions of task-based language teaching and learning are to instruct a language by focusing on its “functional role in real tasks” and to guide learners to learn language by completing the task (Rozait, 2014). In view of the functions of task-based language teaching and learning, considering that Chinese students are also

learners of the German or English language in Germany, it is feasible and practical for them to communicate with German teachers based on communication tasks. On the one hand, the information of communication can be exchanged and tasks can be fulfilled. On the other hand, the language ability of Chinese students can also be improved. To meet this goal, some suggestions are provided.

For Chinese students, a useful method to help them to concentrate on the content of communication tasks instead of overly formalize in communication is to take notes. Firstly, taking notes can properly alleviate the anxiety of Chinese students in communication by shifting their attention to listening and recording. Moreover, due to the limited language ability, taking notes can help Chinese students to grasp the main information of communication. As some students mentioned in the interview that taking notes in class help them “*focus on the information and release the nervousness* (CSGI09)”, thus, taking notes in communication would be a good method for Chinese students to fully participate in the process of communication. Accordingly, German teachers should also give Chinese students appropriate understanding and support by allowing them to take notes during communication.

In addition, this study also discovered that most of the Chinese students tried to avoid communicating with teachers in class because of their worries, such as losing face or interrupting lectures. Given this, it is suggested for Chinese students to take good advantage of the office hours of lecturers. It is a good opportunity for Chinese students to turn to German teachers for help and receive more specific guidance. The one-on-one communication context, unlike the diversified environment of classroom communication, can help Chinese students focus more on the content of conversation and exchange ideas with teachers. It is noted by some Chinese students in this study that a good preparation before the office hour is necessary and well recommended. By understanding well what to ask and what to discuss with teachers, this can give Chinese students certain self-confidence in communication, particularly in language expression, and help them make good use of the office hour and accomplish the

communicative tasks. After all, not only during the office hour of German teachers, Chinese students need to make all the opportunities to communicate with German teachers, which is not only for improving the academic records, but also a way to maximize the value of their studies in Germany.

For German teachers, it is important to guide Chinese students to pay full attention to the task of conversation. The findings of this study show that the communication concerns of German teachers mainly caused by the sensitive behavior and reaction of Chinese students. Concentrating on the communication tasks can help Chinese students to relieve the tension resulted from their insecurity of language skill and sensibility of cultural differences, which may also help German teachers to decrease their concerns in communication. Here are some principles and methods that German teachers can apply in this regard.

First of all, German teachers should play a role in communication to help Chinese students keep concentrating on the task of conversation when students show anxiety and mood swings, rather than being negatively influenced by the emotion of Chinese students. Whether the task is about the thesis supervision, questions answering, or the discussion of topics, German teachers need to always dominant the whole process and lead Chinese students to a positive and active communication.

For this purpose, the “checklist” developed by Mehlhorn (2005:21) for foreign students of establishing contacts with German students in German universities is recommended. As shown in Table 6.1, Mehlhorn (2005) suggests a five-step procedure for foreign students to establish contacts with German students, which can be applied as a general guideline and useful strategy for German teachers to build communications with Chinese students. Additionally, some examples of communication methods in each procedure are also provided. Especially in the procedures of maintaining and intensifying the contact, which refers to the main process of a communication, the listed methods are good examples for German teachers to catch the attention and interests of Chinese students during communication,

such as addressing the name of the student, inquiring detailed information and examples of the topic, and finding mutual interests in communication.

Table 6.1: The “checklist” for foreign students of establishing contacts at German universities (Mehlhorn, 2005:21, English translation)

Procedures and objectives	Examples of communication methods
To prepare a contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To observe how German fellow students communicate with each other. - To find a place, where is easy to start a conversation with other students (e.g. Cafeteria, library etc.). - To indicate interests and the willingness of communication by eye contacts. - To prepare the questions in communication. - ...
To establish the first contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To start a conversation initiatively - To ask other students concrete questions - To ask other students for help - To ask other students for advice - ...
To maintain the contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand whether the students who I talk to wants to continue the conversation - To try to keep the conversation going - To ask the about the study of the student - To address the student by his/her name - To ask about detailed information or examples (regarding the topic of the conversation) - ...
To intensify the contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To try to find the commonalities with the student - To exchange E-Mail address or telephone number - To offer help - To arrange appointments - ...
To resume contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To inquire about the things which are learned about in the last conversation - To start the conversation with the information discussed in the last meeting - ...

Moreover, based on the general reserved communicative manner and sensitivity of most of the Chinese students discovered in this study, emotional support is once again recommended in order for German teachers to reflect their empathy

throughout the whole procedures in Table 6.1. The understanding and emotional support of German teachers, such as encouragement and praise, can help Chinese students to “*build up confidence (CSGI08)*”⁸ and “*increase the enthusiasm of having communication with others (CSGI02)*”⁹.

Furthermore, it is necessary for German teachers to encourage Chinese students to interact more in group discussions instead of letting them stay quiet and think alone. The results presented in chapter 5 (see section 5.5.4) also show that staying away from group discussions would do little benefit to Chinese students but could only multiply their concerns in communication. Two methods are recommendable to this point.

To begin with, initiating the topics that Chinese students are familiar with is a useful way for German teachers to stimulate Chinese students to participate in group works and concentrate on communication tasks. An “*interesting and well-known*” topic can not only make Chinese students feel “*the sense of presence*” but also “*the feeling of participation*”¹⁰ in class discussions.

In addition, another way for German teachers to encourage Chinese students to speak is to raise questions in communication. Given the passiveness of most of the Chinese students in communication observed in this study, the external motivation and stimulation of German teachers are good drives for Chinese students to express personal opinions. In particular, it is also recommendable for German teachers to ask questions by involving the feeling of Chinese students, which can give Chinese students a sense of participation and also make them feel included in discussions. This also echoes one of Mehlhorn’s (2005:20) suggestions for guiding foreign students to establish contacts at German universities, which is to “leave room for students to

⁸ [6-7] “My lecturer praised me after my first presentation. I knew that my performance is not that perfect. But her compliment encouraged me and helped me build up confidence.” (CSGI08)

⁹ [6-8] “My supervisor encourages me very often. Slowly, I become confidence and start to become enthusiastic for having communication with others.” (CSGI02)

¹⁰ [6-9] “One lecturer always cites interesting and well-known topics for class. I can feel in his seminar not only the sense of presence but also the feeling of participation.” (CSGI01)

discuss the cultural differences between making contacts at German universities and in universities of their own countries”. For example, German teachers can ask Chinese students the questions, such as how do they think about the topic from a Chinese perspective? What is the situation in their hometown? What is the difference between Germany and China?, and the like. By raising such questions to Chinese students, sometimes even “forcing” them to talk, German teachers can always attract the attention of Chinese students on communication tasks and also train them to think independently.

6.2.4 Fully realizing the personal potential in communication

The relationship between some personal factors and communication were tested in the fifth and sixth research questions and the results were given in chapter 5. In this section, some conclusive recommendations on the realization of the potential value of personal factors in communication will be put forward.

For Chinese students, it is important in the beginning to have a clear understanding of their own communication habits and realistic self-perceptions about their ability to adjust to the college environment (Kaczmarek et al., 1994; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Zhu, 2012). Since the communicative behavior varies from person to person and from culture to culture, it is necessary for Chinese students to be aware of their individual communication style, such as proactive or passive, process- or results-oriented in communication, so that they can adjust their communication strategy appropriately according to the communicative culture at German universities.

Secondly, it is also important for Chinese students to have a realistic expectation of their studies and communication at German universities. Due to the different language requirements and focuses of different subjects between students and teachers, as found out in chapter 5 (see section 5.8.2.1), a full understanding of the communication requirement of targeted subjects is necessary. There are many

possible ways to provide prospective Chinese students information on the discipline-specific language and communication requirements, such as on websites of departments, educational portals¹¹, as well as the supplementary language courses offered by some subjects mentioned in section 6.2.2. Moreover, the senior students are potentially valuable resources, especially for the prospective Chinese freshmen. In addition to the official information offered by universities and faculties, the students further along in their studies normally are willing to share their personal experiences with the lower grade students. These personal experiences, whether existing guidance or sincere exhortation, may help the new-comers avoid detours in interaction with German teachers and shorten the time of trial in the study, thus, enabling them to study at German universities with fewer concerns and errors.

Thirdly, it is also significant for Chinese students to develop personal potential by fully using of the existing resources and personal experiences. The findings of the fifth research question show that some personal experiences of Chinese students, such as their work experience and living status, more or less affected their communication at the university. The students who took these experiences as a chance to improve personal communicative ability normally expressed fewer communication concerns with German teachers. Therefore, it is highly recommended that prospective Chinese students try to make the most of the situation and resources around them. All experiences, whether from a part-time job or a conversation with roommates, can be both challenges and good opportunities for self-improvement, which will eventually be beneficial to the performance at universities.

Last, but not the least, the key to smooth communication for Chinese students with German teachers and a successful study in Germany lies in a positive attitude and self-confidence, as indicated in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.3), which has been recommended by many studies focusing on the overseas study of Chinese students (e.g. Guan, 2007; Liu, 2009; Wang, 2010; Zhu, 2012). According to the findings of

¹¹ Educational Portal is a discipline-based platform offered by most of the German universities. Students at the same faculty can share the studying materials, resources and experiences on this platform.

the fifth research question shown in chapter 5, as time goes on, Chinese students had fewer concerns in communication with the increased knowledge and experience that they acquired with age, the growing length of residence, and academical level. Particularly, Chinese students who were in the final phase of their studies regarded the previous difficulties in study and communication with German teachers as “a milestone of an individual’s life story, marking the moment of greatest crisis and despair but also the turning point of a new start” (Griffiths, Winstanley, & Gabriel, 2005:277). Thus, it is crucial for prospective students to always maintain an enterprising attitude and consider the process of difficulties instructively as the learning process, and to ultimately learn from it and grow from it.

With the growing number of Chinese students in German universities, it is necessary for German teachers to have some knowledge about the learning and communication habits of Chinese students in order to minimize the potential concerns in communication. For instance, trainings of intercultural communication competence emphasizing on Chinese or Asian culture (e.g. Byram, 1997; Schumann, 2007; Brunner & Ivanova, 2015) and overseas teaching exchange programs in China are useful ways to help German teachers acquire knowledge about how to communicate with Chinese students. An efficient communication depends not only on the change of communicative habits from the aspects of Chinese students, but German teachers should also adjust their communicative approach appropriately according to the characteristics of Chinese students. As explored in the findings of the sixth research question in chapter 5, Chinese students pointed out that German teachers who had overseas experiences in China normally show more understanding and patience for Chinese students in communication and were easy for Chinese students to communicate with. This finding proves that German teachers have the potential willingness and competence to establish a good communication with Chinese students. It also explains that the mutual understanding between two cultures plays an active role in promoting the quality of communication with each other.

For example, it is beneficial for German teachers to have a deeper insight of the communicative style of different genders and different academic levels of Chinese students, so that they can communicate with Chinese students with more confidence and fewer concerns. Moreover, the communicative habits and language ability based on different fields of study also deserve serious attention of German teachers. As found out in chapter 5 (see section 5.8.2.1), Chinese students majoring in social sciences were expected to have a better command of language competence than the students in the field of natural sciences. Thus, German teachers in the field of social sciences should give Chinese students more patience and encouragement in communication. Through such knowledge and understanding about Chinese students, German teachers can enhance the cultural sensibility in communication with Chinese students and further discover the potential competence for improving the quality of communication.

Above all, communication is a process of mutual interaction and cognition (Zhang, 2014). Chinese students and German teachers should both try to understand each other in communication and make an appropriate adjustment of their communicative behavior to integrate each other into the interaction (Zhu, 2012:249). As long as the both sides of communication have a correct perception of self and a rational expectation of the other side, and understand and learn from each other, the communication between them can develop smoothly.

6.2.5 Summary of the interpretations and inspirations

The findings of this study can be summarized into four segments (in Table 6.2), which stand for four primary observations of the findings. Each observation segment includes the interpretation of the results and the corresponding inspirations, as well as suggestions based on the content of the interpretations. In particular, each interpretation of the research results stands for one primary cause of the communication concerns discovered in this study and is presented as the strengths and

the missing abilities of Chinese students and German teachers. On this basis, some suitable suggestions for each group is provided.

As presented in Table 6.2, the first observation points out that the cultural differences between communication in Germany and China are one of the causes that resulted in the concerns of Chinese students and German teachers in their communication. The findings show that Chinese students appeared nervous and restrained in the German communication context because they did not know how to manage the different communication requirements and standards between the Chinese and the German communicative culture. As a result, it is shown that Chinese students lack the self-confidence to adapt to the communication with German teachers quickly. The sense of insecurity and sensitivity resulted from the lack of confidence of Chinese students, in turn, also caused their German teachers a certain level of concerns in communication.

However, the findings also show that Chinese students did not complain about the cultural differences that they encountered in Germany, but rather explained that they were willing to gradually adjust their communicative behavior in order to better communicate with German teachers. This illustrates that most of the Chinese students were flexible, tolerant to difficulties, and respect to the German culture, which are considered as the strengths for adjusting individual strategies in communication in a new culture (Song, 2009; Bennett, 2009). In addition, the results also show that German teachers did not emphasize on the cultural differences among students in communication, which manifests that German teachers are more likely to treat students equally and willing to help students.

