

‘Academic cultures’ and students’ adjustment to new learning environments.

The purpose here will be to raise the question of whether there are specific ‘cultures’ in academe – beliefs, values and behaviours – with which students are expected to comply. The question is relevant to all students but has become prominent in the experience of students from other countries, especially those from East Asia.

An answer will be attempted through examining data from research with Chinese students in a British university, data collected using ethnographic techniques and attempting to understand their interpretation of their learning experience.

On the basis of these empirical data and discussions, we will speculate a little on what ‘adjustments’ might be needed by all concerned and what those specifically invited to aid the adjustment can do. This is therefore a paper about language teaching in a very broad sense – learning the language/interaction modes expected of students in higher education.

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