On the basis of the strengths and missing abilities of Chinese students and German teachers discovered above, an inspiration suggested for both groups is to seek the cultural commonalities of each other while respecting the differences in their communication. More specifically, Chinese students and German teachers are suggested to establish a communication based on the commonalities of each other.

Particularly, Chinese student should hold a positive attitude in communication and be confident that they have the potential ability to conduct a good conversation with German teachers. In order to help Chinese students to communicate with German teachers based on a common ground, it is suggested for Chinese students to have a good knowledge about the communication at German universities before their studies begin. In this regard, it is recommended to combine the language teaching and the German communicative culture teaching together in the stage of language learning of Chinese students. Moreover, it is also necessary for Chinese students to have a deep understanding about the different requirements of communication in different disciplines. Therefore, coaching supports offered by faculties or universities, such as orientation programs, are practical methods for Chinese student to understand the requirements and expectations of German teachers in different subjects and to conduct a targeted communication accordingly.

When the concerns caused by cultural differences arise, Chinese students are suggested to maintain the positive attitude toward the communication and hold the belief that they have the ability to overcome the difficulties. The corresponding suggestions and strategies for German teachers to help Chinese students are to offer support and empathy, and show understanding and trust. As some Chinese students noted in the study, encouragement and support of German teachers can help them to weaken the fear of cultural differences and build self-confidence again. Additionally, it is also significant for German teachers to take the culture specific communicative style of Chinese students into consideration and reflect it into the communication with Chinese students, which is conducive to improve the engagement of both sides in communication.

The second observation of the findings is regarding the language ability of Chinese students discovered in this study. The findings display that although Chinese students passed the language test required by German universities and had the ability to communicate with others in Germany, which are considered as the strengths of

Chinese students, their language ability still cannot fully meet the demands of barrier-free communication with German teachers and peer non-Chinese speaking students. The language-related communication barriers, such as insufficient vocabularies, restrict listening, and speaking skills, were revealed as the major language problems of Chinese students and hindered them from fully participating in the communication. Because of the non-confidence in language ability, some Chinese students did not like to interact with German teachers in class, and, therefore, stayed in “silence”. Although it is found that the German teachers realized the insufficient language ability of Chinese students and understood that they did not like to express personal opinions openly, the “silence” and overcautious behaviors of some Chinese students in class still caused the concerns of German teachers to some extent.

In order to weaken the language-related concerns, some suggestions are put forward for both groups. Chinese students are suggested to build a good language foundation in the stage of language learning before their studies begin. In addition, some subject-specific language knowledge offered by preparatory and supplementary language courses of faculties are also highly recommended for Chinese students, which can help them to adapt to the communication and study in specific subject quickly. It is also necessary for Chinese students to keep learning the foreign language during their studies in order to constantly adjust to the new communication demands. Some learning methods, such as learning with language partners and avoiding always staying with Chinese-speaking peers, are suggested for Chinese students. This study recommends German teachers to give emotional supports to Chinese students in order to encourage them to express personal ideas in foreign languages. Moreover, German teachers are also suggested to take some measures to guide Chinese students to actively communicate by using foreign languages, such as asking Chinese students to work with non-Chinese speaking students in group activities.

The third observation focuses on the communication concerns caused by different teaching and learning styles between Germany and China discovered in this

study. It is found that most of the Chinese students communicated with German teachers according to the Chinese-style learning habits, which they were accustomed to and believed were “correct” behaviors in interacting with teachers. However, some “correct” behaviors of Chinese students based on the Chinese culture turn out to be “inappropriate” for the classroom communication in Germany, which caused German teachers a certain degree of concerns. The concerns shown by German teachers in communication, in turn, emotionally affected the performance of Chinese students, which led to the communication barriers of both sides.

Although some misunderstandings existed in communication, both Chinese students and German teachers appeared to possess the strength to overcome the concerns caused by the misunderstandings. For example, Chinese students indicated that they were trying to adjust their learning habits to the German educational context and were willing to interact with German teachers based on the mutual understanding. German teachers also discovered the efforts shown by Chinese students through the experiences of communicating with Chinese students, and were willing to offer help.

Therefore, on the basis of the strength of both groups, a task-oriented communication method is recommended. Both Chinese students and German teachers are suggested to focus on the contents of communication tasks rather than being emotionally influenced by the behavior of each other. Specifically, Chinese students are recommended to take notes during the communication so that they can concentrate on the communicative contents. Give that communicating with German teachers during office hours has fewer interruption than in class, Chinese students are also suggested make good use of the office hours to communicate with teachers as much as possible. Accordingly, in order to help Chinese students concentrate on tasks, German teachers need to guide students properly and dominate the direction of communications. For this purpose, the “checklist” designed by Mehlhorn (2005) (see Table 6.1, p.314) for foreign students to establish contacts with German students at German universities, particularly some concrete methods mentioned in the “checklist”,

are suggested for German teachers as a reference for starting and keeping conversations with Chinese students. In addition, group discussion is also a practical way for German teachers to train Chinese students to communicate actively based on tasks. In order to involve Chinese students more in discussions and encourage them to speak, discussion topics selected by German teachers are suggested to be well known and have a wide range of participation of students so that Chinese students can have a chance to join the discussion. German teachers are also suggested to raise some questions that can involve the feeling of Chinese students with the purpose to stimulating Chinese students' desire to communicate with others.

The fourth observation of this study emphasizes on the influence of personal factors and experiences of Chinese students and German teachers on their communication revealed in this study. The findings show that most of the personal factors of Chinese students involved in this study, such as their gender, age, academic level, the length of residence, and work experience in Germany, appeared to have significant influence on their communication with German teachers. Similarly, it is also found that the levels of German teachers' concerns in communication with Chinese students appeared differently based on the different personal experiences, such as their fields of study, instructional languages, and overseas experiences in China. However, the potential benefit resulted from these personal experiences to communication was not fully realized and utilized by Chinese students and German teachers, which manifested as the result that they ignored the opportunities of mutual understanding and underestimated personal potentials in communication. For instance, Chinese students did not fully realize their different communication features and habits based on different genders and fields of study, so that they lacked a correct self-knowledge. And likewise, some German teachers did not take full advantage of their overseas experience in China to promote better understanding and communication with Chinese students.

Nevertheless, the findings also show that both Chinese students and German

teachers expressed their wishes for learning more about each other so as to develop good interactions. Given their desire of communication and their potential ability discovered from personal experiences, some suggestions are provided for both groups. First of all, Chinese students are suggested to have a clear understanding of individual communication characteristics and habits, which is considered as the foundation of self-enhancement and the basis of establishing a communication with others (e.g. Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Falbo et al., 1997; Song, 2009). In addition, a realistic expectation of the subject-specific requirements of communication is also necessary for Chinese students to have a deep insight of so that they can have an idea about the ability, which they still need to improve to meet the requirement. For this purpose, methods such as coaching programs, preparatory and supplementary language courses offered by faculties are recommended again to Chinese students to help them to enhance personal communication skills as much as possible. Moreover, it is also beneficial for Chinese students to learn lessons from the experiences of senior students, which can help Chinese freshmen avoid many detours during their studies. Last but not the least, Chinese students are always advised to hold a positive attitude toward the communication with German teachers and be confident to overcome any difficulty occurred in the process of learning. A successful communication relies on the efforts of both sides. Therefore, in order to provide Chinese students corresponding supports in interactions, it is also important for German teachers to have a good understanding of Chinese students, which can be acquired from their teaching experiences and through some methods, such as relevant research findings related to Chinese students, intercultural training focusing on the Chinese culture, etc. Only with “mutual understanding” and interaction between Chinese students and German teachers can they realize the “mutual winning” of their communication (Zhang, 2014:247f; Lande, 2017).

Table 6.2: Summary of the interpretations, inspirations, and suggestions of the research findings

	Interpretations		Inspirations and suggestions
1.	<i>Overemphasis on cultural differences in communication</i>		<i>Seeking common grounds while respecting differences</i>
Chinese students	<p><u><i>Strength:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility - Tolerant to frustration - Respect to unfamiliar cultures 	<p><u><i>Missing ability:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overemphasis on differences - To overcome restrained behavior - Self-confidence in new environment - To adapt to the new communication and study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holding and maintaining a positive attitude - The potential competencies for the openness to a new culture - Being well prepared before the study in Germany - Intercultural communication competence in the language learning - Fully utilizing resources after the study - Coaching supports offered by universities and faculties - Valuing the common grounds with German teachers - Being prepared for concerns caused by cultural differences
German teachers	<p><u><i>Strength:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Openness to students - Willingness to help 	<p><u><i>Missing ability:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affected by students' reserved behaviors - Overlook the differences among students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering support and empathy (e.g. encouragements and supports) - Showing the understanding and trust - Helping students to weaken the fear of cultural differences - Helping students to build self-confidence - Being aware of culture specific communication style of Chinese students
2.	<i>Being restrained by the language ability in communication</i>		<i>Language is as a tool for communication rather than the end</i>
Chinese students	<p><u><i>Strength:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reached the standard of language tests - The ability to communication 	<p><u><i>Missing ability:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-confidence in communication - Insufficient vocabulary - Restrict listening and speaking skills - Unable to fully participate in communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Laying emphasis on language learning before the study - Preparatory and supplementary foreign language courses - Keeping on learning language throughout the whole study process - Avoiding staying in Chinese communities constantly - Learning languages with language partners
German teachers	<p><u><i>Strength:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding of the limited verbal ability of Chinese students 	<p><u><i>Missing ability:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confused by the "silence" and cautiousness of Chinese students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging Chinese students to speak - Emotional support (e.g. praise and encouragement) - Guiding Chinese students to work with non-Chinese students

3.	<i>Misunderstanding of teaching and learning habits</i>		<i>Task-oriented communication</i>
Chinese students	<u>Strength:</u> - Respect to German teaching styles - Willing to change and interact	<u>Missing ability:</u> - Different teaching and learning habits - Bound by Chinese learning habits - To overcome the sensitive feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focusing on the content of communicative tasks - Taking notes in communication - Making the most of the office hours - Being well prepared before the communication
German teachers	<u>Strength:</u> - Willing to complete tasks with students - Teaching experiences and practices	<u>Missing ability:</u> - Unfamiliar with Chinese learning and teaching style - Easy to misunderstand Chinese students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guiding Chinese students to concentrate on communicative tasks - Dominating the communication direction - The “checklist” of establishing contact with foreign students (Mehlhorn, 2005:21) - Involving Chinese students more in group discussions - Initiating topics for a broad participation of students - Raising questions to Chinese students and involving their feelings
4.	<i>Underestimation the role of personal factors in communication</i>		<i>Fully realizing the personal potential in communication</i>
Chinese students	<u>Strength:</u> - Potentials of self-improvement - Readiness to learn and to adjust - Respect for the German culture	<u>Missing ability:</u> - Underestimating personal potentials - Lack of clear self-knowledge - Lack of motivation to interact - Ignored the potential opportunities of self-improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-awareness of the communication features - Realistic self-expectation of the study - Fully preparing for the discipline-specific learning requirements - Learning from the experiences of senior students/supplementary language courses/ coaching programs - Learning from personal experiences - Being confident and positive - Taking all the chances to train personal communication skills
German teachers	<u>Strength:</u> - Willing to know more about Chinese students - Longing for communication	<u>Missing ability:</u> - Lack of the in-depth knowledge about Chinese students - Neglected personal potentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning more about Chinese students from relevant studies - Intercultural communication training/ teaching exchange in China - Learning to benefit from personal experiences - Mutual understanding in communication

6.3 Reflections and perspectives

In this section, the strengths and a few limitations of the present study are summarized. Additionally, some recommendations based on the restrictions of this study are provided for future studies in order to refine the correlative research.

6.3.1 Strength

First, this study explores the communication between Chinese students and their German teachers in Germany by applying mixed research approaches. The findings answer the six research questions presented in chapter 3 (see section 3.1.1), and are supportive of the assumption that Chinese students and German teachers expressed different concerns in their communication.

In addition, this research extends the scope of research objects and pays substantial attention to the comparison of Chinese students' communication with German teachers between China and Germany. The communication with German teachers in China and in Germany tend to cause different psychological and behavioral impact on Chinese students. Nevertheless, as indicated in the research background in chapter 1 (see section 1.1), few studies have explored the communication of Chinese students based on the transformation of cultural and language background. The results of this study reveal that the change of the communicative environment caused the changes of communicative habits and culture, which, as a result, led to the increase of Chinese students' concerns when communicating with German teachers in Germany.

Furthermore, this study achieved the goal of exploring the communication of Chinese students in an intensive way. As introduced in chapter 1 (section 1.1 (2)), the previous studies regarding Chinese students' communication in Germany were mainly conducted from the perspective of students, such as Chinese students' communication

with German students. German teachers also play an essential role in the study of Chinese students. However, the communication between Chinese students and German teachers has not been well studied. Based on such a background, the present study has probed into the communication between Chinese students and German teachers and listened to the concerns of both sides attentively.

Last but not the least, this study applied a mixed survey to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and employed the methods by combining both the qualitative and quantitative analysis. The double data classification standards ensured the data processing concretely and accurately. Previous studies often estimated the communication problems of Chinese students from the perspectives of psychology and language by applying mostly quantitative analysis. Given that communication is a process of subjective interaction, it is also important to understand the subjective emotions, the perception of concerns, and considerable experiences of Chinese students and German teachers in their communication. The results demonstrated that the qualitative method adopted in this study is necessary and contributory to the integrity of the research.

6.3.2 Limitation

(1) The process of data collection

Firstly, 123 Chinese students and 34 German teachers represented a sample of fairly small size. The findings cannot be readily generalized to the populations of all Chinese students and all German teachers of other universities.

Moreover, taking the scope of this study into consideration, the researcher could not take account of all characteristics of the participants, such as previous educational experiences, family backgrounds, and regional differences in China. Although the researcher has listed the demographic questions related to communication concerns as comprehensive as possible, given the privacy issues and

sensitive topics, the demographic variables selected in this research were not all-sided. For instance, as revealed in the interviews with Chinese students, the researcher realized that their previous intercultural and abroad experiences, even a short trip abroad, could play a role in their interaction with German teachers, which, however, were not taken as a variable factor into account.

Finally, ideally, four target research objects should have involved in this study, namely, Chinese students studying in Germany and in China, as well as German teachers working in Germany and in China. Considering the limited conditions of this study, only three target groups (German teachers in Germany, Chinese students in Germany and in China) involved in the research investigation. Thus, this study could not conduct the complete parallel comparison, which requires the future improvement.

(2) The definition of data categorization

To classify the data into different concerns categories and communication barriers, a two-folded classification system was applied in this study, consisting of three communication concerns categories (Self, Task, and Impact) and four potential communication barriers categories (Language, Knowledge, Emotional, and Perceptual barriers), as shown in chapter 3 (section 3.4.2.2). Considering the categories of communication barriers were developed during the research process, the external validity¹² of the system needs to be further verified.

In addition, the communication concerns model (Station-Spicer & Bassett, 1979) applied in this study was originally developed in the context of instructional communication. Therefore, the categories of the concerns laid more stress on the speaker rather than the listener. Considering that communication was defined as a two-way process in this study, the concerns from the listener's perspective were overlooked. For instance, other than the concerns regarding how to communicate with

¹² External validity here refers to the validity of the data categorization to other situations and to other study population.

teachers, Chinese students expressed that they were also concerned with how they were treated by German teachers.

6.3.3 Suggestions for future research

In light of the reflections of this study mentioned above, some suggestions and prospects for future research are put forward.

First of all, given the sample size of the current study, a more inclusive sample is suggested to future studies, which could be realized by involving students and teachers from more than one university. In this way, the external validity of findings would be enhanced. Additionally, in order to increase the answer rate of research participants and to minimize the self-selection bias, especially the participation rate of teachers, it is recommended for future studies to be conducted with the help of faculties and universities, rather than by an individual researcher.

In addition, future studies in the field of intercultural communication should also focus equally on both communicating parties. In other words, they should not simply pay attention to the perception of the speakers but also to that of the listeners, with the purpose of reflecting the interactive nature of the communication process. Based on this, the concerns classification system applied in this study should be further refined to suit the more complex communication process.

Furthermore, this study achieved a comparison of the communication between Chinese students and German teachers at German universities. The findings of this study discovered the concerns expressed by both sides and further explored the reasons for their concerns. On the basis of the discovered findings, future studies are suggested to explore possible strategies to prevent and avoid the concerns reoccurring between Chinese students and German teachers and try to solve the potential communication problems in the first place. Some research questions, such as how can Chinese universities help Chinese students be better prepared for studying in

Germany before students going aboard? and how to integrate culture teaching and intercultural communication competence into the German language teaching?, are the potential research emphases suggested for future studies.

Overall, in light of the above points, by using the communication concerns discovered in this study as a beginning point, ongoing research should involve a large sample size, try to explore the conditions of Chinese students in China (such as the preparations before going aboard), and reflect the interactive and complex process of teacher-student communication, in order to understand Chinese students' communication with foreign teachers from a more comprehensive perspective.

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Appendix A

Concerns categories of the items in section III and section IV of the questionnaires

Concern Category	Item No.		Concern Statements	Potential Barrier
	III	IV		
			<i>I am concerned that...</i>	
Concerns about Self behavior	1	17	I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared to my teacher.	P
	2	18	I feel nervous when talking to my teachers.	E-V
	3		My silence in class makes my teachers think that I am unintelligent or unconcerned.	E-N
	15		I feel nervous to speak in class because I may ask something sounds stupid due to my lack of knowledge of the topic.	K
		19	I cannot be honest with my teachers without being uncomfortable.	P
		20	I do not feel comfortable talking to my teachers about non-academic topics.	E-V
		21	My teachers do not enjoy talking with me.	P
		22	My teachers would underestimate me because of my defective communication ability.	P
		24	I do not feel comfortable joking with my teachers.	E-V
		37	My teachers would underestimate me because of my lack of knowledge of the topics.	P
	38	My knowledge is not enough to discuss comfortably with teachers alone.	K	
Concerns about Task	4	25	Although I think I understood what teachers said, it turns out later that I do not understand the real meaning of what he/she said.	L-L
	6	27	I do not know how to express my answers to the questions of my teachers in an appropriate way.	L-S
	7	28	I am unable to express my dissatisfaction/request to my teachers.	E-V
	8	29	I do not understand the humor my teachers use during our conversations.	P
	9		Grammatical errors bother me when I speak in class.	L-S

	10	30	I have to construct a complete English/German sentence in my mind before actually saying it.	L-S
	11		I am unable to make good notes during lectures.	L-L
	12		I do not understand the assignment assigned by my teachers in class.	L-L
	16		I cannot engage in class because my knowledge is not enough for the discussion in class.	K
		31	I cannot look at my teacher directly in the eyes with a sense of comfort.	E-N
		32	It is difficult to defend my opinions in individual meetings with my teachers.	E-N
		23	My hypertension/overstress has a bad impact on my teachers during our conversations.	E-N
	5	26	My knowledge about the lecture/topic makes my teachers confused.	K
Concerns about the Impact of one's behavior on others	13	33	My teachers cannot immediately understand what I say.	L-S
		34	My teachers cannot feel my full respect to him/her.	P
	14	35	I may offend my teachers because my behaviors are not appropriate in the German communication culture.	P
		36	Showing respect to my teachers by following her/his opinions, which makes she/he think that I am not assertive.	P

Note:

1. Concern statements presented in this table are based on Appendix B (Questionnaire Distributed to Chinese Students in Germany).
2. This concern category is applicable to Appendixes B, C, and D
3. **Concern category** refers to (1) concerns about **Self** as a communicator (2) concerns about the **Task** of communicating (3) concerns about the **Impact** of one's communication on others (Fuller, 1969; Staton-Spicer & Bassett, 1979; Bauer, 1992; Feezel & Myers, 1997).
4. The **Item No.** refers to the item number of concern statements in section III and section IV of the questionnaire.
5. The potential barriers designed for each concern statement in section III and section IV are categorized into:
 - (1) Language-related barriers (barriers of Speaking (**L-S**) or Listening (**L-L**))
 - (2) Academic knowledge-based barriers (**K**)
 - (3) Emotion-based barriers (barriers due to Verbal process (**E-V**) or Non-verbal (**E-N**) process)
 - (4) Perception-based barriers (**P**)

Appendix B

Questionnaire Distributed to Chinese Students in Germany

Dear fellow student, 亲爱的同学,

I hope this letter finds you successful in your study in Germany and you enjoy the opportunity of living and studying in the German culture. As a Chinese student studying in Germany, I understand that some of you have experienced some difficulties in study, which are caused by the ineffective communication with German teachers. This letter is closely connected with the problems and worries shared by all of us from China in communication with our German teachers.

见此信希望你在德国的学习生活顺利并享受亲身体验德国文化的机会。同样作为中国学生，我了解到一些中国学生在学习中面临一些困难，这些困难是由与德国老师间不太成功的交际而引起的。这封信的内容正是与我们中国学生与德国老师的交际问题有关。

I am writing to ask you for your kind help in my doctoral research project. The aim of my project is to investigate the concerns, worries, and thoughts that we Chinese students may have in communication with German teachers in Germany. Please fill out this questionnaire, which is regarding your concerns in communication with your German teachers either in class or in one-on-one conversations. Your answers to the questionnaire will provide valuable data to help both Chinese students and German teachers to interact more effectively with each other in the future.

我写这封信的目的是想请你帮助我的博士研究。我研究的目的是想探究中国学生与德国老师间交际的顾虑，担忧，及相关想法。请填写一份有关你与德国老师交际顾虑的调查问卷，交际情境设定为课上交际和一对一交际。你的问卷结果将对本研究提供非常有价值的的数据，并会促进中国学生和德国老师间更有效的交际。

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You may notice that the questionnaire is marked with a code number. This code number identifies your questionnaire and is used only for record keeping purposes. The code number is known only to me, and I alone have access to it. Your German teachers will not have any access to the data you provided.

你提供的信息会严格的保密。每份问卷会用编码标注。此编码仅为我所知，以便识别你的问卷，并仅为此用。你的德国老师不会得知你提供的任何数据。

If you have any question regarding the nature of this research, please feel free to contact me at (E-mail address) and I will be happy to answer them.

如果你对此研究有任何问题，欢迎随时发邮联系我(邮箱地址)，我非常愿意回答任何疑问。

I very much appreciate your time and cooperation!

真诚的感谢你对此付出的时间和精力！

Sincerely, 祝好,

Lei Huang 黄蕾

SECTION I: Background information 第一部分：个人信息

Please circle the appropriate options. 请选择合适的选项。

1. Your gender 您的性别是
1) Male 男 2) Female 女
2. Your age 您的年龄是
1) under 23 23 岁以下 2) 23-27 23-27 岁
3) 28-32 28-32 岁 4) over 32 大于 32 岁
3. How long have you been studying in Germany? 您在德国学习多久了?
1) 2 years and less ≤ 2 年 2) 2 years to 3 years 2-3 年之间
3) 3 years to 4 years 3-4 年之间 4) More than 4 years ≥ 4 年
4. What academic level are you pursuing for? 您在德国攻读什么学位? (If you have already graduated, what academic level did you study in the German university? 如果您已毕业, 您之前德国大学攻读什么学位?)
1) Teaching Profession Study/Lehramtsstudium/Staatexamen 教师资格教育
2) Bachelor's Degree 学士学位 3) Master's Degree 硕士学位
4) Doctor Title 博士学位 5) Post-Doctoral Research 博士后研究
5. How do you support your study in Germany? 您如何负担在德国的学费与生活费?
1) I am supported by my family/parents. 家庭/父母资助。
2) By myself. Saving, working, etc. 通过打工或存款等自己承担。
3) I have a scholarship. 我有奖学金。
4) Bank load. 通过银行贷款。
6. In which faculty do/did you enroll in? 您所属的院系是?
1) Natural Sciences (e.g. Physics, Chemistry, Geography) 自然科学
2) Agricultural Sciences (e.g. Agriculture, Forestry) 农学
3) Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing 医学/护理
4) Engineering (e.g., ME, IE, EE) 机械工程
5) Humanities and Social Sciences (e.g. Language, Law, Literature, Economics, Politics, Education, Philosophy, Art) 人文与社会科学
The language of instruction is 授课语言是 _____
7. Do you work (e.g. part-time, TA¹, RA²) besides your study? 您在学习之余有工作或兼职吗?
1) Yes 是的 2) No 没有
8. During your study, you live in Germany _____ 您在德国_____
1) alone 一个人住 2) with family 和家人一起住
3) in student dormitory with Chinese students 在学生宿舍与其他中国学生一起
4) in student dormitory with non-Chinese students 在学生宿舍与国际学生一起

¹ TA: Teaching Assistant. This position normally offered by University or Professor.

² RA: Research Assistant. This position normally offered by University or Professor.

SECTION II: Personal communication concerns 第二部分：个人顾虑描述

Please write down as many comments as you can think of concerning what you are concerned about. You can write in English, German or Chinese.

请尽可能详尽的描述你在交谈时的所有顾虑。可用英语，德语或中文描述。

Please think about the situations when you talk to your German teacher(s) in class/group meetings or during your one-on-one conversations. What do you concern about the communication? What are your worries during the interactions? What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns?

当你和德国老师在课堂上或是单独交谈时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？在交谈中你的担忧又是什么？为什么在和德国老师交流时有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

Question 1: 问题 1:

When I am speaking with my German teacher in class, I am concerned that...

在与德国老师课上的交谈中你的担忧是什么？

- What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns? 为什么有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

Question 2: 问题 2:

When I am speaking with my German teacher in an out-of-class situation, I am concerned that... 在课下，当我与德国老师一对一交流时，我担心。。。。

- What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns? 为什么有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

Question 3: 问题 3:

Please think about your concerns and worries when talking to your Chinese teachers in China. What are the differences between talking to Chinese teachers and to German teachers regarding your feelings, approaches to dialogue, and worries? Why do these differences appear to you?

请想一想当你在中国与中国老师交流时的情境，与目前在德国与德国老师交流有什么不同吗？与中国老师交流相比，和德国老师交流你有哪些特别的担心和顾虑吗？在心境感受，交流方式，担心或烦恼上有哪些不同吗？为什么存在这些差异呢？

Comparing talking to my Chinese teachers and to my German teachers, I am especially concerned that... 与中国老师交流相比，和德国老师交流你有哪些特别的担心和顾虑吗？

- What are the differences between talking to Chinese teachers and to German teachers regarding your feelings, approaches to dialogue, and worries? 在心境感受，交流方式，担心或烦恼上有哪些不同吗？

- Why do these differences appear to you? 为什么存在这些差异呢？

SECTION III: Communication concerns during lectures/in class/in group meetings 第三部分：在德国课堂上/集体交际时的顾虑

Think about when you are attending a lecture or group/lab meeting taught by your German teachers. What are your concerns about expressing your ideas during the lecture/meeting? Please choose the number indicating how often you have that particular concern in communication.

当你和德国老师在课堂上/课题组会议交流时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？请选择相应的虑程度数字选项，来表示你自身对此项顾虑的存在程度。

Scale 程度	Description 程度示意
1	This is <u>never</u> a concern of mine. 这 从不是 我的顾虑。
2	This is <u>rarely</u> a concern of mine. 这 很少 是我的顾虑。
3	This is <u>sometimes</u> a concern of mine. 这 有时 是我的顾虑。
4	This is <u>often</u> a concern of mine. 这 时常 是我的顾虑。
5	This is <u>always</u> a concern of mine. 这 一直 是我的顾虑。

Note: All the following 16 statements are followed by “I am concerned that.....”

注意：以下所有 16 个选项都是以“**我担心是否...**”为前提

从不 *Never*... *Always* 一直

1.	I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared in my teacher's class. 在课上我表现出既有见解及准备充分。	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel nervous when talking to my teacher in front of my classmates. 在全班同学面前与老师交谈，我会感到紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My silence in class makes my teacher think that I am unintelligent or unconcerned. 我在课上沉默令老师认为我无知或轻视课程。	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Although I think I understood what the teacher said in class, it turns out later that I do not understand the real meaning of what he/she said. 虽然在课上我觉得我理解了所有内容，但之后我才发现并不真正理解老师讲的内容。	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My knowledge about the lecture makes my teacher confused during our discussions. 我对课程内容的理解让老师感到迷惑。	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I do not know how to express my ideas to my teacher's questions in an appropriate way. 我不知怎样恰当的回答老师的问题。	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I am unable to express my dissatisfaction/request (concerning the lecture) to my teacher in class. 我不敢表达我对课程的不满。	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I do not understand the humor my teacher used during lectures. 我无法理解老师在课上使用的幽默方式。	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Grammatical errors bother me when I speak in class. 我担心一说英语/德语就要出语法错误。	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have to construct a complete English/German sentence in my mind before I actually say it. 在说话之前，我一定预先想好要说的整个英语/德语的句子。	1	2	3	4	5

11.	I am unable to take good notes during lectures. 我无法对课程内容做好笔记。	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I don't understand the assignment my teacher assigned in class. 我不能理解老师在课上布置的任务。	1	2	3	4	5
13.	It seems that my teacher cannot understand immediately what I said in class. 老师似乎不能马上正确理解我想表达的意思。	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I may offend my teachers because my behaviors are not appropriate in a German classroom. 因为我的行为不适合德国的课堂习惯，因而冒犯老师。	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel nervous to speak in class because I may ask something stupid due to my lack of knowledge of the topics. 由于对课程知识不熟悉，我不敢发言，怕被人嘲笑。	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I cannot engage in class because my knowledge is not enough for the discussion in class. 由于背景知识不够，我无法参与到课堂活动中。	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION IV: Communication concerns in one-on-one conversations

第四部分：与德国老师一对一交际时的顾虑

Think about when you are talking to your German teachers in one-on-one situations. What are your concerns about communicating with him/her? Please choose the number indicating how often you have that particular concern.

当你和德国老师一对一单独交流时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？请选择相应的顾虑程度数字选项，来表示你自身对此项顾虑的存在程度。

Scale 程度	Meanings 程度示意
1	This is <i>never</i> a concern of mine. 这 从不是 我的顾虑。
2	This is <i>rarely</i> a concern of mine. 这 很少 是我的顾虑。
3	This is <i>sometimes</i> a concern of mine. 这 有时 是我的顾虑。
4	This is <i>often</i> a concern of mine. 这 时常 是我的顾虑。
5	This is <i>always</i> a concern of mine. 这 一直 是我的顾虑。

Note: All the following 22 statements are followed by "I am concerned that....."

注意：以下所有 22 个选项都是以“**我担心是否。。。。**”为前提

从不 *Never*...*Always* 一直

17.	I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared to my teacher. 在与老师交谈时，我表现得既有见解又准备充分。	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I feel nervous when talking to my teacher alone. 在单独谈话时我会感到很紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I cannot be honest with my teacher without being uncomfortable. 单独交谈时，我不能自在坦诚的面对老师。	1	2	3	4	5
20.	I do not feel comfortable when I talk with German teachers about non-academic topics. 在与老师谈论非学术方面的话题时，我会	1	2	3	4	5

	感到不自在。					
21.	My teacher does not enjoy talking to me. 老师不喜欢和我谈话。	1	2	3	4	5
22.	My teacher underestimates me because of my defective communication ability. 因为我的沟通能力,老师会低估我的实际水平。	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My hypertension/overstress has a bad impact on my teacher during our conversations. 与老师私下谈话时,我表现得过于紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I do not feel comfortable joking with my teacher. 与老师开玩笑时我会感到不自在。	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Although I think I understood what the teacher said, it turns out later that I do not understand the real meaning of what he/she said. 虽然当时我觉得我理解了老师说的内容,但之后我才发现其实并不是真正理解。	1	2	3	4	5
26.	My knowledge about the topic makes my teacher confused during our conversations.我对话题内容的理解让老师感到迷惑。	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I do not know how to phrase an answer to my teacher's questions in an appropriate way in one-on-one conversations. 单独交谈时,我不知道如何以恰当的方式来回答老师的问题。	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I am unable to express my dissatisfaction/request (concerning academic issues) to my teacher in one-on-one conversations. 单独交谈时,我不敢表达我关于学术问题的要求或不满。	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I do not understand when my teacher is being humorous in one-on-one contacts. 我无法理解单独交谈时老师运用的幽默。	1	2	3	4	5
30.	When speaking to my teacher, I have to construct a complete English/German sentence in my mind before actually saying it.单独和导师谈话前,我一定预先想好要说的整个英语/德语句子。	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I cannot look at my teacher directly in the eyes with a sense of comfort. 我无法自在的直视老师的眼睛。	1	2	3	4	5
32.	It is difficult to defend my opinions in individual meetings because of my language ability. 在与老师单独交谈时,我感到很难为自己的观点辩护。	1	2	3	4	5
33.	It seems that my teacher cannot understand immediately what I say when we talk alone.老师似乎不能马上理解我想表达的意思。	1	2	3	4	5
34.	My teacher cannot feel my full respect to him/her. 我担心老师会觉得我没有对他/她给予全部的尊重。	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I may offend my teacher because my behaviors are not appropriate in the German communication culture. 由于我的行为不适合德国文化而冒犯了老师。	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Showing respect to my teacher by following her/his opinions, which makes he/she think that I am not assertive. 通过赞同老师的观点来表示我的尊重,这会使老师觉得我没有个人主见。	1	2	3	4	5
37.	My teacher would underestimate me because of my lack of knowledge of the topics. 由于背景知识不足,我怕导师会轻视我。	1	2	3	4	5

38.	My knowledge is not enough to discuss comfortably with my teacher alone. 担心我背景知识不足与导师顺畅的单独谈话。	1	2	3	4	5
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SECTION V: Potential causes for the communication concerns

第五部分：交际顾虑存在的原因

Please think about the reasons why you may not be successful in communicating with German teachers. You may choose more than one explanation.

请思考您与德国老师交际不成功可能存在的原因。您可以选择多个选项。

1. I choose to remain silent after my teacher asks a question in class, because 老师在课堂提问后我选择保持沉默，是因为
 - 1) I do not understand the question; therefore, I have nothing to say.
我不理解老师的问题，所以无话可说。
 - 2) I understand the question, but I just do not know what to say.
我虽明白问题，但觉得没什么好说的。
 - 3) I do not know/am not sure how to express my ideas in English/German.
我不知道/不确定如何用英语/德语表达我的想法。
 - 4) I am not interested in the question, so that I do not want to respond.
我对问题不感兴趣，所以不想回答。
 - 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me, even if I understand the questions he/she asked.
我明白问题，但怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
 - 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

2. I do not ask questions even when I do not understand what my teacher says, because 即使我不明白老师的问题，我也不提问，是因为
 - 1) I do not know how to start to ask, because I do not understand it at all.
我一点头绪都没有,不知道问什么。
 - 2) I do not care if I do not understand. 我懂不懂都无所谓。
 - 3) I do not know/am not sure how to ask about it in English/German.
我不知道/不确定如何用英语/德语表达我的问题。
 - 4) I am too shy to ask. I prefer to ask other students or guess it myself.
我不好意思问。我可以之后问别人或者自己揣摩。
 - 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me.
我怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
 - 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

3. When I do not understand what my teacher said, it is because 当我不理解导师所说的内容时，是因为
 - 1) too many words he/she used that I am not familiar with.
他/她使用很多我陌生的词汇。
 - 2) he/she speaks too fast, I cannot follow.
老师说的太快,我无法听懂。
 - 3) his/her sentences are too long, I cannot catch the points.
他/她说的句子太长,我无法抓住重点。

- 4) I am not familiar with the content of the lecture. 我对课程的内容不熟悉。
- 5) I am not familiar with the cultural references he/she uses.
我对老师涉及的文化背景不熟悉。
- 6) State your own reasons 其他的原因: _____
4. When I cannot freely express my ideas to my teachers, it is because
当我无法自如的向老师表达我的想法时, 是因为:
- 1) I do not know what to say because I have no clue about the topics. 我不知道该说什么。
- 2) I just do not want to say anything. 我觉得没什么好说的。
- 3) I do not know how to say what I want to express in English/German. 我不知道如何用英语/德语表达我想说的。
- 4) I do not know if it is appropriate to say what I think directly to my teacher. 我不知道我如果我对老师“有话直说”是否合适。
- 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me.
我怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
- 6) State your own reasons 其他的原因: _____
5. I cannot involve actively in group discussions in class, because 我无法积极的参与
到老师设定的小组讨论, 因为
- 1) I am not interested in the topic so that I have nothing to say.
我对讨论的话题不感兴趣。无话可说。
- 2) I do not like group discussions and do not want to participate in.
我不喜欢小组讨论, 不想参与。
- 3) I do not have any chance to speak, because the others are very talkative.
我没有机会介入发言, 小组其他人不给我说话的机会。
- 4) I do not want to participate in the discussion, even if I like the topic. I prefer to
keep out of the affair,
即使我对话题感兴趣, 我也不想参与, 觉得置身事外最好。
- 5) I cannot keep pace with the rhythm of others, such as thinking, speed, etc.
我跟不上其他人的节奏, 包括思维节奏或语速等
- 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

(To be detached) 与前部分分开

***Please write down the name and the campus mail address of your German teachers. Your teacher will receive a similar questionnaire about his/her ideas of the communication of Chinese students. **Your name will not be made known to him/her.**

***请您提供您德国老师的电话和邮件。他/她会收到一封相似的调查问卷，用以了解在交际沟通方面，德国教师对中国学生的总体影响。请不要担心，您的个人信息将会被保密且不透露给您的德国老师。

Thank you very much! 十分感谢您的支持!

Name 导师姓名: _____ Faculty 导师所属院系: _____

Telephone 导师电话: _____ E-mail 导师邮箱: _____

S/He has been my teacher from _____ month/year to _____ month/year.

她/他自从_____年_____月至_____年_____月教授我。

(To be detached) 与前部分分开

***After completing the questionnaire, do you still feel that you have more concerns to say about the communication with German teachers? Your opinions will be of great help to this study, as well as to prospective Chinese students. I would greatly appreciate if you would like to voice your concerns to me in an interview. The interview will require about 20–25 minutes. If you are interested, please write your name and telephone number below. **(This part will be torn off before data analysis, so your anonymity will be protected.)**

***在完成了此调查问卷后，您是否愿意与我分享更多关于德国老师和中国学生之间跨文化交际的故事？您宝贵的意见对本研究有极其重要的意义！同时也会帮助更多即将到德国留学的中国学生。如果您愿意接受一次 20-25 分钟的访谈，与我畅谈您在跨文化交际方面的各种经历，我将十分荣幸！如果您有兴趣接受访谈，请留下您的姓名和联系方式。（此部分信息将在调查问卷数据分析前被撕毁，您的身份会得到保护。）

Name 您的姓名: _____ Faculty 您所属院系: _____

Telephone 您的电话: _____ E-mail 您的邮箱: _____

Best Time to Call 电话联系时间段: _____

Thank You So Much! 衷心感谢您的支持!

Have a Great Semester! 祝您学业顺利!

Appendix C

Questionnaire Distributed to Chinese Students in China

Dear fellow student, 亲爱的同学,

I hope this letter finds you successful in your study and you enjoy the opportunity of studying with German teachers. As a Chinese student studying with German teachers, I understand that some of you have experienced some difficulties in study, which are caused by the ineffective communication with German teachers. This letter is closely connected with the problems and worries shared by all of us in communication with our German teachers.

见此信希望你的学习生活顺利并享受与德国老师一起学习的机会。同样作为中国学生,我了解到一些中国学生在学习中面临一些困难,这些困难是由与德国老师间不太成功的交际而引起的。这封信的内容正是与我们中国学生与德国老师的交际问题有关。

I am writing to ask you for your kind help in my doctoral research project. The aim of my project is to investigate the concerns, worries, and thoughts that Chinese students may have in communication with German teachers. Please fill out this questionnaire, which is regarding your concerns in communication with your German teachers either in class or in one-on-one conversations. Your answers to the questionnaire will provide valuable data to help both Chinese students and German teachers to interact more effectively with each other in the future.

我写这封信的目的是想请你帮助我的博士研究。我研究的目的是想探究中国学生与德国老师间交际的顾虑,担忧,及相关想法。请填写一份有关你与德国老师交际顾虑的调查问卷,交际情境设定为课上交际和一对一交际。你的问卷结果将对本研究提供非常有价值的数 据,并会促进中国学生和德国老师间更有效的交际。

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You may notice that the questionnaire is marked with a code number. This code number identifies your questionnaire and is used only for record keeping purposes. The code number is known only to me, and I alone have access to it. Your German teachers will not have any access to the data you provided.

你提供的信息会严格的保密。每份问卷会用编码标注。此编码仅为我所知,以便识别你的问卷,并仅为此用。你的德国老师不会得知你提供的任何数据。

If you have any question regarding the nature of this research, please feel free to contact me at (E-mail address).de and I will be happy to answer them.

如果你对此研究有任何问题,欢迎随时发邮联系我(邮箱地址),我非常愿意回答任何疑问。

I very much appreciate your time and cooperation!

真诚的感谢你对此付出的时间和精力!

Sincerely, 祝好,

Lei Huang 黄蕾

SECTION I: Background information 第一部分：个人信息

Please circle the appropriate options. 请选择合适的选项。

1. Your gender 您的性别是
1) Male 男 2) Female 女
2. Your age 您的年龄是
1) under 18 18 岁以下 2) 18-23 18-23 岁
3) 23-28 23-28 岁 4) over 28 大于 28 岁
3. Have you been to Germany before? If yes, for how long? 你如果去过德国，逗留多久？
1) less than 3 months 不到 3 个月 2) 3 months to 1 year 3 个月至一年之间
3) 1 year to 1.5 year 1-1.5 年 4) More than 1.5 years ≥ 1.5 年
5) No 没去过
4. Which academic level are you pursuing for? 您在中国攻读什么学位？
1) Diploma 大专学历 2) Bachelor's Degree 学士学位
3) Master's Degree 硕士学位 4) Doctor Title 博士学位
5. How do you support your study in China? 您如何负担在中国的学费与生活费？
1) I am supported by my family/parents. 家庭/父母资助。
2) By myself. Saving, working, etc. 通过打工或存款等自己承担。
3) I have a scholarship. 我有奖学金。
4) Bank load. 通过银行贷款。
6. In which faculty do/did you enroll in? 您所属的院系是？
1) Natural Sciences (e.g. Physics, Chemistry, Geography) 自然科学
2) Agricultural Sciences (e.g. Agriculture, Forestry) 农学
3) Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing 医学/护理
4) Engineering (e.g., ME, IE, EE) 机械工程
5) Humanities and Social Sciences (e.g. Language, Law, Literature, Economics, Politics, Education, Philosophy, Art) 人文与社会科学
7. Do you work (e.g. part-time, TA¹, RA²) besides your study? 您在学习之余有工作或兼职吗？
1) Yes 是的 2) No 没有
8. During your study, you live in China _____ 您在德国 _____
1) alone 一个人住 2) with family 和家人一起住
3) in student dormitory with Chinese students 在学生宿舍与其他中国学生一起
4) in student dormitory with non-Chinese students 在学生宿舍与国际学生一起

¹ TA: Teaching Assistant. This position normally offered by University or Professor.

² RA: Research Assistant. This position normally offered by University or Professor.

SECTION II: Personal communication concerns 第二部分：个人顾虑描述

Please write down as many comments as you can think of regarding what you are concerned about. You can write in English, German, or Chinese.

请尽可能详尽的描述你在交谈时的所有顾虑。可用英语，德语或中文描述。

Please think about the situations when you talk to your German teacher(s) in class/group meetings or in one-on-one conversations. What do you concern about the communication? What are your worries during the interactions? What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns?

当你和德国老师在课堂上或是单独交谈时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？在交谈中你的担忧又是什么？为什么在和德国老师交流时有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

Question 1: 问题 1:

When I am speaking with my German teacher in class, I am concerned that...

在与德国老师课上的交谈中你的担忧是什么？

- What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns? 为什么有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

Question 2: 问题 2:

When I am speaking with my German teacher in an out-of-class situation, I am concerned that... *在课下，当我与德国老师一对一交流时，我担心。。。*

- What are the main reasons for your worries and concerns? 为什么有这样的担忧和顾虑呢？

If you need more space to express your concerns, please use the back of this page. When you complete SECTION 1, please go on to SECTION 2.

Question 3: 问题 3:

Please think about your concerns and worries when talking to your Chinese teachers. What are the differences between talking to Chinese teachers and to German teachers regarding your feelings, approaches to dialogue, and worries? Why do these differences appear to you?

请想一想当你在中国与老师交流时的情境，与目前在德国与德国老师交流有什么不同吗？与中国老师交流相比，和德国老师交流你有哪些特别的担心和顾虑吗？在心境感受，交流方式，担心或烦恼上有哪些不同吗？为什么存在这些差异呢？

Comparing talking to my Chinese teachers and to my German teachers, I am especially concerned that... 与中国老师交流相比，和德国老师交流你有哪些特别的担心和顾虑吗？

- What are the differences between talking to Chinese teachers and German teachers regarding your feelings, approaches to dialogue, and worries? 在心境感受，交流方式，担心或烦恼上有哪些不同吗？

- Why do these differences appear to you? 为什么存在这些差异呢？

SECTION III: Communication concerns during lectures/in class/in group meetings 第三部分：在德国课堂上/集体交际时的顾虑

Think about when you are attending a lecture or group/lab meeting taught by your German teachers. What are your concerns about expressing your ideas during the lecture/meeting? Please choose the number indicating how often you have that particular concern.

当你和德国老师在课堂上/课题组会议交流时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？请选择相应的虑程度数字选项，来表示你自身对此项顾虑的存在程度。

Scale 程度	Description 程度示意
1	This is <u>never</u> a concern of mine. 这 从不是 我的顾虑。
2	This is <u>rarely</u> a concern of mine. 这 很少 是我的顾虑。
3	This is <u>sometimes</u> a concern of mine. 这 有时 是我的顾虑。
4	This is <u>often</u> a concern of mine. 这 时常 是我的顾虑。
5	This is <u>always</u> a concern of mine. 这 一直 是我的顾虑。

Note: All the following 16 statements are followed by “I am concerned that.....”

注意：以下所有 16 个选项都是以“**我担心是否...**”为前提

从不 *Never*... *Always* 一直

1.	I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared in my teacher's class. 在课上我表现出既有见解及准备充分。	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel nervous when talking to my teacher in front of my classmates. 在全班同学面前与老师交谈，我会感到紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
3.	My silence in class makes my teacher think that I am unintelligent or unconcerned. 我在课上沉默令老师认为我无知或轻视课程。	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Although I think I understood what my teacher said in class, it turns out later that I do not understand the real meaning of what he/she said. 虽然在课上我觉得我理解了所有内容，但之后我才发现并不真正理解老师讲的内容。	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My knowledge about the lecture makes my teacher confused during our discussions. 我对课程内容的理解让老师感到迷惑。	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I do not know how to express my ideas to my teacher's questions in an appropriate way. 我不知怎样恰当的回答老师的问题。	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I am unable to express my dissatisfaction/request (concerning the lecture) to my teacher in class. 我不敢表达我对课程的不满。	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I do not understand the humor my teacher used during lectures. 我无法理解老师在课上使用的幽默方式。	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Grammatical errors bother me when I speak in class. 我担心一说英语/德语就要出语法错误。	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I have to construct a complete English/German sentence in my mind before I actually say it. 在说话之前，我一定预先想好要说的整个英语/德语的句子。	1	2	3	4	5

11.	I am unable to take good notes during lectures. 我无法对课程内容做好笔记。	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I don't understand the tasks my teacher assigned in class. 我不能理解老师在课上布置的任务。	1	2	3	4	5
13.	It seems that my teacher cannot immediately understand what I said in class. 老师似乎不能马上正确理解我想表达的意思。	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I may offend my teacher because my behaviors are not appropriate in a German classroom. 因为我的行为不适合德国的课堂习惯，因而冒犯老师。	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel nervous to speak in class because I may ask something stupid due to my lack of knowledge of the topics. 由于对课程知识不熟悉，我不敢发言，怕被人嘲笑。	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I cannot engage in class because my knowledge is not enough for the discussion in class. 由于背景知识不够，我无法参与到课堂活动中。	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION IV: Communication concerns in one-on-one conversations

第四部分：与德国老师一对一交际时的顾虑

Think about when you are talking to your German teachers in one-on-one situations. What are your concerns about communicating with him/her? Please choose the number indicating how often you have that particular concern.

当你和德国老师一对一单独交流时，你有什么样的交际顾虑？请选择相应的顾虑程度数字选项，来表示你自身对此项顾虑的存在程度。

Scale 程度	Meanings 程度示意
1	This is <u>never</u> a concern of mine. 这 从不是 我的顾虑。
2	This is <u>rarely</u> a concern of mine. 这 很少 是我的顾虑。
3	This is <u>sometimes</u> a concern of mine. 这 有时 是我的顾虑。
4	This is <u>often</u> a concern of mine. 这 时常 是我的顾虑。
5	This is <u>always</u> a concern of mine. 这 一直 是我的顾虑。

Note: All the following 22 statements are followed by "I am concerned that....."

注意：以下所有 22 个选项都是以“**我担心是否。。。为**前提

从不 *Never...Always* 一直

17.	I appear knowledgeable and well-prepared to my teacher. 在与老师交谈时，我表现得既有见解又准备充分。	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I feel nervous when talking to my teacher alone. 在单独谈话时我会感到很紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I cannot be honest with my teacher without being uncomfortable. 单独交谈时，我不能自在坦诚的面对老师。	1	2	3	4	5

20.	I do not feel comfortable when I talk with German teachers about non-academic topics. 在与老师谈论非学术方面的话题时, 我会感到不自在。	1	2	3	4	5
21.	My teacher does not enjoy talking to me. 老师不喜欢和我谈话。	1	2	3	4	5
22.	My teacher underestimates me because of my defective communication ability. 因为我的沟通能力, 老师会低估我的实际水平。	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My hypertension/overstress has a bad impact on my teacher during our conversations. 与老师私下谈话时, 我表现得过于紧张。	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I do not feel comfortable joking with my teacher. 与老师开玩笑时我会感到不自在。	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Although I think I understood what the teacher said, it turns out later that I do not understand the real meaning of what he/she said. 虽然当时我觉得我理解了老师说的内容, 但之后我才发现其实并不是真正理解。	1	2	3	4	5
26.	My knowledge about the topic makes my teacher confused during our conversations. 我对话题内容的理解让老师感到迷惑。	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I do not know how to phrase an answer to my teacher's questions in an appropriate way in one-on-one conversations. 单独交谈时, 我不知道如何以恰当的方式来回答老师的问题。	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I am unable to express my dissatisfaction/request (concerning academic issues) to my teacher in one-on-one conversations. 单独交谈时, 我不敢表达我关于学术问题的要求或不满。	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I do not understand when my teacher is being humorous in one-on-one contacts. 我无法理解单独交谈时老师运用的幽默。	1	2	3	4	5
30.	When speaking to my teacher, I have to construct a complete English/German sentence in my mind before actually saying it. 单独和导师谈话前, 我一定预先想好要说的整个英语/德语句子。	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I cannot look at my teacher directly in the eyes with a sense of comfort. 我无法自在的正视老师的眼睛。	1	2	3	4	5
32.	It is difficult to defend my opinions in individual meetings because of my language ability. 在与老师单独交谈时, 我感到很难为自己的观点辩护。	1	2	3	4	5
33.	It seems that my teacher cannot understand immediately what I say when we talk alone. 老师似乎不能马上理解我想表达的意思。	1	2	3	4	5
34.	My teacher cannot feel my full respect to him/her. 我担心老师会觉得我没有对他/她给予全部的尊重。	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I may offend my teacher because my behaviors are not appropriate in the German communication culture. 由于我的行为不适合德国文化而冒犯了老师。	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Showing respect to my teacher by following her/his opinions, which makes he/she think that I am not assertive. 通过赞同老师的观点来表示我的尊重, 这会使老师觉得我没有个人主见。	1	2	3	4	5

37.	My teacher would underestimate me because of my lack of knowledge of the topics. 由于背景知识不足, 我怕导师会轻视我。	1	2	3	4	5
38.	My knowledge is not enough to discuss comfortably with my teacher alone. 担心我背景知识不足与导师顺畅的单独谈话。	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION V: Potential causes for the communication concerns

第五部分: 交际顾虑存在的原因

Please think about the reasons why you may not be successful in communicating with German teachers. You may choose more than one explanation.

请思考您与德国老师交际不成功可能存在的原因。您可以选择多个选项。

1. I choose to remain silent after my teacher asks a question in class, because 老师在课堂提问后我选择保持沉默, 是因为
 - 1) I do not understand the question; therefore, I have nothing to say.
我不理解老师的问题, 所以无话可说。
 - 2) I understand the question, but I just do not know what to say.
我虽明白问题, 但觉得没什么好说的。
 - 3) I do not know/am not sure how to express my ideas in English/German.
我不知道/不确定如何用英语/德语表达我的想法。
 - 4) I am not interested in the question, so that I do not want to respond.
我对问题不感兴趣, 所以不想回答。
 - 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me, even if I understand the questions he/she asked.
我明白问题, 但怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
 - 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

2. I do not ask questions even when I do not understand what my teacher says, because 即使我不明白老师的问题, 我也不提问, 是因为
 - 1) I do not know how to start to ask, because I do not understand it at all.
我一点头绪都没有, 不知道问什么。
 - 2) I do not care if I do not understand. 我懂不懂都无所谓。
 - 3) I do not know/am not sure how to ask about it in English/German.
我不知道/不确定如何用英语/德语表达我的问题。
 - 4) I am too shy to ask. I prefer to ask other students or guess it myself.
我不好意思问。我可以之后问别人或者自己揣摩。
 - 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me.
我怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
 - 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

3. When I do not understand what my teacher says, it is because 当我不理解导师所说的内容时, 是因为
 - 1) too many words he/she used that I am not familiar with.
他/她使用很多我陌生的词汇。
 - 2) he/she speaks too fast, I cannot follow.
老师说的太快, 我无法听懂。

- 3) his/her sentences are too long, I cannot catch the points.
他/她说的句子太长,我无法抓住重点。
- 4) I am not familiar with the content of the lecture. 我对课程的内容不熟悉。
- 5) I am not familiar with the cultural references he/she uses.
我对老师涉及的文化背景不熟悉。
- 6) State your own reasons 其他的原因: _____
4. When I cannot freely express my ideas to my teacher, it is because
当我无法自如的向老师表达我的想法时, 是因为:
- 1) I do not know what to say because I have no clue about the topic. 我不知道该说什么。
- 2) I just do not want to say anything. 我觉得没什么好说的。
- 3) I do not know how to say what I want to express in English/German. 我不知道如何用英语/德语表达我想说的。
- 4) I do not know if it is appropriate to say what I think directly to my teacher. 我不知道我如果我对老师“有话直说”是否合适。
- 5) I do not want to say something that will give my teacher a negative impression of me.
我怕说些会另老师对我有消极印象的话。
- 6) State your own reasons 其他的原因: _____
5. I cannot involve actively in the group discussion in class, because 我无法积极的参与到老师设定的小组讨论, 因为
- 1) I am not interested in the topic so that I have nothing to say.
我对讨论的话题不感兴趣。无话可说。
- 2) I do not like group discussions and do not want to participate in.
我不喜欢小组讨论, 不想参与。
- 3) I do not have any chance to speak, because the others are very talkative.
我没有机会介入发言, 小组其他人不给我说话的机会。
- 4) I just do not want to participate in the discussion, even if I like the topic. I prefer to keep out of the affair.
即使我对话题感兴趣, 我也不想参与, 觉得置身事外最好。
- 5) I cannot keep pace with the rhythm of others, such as thinking, speed, etc.
我跟不上其他人的节奏, 包括思维节奏或语速等
- 6) State your own reasons 其他原因: _____

Thank You So Much! 衷心感谢您的支持!

Have a Great Semester! 祝您学业顺利!

Appendix D:

Questionnaire Distributed to German University Teachers

Dear Professor:

I hope this letter finds you well and successful in your academic career at Justus-Liebig-University Giessen. I also hope you enjoy the opportunity of teaching your Chinese students. As a student from China, I have observed that some Chinese students have experienced difficulties and ineffectiveness in communicating with their German teachers. This letter is directly related to these often-noticed communication problems in the context of classroom/group meetings and one-on-one conversations.

I am writing to ask you for your kind help in my doctoral research project, which is an investigation and exploration of the concerns, thoughts, or worries that you may have about communicating with Chinese students. If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the questionnaire regarding your interaction with your Chinese students either in class/group meetings or in one-on-one conversations. Your participation in this study will provide valuable data to help both German teachers and Chinese students to communicate more effectively with one another in the future.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You may notice that the questionnaire is marked with a code number. This code number identifies your questionnaire and is used only for record keeping purposes. The code number is known only to me, and I alone have access to it. The Chinese students who work together with you will not have any access to the data you provided.

If you have any question regarding the nature of this research, please feel free to contact me at (E-mail address) and I will be happy to answer them.

I very much appreciate your time and cooperation!

Thank you very much in advance!

Sincerely,

Lei Huang

SECTION I: Background information

Please circle the appropriate options.

1. Your gender
 - 1) Male
 - 2) Female
2. Are you a German citizen
 - 1) Yes.
 - 2) No.
3. Your native language is
 - 1) German
 - 2) English
 - 3) others
4. Do/Did you have any experience teaching Chinese students
 - 1) Yes, more than five students.
 - 2) Yes, less than five.
 - 3) No.
5. Which faculties are you currently affiliated with?
 - 1) Natural Sciences (e.g. Physics, Chemistry, Geography)
 - 2) Agricultural Sciences (e.g. Agriculture, Forestry)
 - 3) Medicine/Dentistry/Nursing
 - 4) Engineering (e.g., ME, IE, EE)
 - 5) Humanities and Social Science (e.g. Language, Law, Literature, Economics, Politics, Education, Philosophy, Art)
6. Which language do you mainly use for communicating with Chinese students?
 - 1) German
 - 2) English
7. Have you been to China before?
 - 1) Yes, for how long _____
 - 2) No

SECTION II: Personal communication concerns

Please think about the situation when you talk to your Chinese student(s) in class/group meetings or in one-on-one conversations. What are your concerns in these interactions? Please write down what you are actually concerned about, not what you should be concerned about. Please list as many communication concerns as you can think of.

Question 1: When I am interacting with my Chinese student(s) in class/group meetings, I am concerned that...

- What caused your worries?

Question 2: When I am communicating with my Chinese student(s) during an out-of-class situation, I am concerned that...

- What caused your worries?

Question 3: Comparing communicating with Chinese students and with other European students, I am especially concerned that.....

SECTION III: Communication concerns in class/in group meetings

Please think about when you are teaching a class/holding a meeting which your Chinese student(s) attend. What are your concerns about communicating with them? Please underline the number indicating how often you have that particular concern.

- | Scale | Description |
|-------|---|
| 1: | This is <u>never</u> a concern of mine. |
| 2: | This is <u>rarely</u> a concern of mine. |
| 3: | This is <u>sometimes</u> a concern of mine. |
| 4: | This is <u>often</u> a concern of mine. |
| 5: | This is <u>always</u> a concern of mine. |

Note: All the following 16 statements are followed by

“I am concerned that...”

Never.....Always

1.	my Chinese student(s) do not appear knowledgeable and well-prepared in my class/group meetings.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
2	my Chinese student(s) feel nervous when talking to me in front of other classmates/group colleagues.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
3.	my Chinese student(s) consider(s) that their silence in class makes me think that they are unintelligent or unconcerned.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
4.	although my Chinese student(s) think that they understood what I said in class, it turns out later that they do not understand the real meaning of what I said.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
5.	my Chinese student(s)' knowledge about the lecture topics makes me confused.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
6.	my Chinese student(s) do not know how to phrase an answer to my questions in an appropriate way.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
7.	my Chinese student(s) are unable to express their dissatisfaction about the course to me.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
8.	my Chinese student(s) do not understand the humor I used in my lectures/group meetings.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
9.	my Chinese student(s) are unable to speak English/German without making grammatical errors.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
10.	my Chinese student(s) must construct a complete English/German sentence in their mind before actually saying it.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
11.	my Chinese student(s) are unable to take good notes on the information I give in class/group meetings.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
12.	my Chinese student(s) do not understand the assignments I give in class/group meetings.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5
13.	I cannot immediately understand what my Chinese student(s) say in class/group meetings.	<u>1</u>	2	3	4	5

14.	the behavior of my Chinese student(s) is not appropriate in the context of a German classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	my Chinese student(s) are afraid to speak in class because they are not confident with their academic knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	my Chinese student(s) cannot engage in class due to their lack of relevant knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION IV: Communication concerns in one-on-one conversations

Please think about when you are talking to your Chinese student(s) in one-on-one situations. What are your concerns about communicating with her/him? Please choose the number indicating how often you have that particular concern.

Scale Description

- 1: This is ***never*** a concern of mine.
- 2: This is ***rarely*** a concern of mine.
- 3: This is ***sometimes*** a concern of mine.
- 4: This is ***often*** a concern of mine.
- 5: This is ***always*** a concern of mine.

Note: All the following 22 statements are followed by

“I am concerned that...”

Never.....Always

17.	my Chinese student(s) do not appear to be knowledgeable and prepared in one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	my Chinese student(s) feel nervous when talking to me in one-on-one situations.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	my Chinese student(s) do not feel free to be honest with me.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	my Chinese student(s) do not feel comfortable talking with me about non-academic topics.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	my Chinese student(s) think that I do not enjoy talking to them.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	my Chinese student(s) think that I think less of them because of their weak communication ability.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	my Chinese student(s) seem to be too tense when talking to me in one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	my Chinese student(s) do not feel comfortable joking with me in one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	although my Chinese student(s) think that they understood what I said, it turns out later that they do not understand the real meaning of what I said.	1	2	3	4	5

26.	my Chinese student(s)' knowledge about the lecture topics makes me confused.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	my Chinese student(s) do not know how to phrase an answer to my questions in an appropriate way.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	my Chinese student(s) are unable to express their dissatisfaction (concerning academic issues) to me in one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	my Chinese student(s) do not understand my humor in our one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	my Chinese student(s) must construct a complete English/German sentence in their mind before actually saying it.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	my Chinese student(s) cannot look at me directly in the eyes with a sense of comfort.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	my Chinese student(s) find that it is difficult to defend their opinions with me in one-on-one conversations.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	my Chinese student(s) have to repeat what they say two or more times to get their message across to me.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	my Chinese student(s) do not show their full respect to me.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	the behavior of my Chinese student(s) is not appropriate in the German communication culture.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	in order to show their respect to me, my Chinese student(s) always follow my ideas without thinking on their own.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	my Chinese student(s) worry that I would despise them because of their academic shortcomings.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	worries of my Chinese student(s) about their lacking knowledge make them cannot talk with me comfortably.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION V: Potential causes for the communication concerns

Please think about the reasons why your Chinese student(s) may not be successful in communicating with you. You may choose more than one explanation.

1. My Chinese student(s) sometimes choose to remain silent after I ask a question in class, because
 - 1) My questions are sometimes too difficult for them.
 - 2) They are too shy to express their ideas, even if they understand the questions.
 - 3) Their language ability could be a problem for them to express their ideas.
 - 4) My questions are not interested to them.
 - 5) They do not want to say something that will give me a negative impression of them.
 - 6) State your own reason: _____
2. My Chinese student(s) do not ask questions even when they do not understand what I say, because

- 1) What I say is too difficult for them to start a question.
 - 2) I am too harsh to them, so that they are afraid to ask questions.
 - 3) Their language ability stops their courage to ask me in English/German.
 - 4) They are too shy to ask me and prefer to ask other students.
 - 5) They do not want to say something that will give me a negative impression of them.
 - 6) State your own reason: _____
3. When my Chinese student(s) do not understand what I say, it is because
- 1) I use too many unfamiliar words that they may be not familiar with.
 - 2) I speak too fast for them.
 - 3) My sentences may be too long so that they cannot catch the points.
 - 4) The content of the lectures are difficult for them.
 - 5) They are not familiar with the cultural references in the context of the topics.
 - 6) State your own reason: _____
4. When my Chinese student(s) do not freely express themselves to me, it is because
- 1) The topics are too difficult to them.
 - 2) They are too shy to express their ideas.
 - 3) Their weak language ability stops them to speak freely in English/German.
 - 4) I made them nervous/afraid to say what they think to me directly.
 - 5) They do not want to say something that will give me a negative impression of them.
 - 6) State your own reason: _____
5. My Chinese students cannot involve in the group discussions in my class, because
- 1) The topics that I assigned are not interested to them.
 - 2) The study method of group discussion is not interested to them.
 - 3) The other students in the group do not give them many chances to talk.
 - 4) They do not like participating in any group activities, but like staying out of the affair.
 - 5) They have difficulties to keep pace with the rhythm of other students in the group.
 - 6) State your own reason: _____

Thank you very much for your help and cooperation!

衷心感谢您对本研究课题的支持与合作!

Appendix E

Interview framework (Chinese students in Germany)

I. Introduction

- To give a brief explanation of the purpose of the study
- To describe the interview process
 - To introduce the interview questions in general
 - To specify the communication settings defined in this study
- To obtain interviewees' permission for recording the interview content
- To request a short self-introduction of the interviewee

II. Content questions discussion (from the perspective of students)

All interview questions refer to two communication settings:

- in class/group meetings
- in one-on-one conversations

Leading questions examples:

- What are the main concerns during your interaction with German teachers in Germany, in class and in one-on-one conversations?
- What are the reasons for your concerns?
- What are your concerns caused by language- or culture-based factors?
- Are there other reasons for your concerns? For example?
- How do you solve your communication problems and concerns?
- Some students reported in their questionnaire that...? Do you agree with this opinion? Do you have the similar concerns?
- What are your experiences and understanding about the communication with German teachers in Germany and with Chinese teachers in China?
- If you have experience of working with German teachers in China, how do you compare the communication with German teachers in China to in Germany?
- What kind of suggestions you would like to give future Chinese students, who plan to study in Germany, with respect to communication with German teachers?
- Do you have other concerns or worries to share?

III. Conclusion

- To show appreciation
- To provide the contact information of the researcher for any further questions of the interviewee

Appendix F

Interview framework (German university teachers)

I. Introduction

- To give a brief explanation of the purpose of the study
- To describe the interview process
 - To introduce the interview questions in general
 - To specify the communication settings defined in this study
- To obtain interviewees' permission for recording the interview content
- To request a short self-introduction of the interviewee

II. Content questions discussion (from the perspective of teachers)

All interview questions refer to two communication settings:

- in class/group meetings
- in one-on-one conversations

Leading questions examples:

- What is your general evaluation of Chinese students?
- What are the main concerns during your interaction with Chinese students?
- Why do you have these concerns?
- What are your concerns caused by Chinese students' language- or culture-based factors? For example?
- Are there other reasons for your concerns? For example?
- How do you solve these communication problems and concerns?
- Some students/teachers reported in their questionnaire that...? Do you agree with this opinion? Do you have the similar concerns?
- How do you compare Chinese students with European students in their academic performance, especially the way that they communicate with you?
- What kind of suggestions you would like to give future Chinese students, who plan to study in Germany, with respect to communication with German teachers?
- Do you have other concerns or worries to share?

III. Conclusion

- To show appreciation
- To provide the contact information of the researcher for any further questions of the interviewee

Appendix G

The quoted statements of Chinese students in chapter 4

[4-1] “我脸皮薄。”(CSGQ18)

[4-3] “我有很多担心。我是个外国人，德语也不好。比如，老师认为我的问题傻？别人笑话我说的话？这类的担心让我不想说话。也许别人觉得我害羞。其实我就是不想丢脸。”(CSGQ30)

[4-4] “通常我和外国学生和德国老师在课堂交流不多。其实我就是想确保安全，不想丢脸。”(CSGQ52)

[4-5] “我和德国同学和老师交谈时总很紧张，特别在课上。我是个脸皮薄的人，我不想在课上因为我的错误被别人笑话。”(CSGQ29)

[4-6] “课上，我通常不想提问或回答老师的问题，我不想因为我语言不好或说错点什么被别人笑话。”(CSGI10)

[4-9] “当我在课上发言时，我德国同学总给我无形的压力。我不想被别人笑话，所以我在课上不太想和老师交流。”(CSGI02)

[4-10] “课上不只有我和老师，还有德国和外国同学。他们的语言，或背景知识都比我好。我不是怕在老师面前丢脸，但我不想在同学前丢脸。”(CSGQ01)

[4-11] “我和老师在课上交流比单独交流更容易些。在课上其他同学可以帮助我，如果我有问题，犯错也不会笑我。在课上我感觉比较‘安全’。”(CSCQ09)

[4-12] “我基本不单独见老师，因为我怕说错话。如果要去我会和一两个同学一起去。同学可以让我在和老师交谈时不会那么紧张。”(CSCQ23)

[4-13] “虽然我是学德语的，但我没什么机会和德国人交流。我没什么自信，所以和德国老师交流时总是很紧张。”(CSCQ11)

[4-14] “我想我导师感到我是尊敬他的。”(CSGQ63)

[4-16] “我基本不怎么提问，因为我不想无意中冒犯老师。”(CSGQ72)

[4-17] “我想要老师能完全感到我对他的尊敬。”(CSGI02)

[4-18] “在我们实验室，老师让我做什么我就做什么。遵从老师的指导对我来说这很是自然的事。”(CSGQ08)

[4-19] “德国学生课上总打断课堂。我觉得这不太正常也不礼貌。刚开始时，我都被吓到了。”(CSGQ04)

[4-20] “在德国2年了，我还是不习惯像德国同学一样在老师说话或讲课时随时

- 举手提问。我觉得这样对老师不太礼貌。”(CSGQ08)
- [4-24] “我不习惯在其他人面前表现自己。”(CSGQ34)
- [4-26] “即便我知道答案，我通常也不会争着回答老师的问题，除非我被问到。我不想让别人觉得我爱争。”(CSGQ10)
- [4-27] “在组里我不太爱说话。除非我有问题时才问其他人或导师。其实有时我知道我会比其他人做的好，但我不会表现出来。要谦虚！”(CSGI08)
- [4-28] “从小我爸妈和老师就教育我要谦卑，虚心，要不就会落后别人。”(CSGQ19)
- [4-29] “‘谦虚是美德。’是中华民族的美德。”(CSGQ01)
- [4-30] “我的担心大都与语言能力有关。”(CSGI10)
- [4-32] “我的主要问题是语言。虽然我也有文化差异引起的心理担忧，但如果我德语更好的话我想会少些担心。”(CSGI10)
- [4-33] “有时我的担心来自我不太好的德语。如果我能更清楚的表达自己，我想老师会更好理解我。”(CSGQ102)
- [4-34] “我有时不能准确的表达我的想法，只能用简单的句子表达。但原本的意思就不一样了。”(CSGQ07)
- [4-35] “开始时，我课上几乎都听不懂。只看老师的嘴唇快速的动，只能听懂很少的单词。”(CSGI04)
- [4-36] “经常是这样，我还想着老师前半部分的话时他早开始说第二部分或更多了。课后我去问其他同学我没听到的部分，但总还是觉得漏掉些什么。”(CSGI09)
- [4-37] “虽然我考过了德福，但还远远不够。课上我还是有困难全听懂。我尽力听了。但和德国同学相比，我还是不能在相同时间内完成老师的任务。说实话，我所有的中国同学都有这样的感觉。”(CSGI10)
- [4-38] “我们（中国学生）在正式入学前都考过了德语考试。但这并不意味着我们可以无障碍的听说。”(CSGI04)
- [4-39] “因为是英语授课，除了一些生僻的单词或俚语，我大致没有什么特别的交流问题。”(CSGQ65)
- [4-40] “我是英语授课的学生。我不觉得有严重的问题。我与德国老师和外国同学都说英语。英语对我们来说都是外语，所以大家在交流时比较平等，没有什么压力。”(CSGQ66)
- [4-42] “一个好印象能持续很久。”(CSGQ108)
- [4-43] “要把坏印象变成好印象会很难的。”(CSGQ74)
- [4-44] “‘低调’是我的行为准则，这在国内上学时很看重。我谦虚的行为和对老师

尊敬有时会让德国老师觉得我没能力。”(CSGQ10)

[4-45] “从很小的时候我们就被教育要尊师重教。这样，在德国课上提问或打断老师会让我觉得很尴尬。我觉得这样不是很礼貌，因为老师被打断了，讲的内容也被偏题了。只有在老师提问我时我才表达。”(CSGI09)

[4-46] “我觉得有时外国同学提问的一些问题或意见‘没什么必要’或很‘傻’。比如，他们会问一些老师刚刚说过的内容，或说一些很明显众人皆知的事。我肯定不会这样做的，因为我可不想耽误其他人的时间，也不想让我老师认为我没注意听讲。”(CSGI01)

[4-47] “课上其他同学很积极。他们会随时随意的提问或发表意见。他们打断讲课会让我很不习惯。但是其他同学似乎觉得这很正常，对此表示无所谓或支持的态度。”(CSGI04)

[4-48] “我发现在德国大学，如果我不主动，没人会主动问我。这点和国内大学很不同。我必须改变成一个积极主动的人。”(CSGI06)

[4-49] “在国内都是老师主动过来帮助我们。德国老师不会这样的。但只要我问他们，他们对尽力帮我。我都懂，但我还是需要时间调整成个主动的人。”(CSGI08)

[4-50] “我习惯默默的，刻苦的学习。”(CSGQ44)

[4-51] “在国内我所有的时间都在学习，特别高中期间。因为升学压力太大了。没有时间考虑什么自己的想法，只是按照老师指定的内容复习。”(CSGQ52)

[4-52] “我感觉一些考试国内要难的多，比如数学和化学。国内学生太多，只有提高考试难度才能优胜略汰。”(CSGQ71)

[4-53] “高中三年让我变的很听老师的话，只是学习老师要求的内容，没有自己的想法和要求。我想考个好大学。”(CSGQ29)

[4-54] “我学习的动力很主动，但学习的方式很被动。要根据老师的要求复习，是高中时形成的习惯。因为高考太重要了。一考定终身。”(CSGQ36)

[4-55] “国内的学习和考试的压力很大，课业负担很重。我学习就是为了考试和升学。”(CSGQ65)

[4-56] “国内高校考试答案大多都是统一的，所以只要按照书本或讲义内容的复习。每天学习很紧，我没有机会，也没必要和老师过多的交流。”(CSGQ92)

[4-59] “我觉得德国学生的压力比较小。学生间的竞争不像中国这么大。学校更看中学生的综合能力而不只是学习成绩。”(CSGQ15)

[4-60] “和中国学生比，德国学生没有什么学业上的顾虑和压力。所以他们能没有顾虑的展现自我。”(CSGQ10)

[4-61] “在德国没有人管我。”(CSGQ04)

[4-62] “在国内，班主任几乎照顾我们所有的事。我只要听老师的指挥就好，不同担心其他的事。”(CSGQ22)

[4-63] “刚来德国我很不适应，因为在学校什么都要自己弄。”(CSGQ61)

[4-64] “在国内大学学习比较安逸。学校和老师都给安排好了。”(CSGQ29)

[4-65] “德国学校主张学生自主。中国高校管理对学生管的比较广。什么都安排好了，所以学生依赖性比较强。”(CSGQ03)

[4-66] “我肩负着全家的荣誉。”(CSGQ08)

[4-67] “压力来自家庭吧。家里要我给家里争脸。从小就要顺从家长的主义，要不就挨骂。变的被动，听话，顺从，但没有自主意识。”(CSGQ34)

[4-68] “我大多听父母的安排。出国学习也是他们帮我选择的。”(CSGQ15)

[4-69] “来德国前，我爸妈帮我帮很多事，我只要好好学习。”(CSGQ114)

[4-70] “来德国后，什么都要自己弄，我就蒙了。”(CSGQ37)

[4-71] “在国内别人会用世俗的眼光看你。要是考不上好大学，好专业，别人就对你指指点点。为了不丢家人的脸，学的很被动。”(CSGI03)

[4-72] “我的中国名字按德国发言规则叫起来比较奇怪。有时我都不知道别人在叫我。”(CSGQ113)

[4-73] “我知道我名字对德国人来说比较难念。但每次我导师叫我时，我总觉得他在叫别人。这感觉很奇怪。”(CSGQ49)

[4-74] “有一个德国老师几乎没念对过我名字。我理解我名字对德国人比较难读。但这有时让我感到不舒服。”(CSGQ57)

Appendix H

The quoted statements of Chinese students in chapter 5

[5-1] “在国内，我觉得中国学生是主人而德国老师是客人。我们只在课上或有限的面谈时间交流。其他的时间我们几乎不怎么见面。到现在我不会觉得有什么和德国老师交流的严重问题。”(CSCQ35)

[5-2] “德国老师其实是我们班上的外国人，我觉得他其实是那个总试图配合我们交流的人。”(CSCQ32)

[5-3] “在国内时，我不会害怕在课上发言或和德国老师交流，尽管我那时的德语水平还不如现在好。但在德国，我是个老外；和老师与同学交流时我会很没自信。”(CSGQ12)

[5-4] “我是一个课上唯一的中国人。在那个课上，我很少和别人交流，就是害怕说话。”(CSGQ45)

[5-5] “可能是在中国有熟悉的环境吧，我有种安全感。虽然我的德语不是很好，但是我不怕和德国老师交谈。”(CSCQ18)

[5-6] “和外国老师交流不是很紧张。我周围都是中国人，让我觉得有种依靠。”(CSCQ29)

[5-7] “我是我们讨论课上仅有的几个外国学生，这让我大多时候很紧张。因为我不知道我的行为是不是对，或我说的是不是让别人认为很傻。”(CSGQ65)

[5-8] “我在德国是个外国学生。这什么都是新的。当我和德国老师说些什么或做什么时，我总会不自觉的紧张。”(CSGI02)

[5-9] “和以前在国内比，在德国学习我感到更担忧。在德国我要根据这个全新文化背景的要求让自己适应一个全新的交际环境。”(CSGQ37)

[5-10] “在德国和在中国与老师交流完全不同。要面对很多新事物和挑战。有时我真想回国算了。”(CSGQ71)

[5-11] “我的专业是德语。如果我犯了语言方面的错误，这很正常，因为我是学习者，我的德语老师也能理解我。有时我希望我犯点错，这样我能学习东西。”(CSCQ25)

[5-12] “我只和德语老师说德语。在交流中，我德国老师为了让我完全理解一般不会用很难的词汇。和他交流我不会有压力。”(CSCQ27)

[5-13] “课上，我有时会觉得我们德语老师会比我们更紧张。她喜欢问我们是否适应她的教课方式，或给她些建议。”(CSCQ01)

[5-14] “有时我听不懂德语老师对我问题的解答。这样，我或德语老师会去问其他的中国老师。不管怎样，我的问题都会得到解答。”(CSCQ36)

- [5-15] “当我不明白德语老师的时候，我能问其他的同学。”(CSCQ29)
- [5-16] “我才学了一年半的德语。对我来说这还是一门需要深入学习的全新语言。但在德国我要全依赖这门语言，让我压力很大。语言应该是最基本也是最大的障碍。德语不仅是一个学科，也是每天的生活。”(CSGI10)
- [5-17] “我不太敢在课上发言或提问，因为我对德语不自信，尽管我的德语水平比之前在国内时强。我不想犯错被别人笑话。”(CSGQ09)
- [5-18] “在德国我要和德语母语者交谈。这让我压力很大。我德语比以前要好，但我还是担心我无法完全理解老师或会犯些低级错误。”(CSGQ01)
- [5-19] “我害怕无法完全听懂老师对我说的话。如果我听不懂，我会让他重复。但有时重复几次后我还是不理解。为了能继续交谈，我只能假装听懂了。”(CSGQ05)
- [5-20] “在国内我课上听不懂时能至少问问班上的其他同学。在德国，什么都要用德语。语言是最大的挑战。”(CSGI01)
- [5-21] “有时我会觉得很可笑。一些老师说的众所周知的事我却不明白，因为我只知道中文名称，例如一些国家名和科学原理。我当然知道莎士比亚和阿基米德定理，但中文说法完全不同。”(CSGI07)
- [5-22] “有时与德国老师交流时我真的觉得很尴尬，特别是在课堂上。好像我一无所知，其实我只是不知道德语翻译而已，因为我都是用中文学习所有知识的。”(CSGQ06)
- [5-24] “能跟上整节课已经很难了。通常我能听到所有内容。但有时在讨论时，老师或德国同学会说一些如俚语，格言和方言之类只有德国人能理解的话。我觉得被忽略了。”(CSGQ06)
- [5-25] “有时老师或同学说的方言或俚语会让我觉得很糊涂。”(CSGQ73)
- [5-26] “有时我不明白德国老师或同学说的什么。字典也查不到。最后我才知道他们说的是地方习语，怪不得我不懂。”(CSGQ06)
- [5-27] “我觉得在德国师生关系比较平等。我看到德国学生很喜欢提问并与老师讨论各种各样的问题。很多中国学生不会这样的。”(CSGQ11)
- [5-28] “德国的师生关系很平等。这对学生是个好事。但我刚开始的时候不是很习惯。”(CSGQ74)
- [5-29] “我从小就被教育要听老师的安排。要让我像我们组德国同学那样，我会觉得很不舒服。就比如和导师争论或质疑导师的观点。”(CSGI08)
- [5-32] “如果我和老师有不同的观点，我不会直接说的。因为这会让老师尴尬，也会让我自己不自在。”(CSGQ74)
- [5-33] “我更愿意课后或单独和老师讨论我的问题，不想直接打断课堂。”(CSCQ20)
- [5-34] “我觉得我德国同学很勇敢。他们就这么没有顾忌的直接表达自己的观点。”

我能感到有时他们的问题或意见会让老师下不来台。中国学生可不会这样做。”(CSGI10)

[5-35] “有时我觉得我德国同学和老师讨论时很不客气，或者说很现实，我很久才适应他们的谈话方式。”(CSGQ58)

[5-36] “和老师单刀直入的交谈会让我很不自在，但我在逐渐调整自己试着改变。”(CSGQ30)

[5-37] “我是学化学的，每天大部分时间都待在实验室里。和以前在国内相比，我和导师交流的机会很少。我德国导师给我很大的自由去完成我的实验。我需要主动地问他。”(CSGQ02)

[5-38] “我要自己和导师约每次预约见面的时间，否则我们就见不到。和完全和国内不同。”(CSGI06)

[5-40] “有时我在课上沉默无语是因为有些话题我真是一无所知，比如什么中世纪欧洲史，我都不知道我能说什么。”(CSGQ81)

[5-41] “我有时不明白我老师说什么，因为太多生词了。有时甚至是我能听懂所有的词，但是我还是不明白那些老师提问的主要意思是什么。”(CSGQ103)

[5-42] “如果我有不懂的，我能问班长。”(CSCQ11)

[5-43] “我能有办法去理解，比如问问其他同学或问班主任。”(CSCQ37)

[5-44] “我的思维有时要在不同课程的交际模式中切换。这时，我就很容易走神。”(CSGQ39)

[5-45] “我要在不同类型的课之间转换。我觉得这不是这么容易能很快适应，很多时候我都懒的和老师交流了。”(CSGQ78)

[5-46] “和别人争论我会觉得很不舒服。”(CSCQ25)

[5-47] “我不愿意和别人争论，在小组讨论中这会让我不自在。”(CSGQ11)

[5-48] “我不喜欢和人争辩，所以不喜欢小组讨论。如果我和人争论，产生的负面情绪就会影响我和其他组员的关系，这是我不希望发生的。”(CSGQ04)

[5-49] “我会觉得有时很难在小组讨论时想出新点子，所以就很难融入。”(CSGQ 41)

[5-50] “有些德国同学在讨论时很活跃，总会有一些新的想法。和这样的人在一组让我压力山大。”(CSGQ20)

[5-51] “我觉得一些德国学生不喜欢和外国学生分到一组，因为语言问题可能会影响交流的速度。”(CSGQ52)

[5-52] “我怕别人听不懂我说什么，这会让我很尴尬。”(CSGQ10)

[5-53] “对我自己的观点会没什么信心，也不想在人面前表达。”(CSG28)

[5-56] “我感觉省心，所以喜欢在课上和中国人待在一起。我们对问题有相似的

理解，能说到一块。”(CSGQ08)

[5-57] “有问题时我会先问其他中国学生。实在没有办法了，我才会问德国老师。” (CSGQ05)

[5-58] “和中国同学在一起我可以说中文。我知道这不太好，但至少我可以参与到讨论中。和德国同学我无法完全参与讨论。”(CSGQ95)

[5-60] “我们老师经常在小组活动中把中国学生分开。他看来察觉到中国学生在一起不是很积极要不就是一直说中文。”(CSGI10)

[5-61] “我想和德国学生在一个小组。但我担心我的语言水平不能应付。”(CSGQ14)

[5-62] “我不想在德国同学面前丢脸，所以最好还是和中国学生一组。”(CSGQ31)

[5-63] “男生在交际中比女生更直接。”(CSGQ08)

[5-64] “我室友搬来后，我不再害怕和德国人交谈。”(CSGQ05)

[5-65] “我希望在交谈中给老师们一个好印象。所以和他们交谈时我很敏感。”(CSGQ03)

[5-66] “我觉得交谈本身很重要。我能维持和德国老师的关系。有时我也想和他们分享我个人的事情，比如我的家庭和工作什么的。”(CSGQ04)

[5-67] “和德国老师有交流问题很正常啊，就像用错动词或没听明白什么的。我没觉得这有什么或负面的影响我的情绪。只要我能领会交谈的重点就行。”(CSGI07)

[5-68] “我一般只关心我导师让我做什么，怎么做。他说的其他的事我一般都过滤了。”(CSGI08)

[5-69] “我觉得和在交流中建立好的关系是个好方法，特别是和同性的老师和同学。这在国内大学很常见。好的关系能事半功倍。”(CSGI08)

[5-70] “大多时间，我都是开门见山，就事论事。我不想参与个人情绪，没必要。”(CSGI07)

[5-72] “和老师谈话时，特别是在课上，我总是有点担心我的表达方式是不是合适。”(CSGI01_non-science)

[5-73] “可能我太敏感了。我挺在意我的问题是不是问的合适或我的观点是不是正确。和老师交流时我很小心，课上和单独谈话都一样。”(CSGI08_non-science)

[5-74] “我的专业是德语和文学。有时我感觉我跟不上班上老师和同学的节奏。我总需要调整我自己去和他们交谈。”(CSGQ01_non-science)

[5-75] “我和我导师的交流一般很短。我们都很直接。这样简单高效。”(CSGQ15_science)

[5-76] “我没觉得我们实验室或我和导师有什么交流问题。我们的交流大部分就

是关于实验里的事，比如实验和取样。要说什么大家都很清楚。基本上我觉得没什么交流问题。”(CSGI07_science)

[5-77] “比起怎么和导师交流，我更看重和导师聊什么。其实我导师只关心我做了什么和我的结果。他不是很在乎我的语言和表达水平。”(CSGQ22_science)

[5-79] “虽然德语是我的专业，学了5年多了。在课上发言我还是不是很自信。其实我觉得我的德语水平不是很差。我其实担心的是我们专业对德语的超高要求。我也能用简单句和简单的词表达观点。但这样会让我们专业其他的人觉得我太low了。我只能尽量用高大上的水平表达我的观点。”(CSGI03)

[5-80] “我和我老师和同学用德语交流。我学德语只不过才一年，然后我过了DSH，去年开始在大学上学。其实我的德语并不好。太深的话题我用德语可谈不了。但是学习上德语够用了。我和老师和同学大部分就是说关于实验和考试的事。只要我知道我们专业的词汇和表达方式，我觉得我在学习上德语够用了。”(CSGI05)

[5-81] “我来德国已经一年了。很多时候在课上和老师交谈我还是很紧张。我觉得我还是需要一些时间来适应这里的新生活。”(CSGQ37_23-year-old)

[5-82] “我来德国时是28岁。虽然是我第一次出国，我激动大于不安。我足够成熟来独自处理学习和生活上的人际关系。”(CSGQ02_33-year-old)

[5-83] “6个月前我刚来德国。我不敢在学校和德国人交谈，因为我德语不够好。我也不知道什么方式能和他们自在的交谈。”(CSGQ04)

[5-84] “和3年前我刚刚来德国时相比，作为学生和成人，我都成熟了很多。最明显的变化就是我能更好的融入到当地人的学习和生活中。”(CSGQ08)

[5-85] “我在一个小公司打工，在一个小组里工作。我必须学会怎么和其他人合作，交流，特别是和外国人一起工作。这份工作使我变得开朗，善谈，积极向上。我的变化也帮我在学校里和其他人建立了很好的关系，特别是和我德国老师和同学。这对我帮助很大。”(CSGI01)

[5-86] “工作经历很重要。除了经济上的支持外，工作能让我心理上和语言上融入到当地生活中，不管是在校内还是在校外。”(CSGQ06)

[5-87] “我住在一个8人间的学生公寓，其他7个人都是外国人。我们每天都碰面有时还一起在公共厨房做饭。和他们聊天很开心。我的英语水平也因此有所提高。”(CSGQ09)

[5-88] “我有两个中国室友。我们说中文，过着中国式生活。有时我都觉得我在国内一样。”(CSGQ05)

[5-89] “我和3个德国人一起合租公寓。因为我们各自都有不同的时间安排，我们没什么交流的时间。大多时间我们只说一些有必要的事情。比如换个灯泡或分摊账单什么的。”(CSGQ10)

[5-90] “我的一个德国老师和我们说她去过中国好几次。我能感到她对中国文化和语言很感兴趣...她在中国的经历无意间拉近了我们的距离。我喜欢和她交谈

因为她喜欢我的文化。也许她也喜欢和我交谈，为了能了解更多关于中国和汉语的事情。我们之间的交流一直都很惬意有趣。和其他不了解中国的老师谈话我就没有这种感觉。”(CSGI09)

[5-91] “我的老板很喜欢中国文化。有次他还让我教他一些中文。和他交流没什么大问题。因为他比其他老师更懂我，我对他有种熟悉感。”(CSGQ04)

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Lei Huang

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