

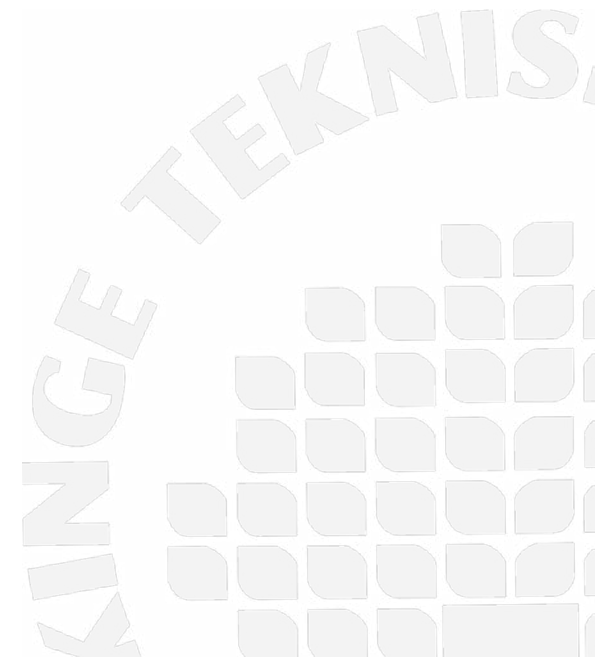


Analyzing the Impact of Differences in Academic Cultures on the Learning Experiences of Overseas Master's Students.

Javier Gonzalez-Huerta & Simon Poulding

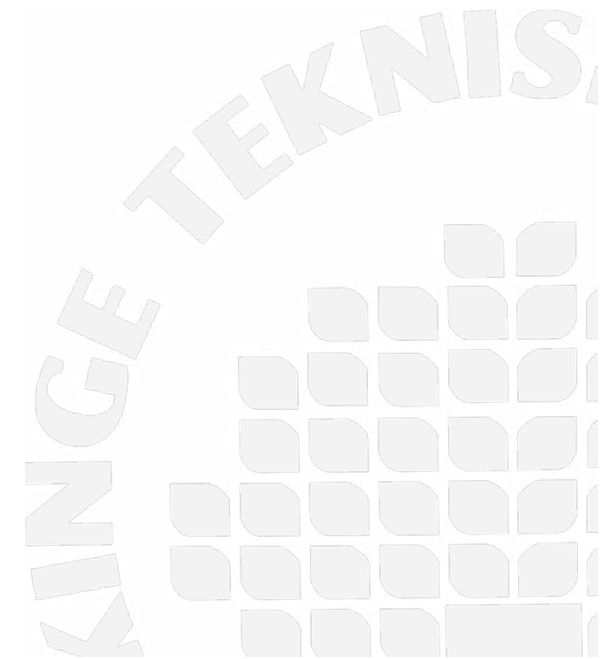
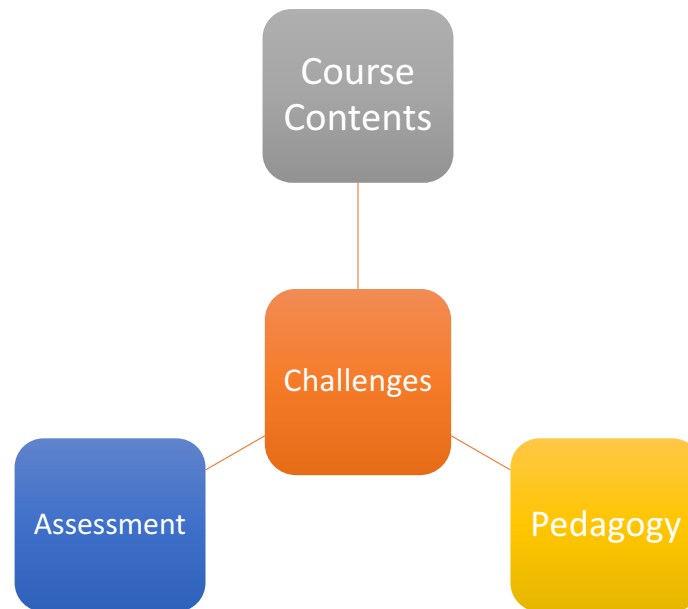
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Goal

- Analyze problems faced by overseas students @BTH that limit the ability of students to engage in the MSc in Software Engineering.

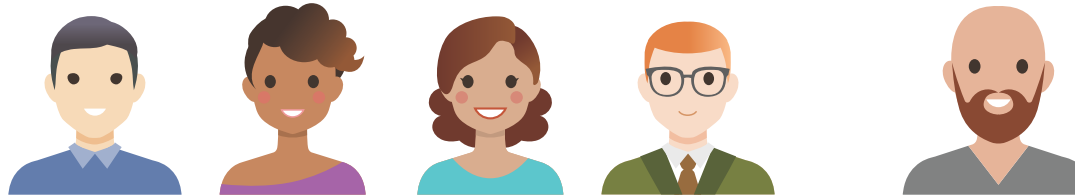


Research Questions

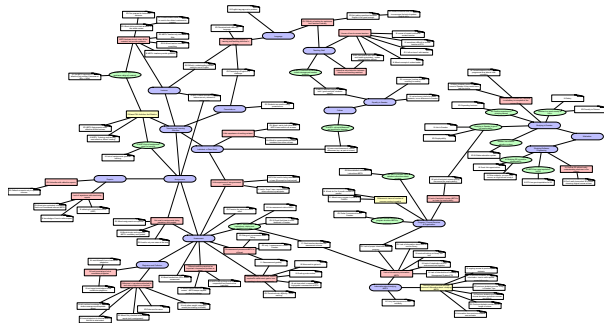
- **The main research question was: What is going on here?**
- But we have more scientific research questions:
 - **RQ2:** What are the differences in academic culture between BTH and partner universities in China and India?
 - How it affects to students on the MSc degree on Software Engineering?
 - **RQ2:** How do students perceive the impact -- both positively and negatively -- of these differences on their learning at BTH?

Method

- Focus Group Interviews



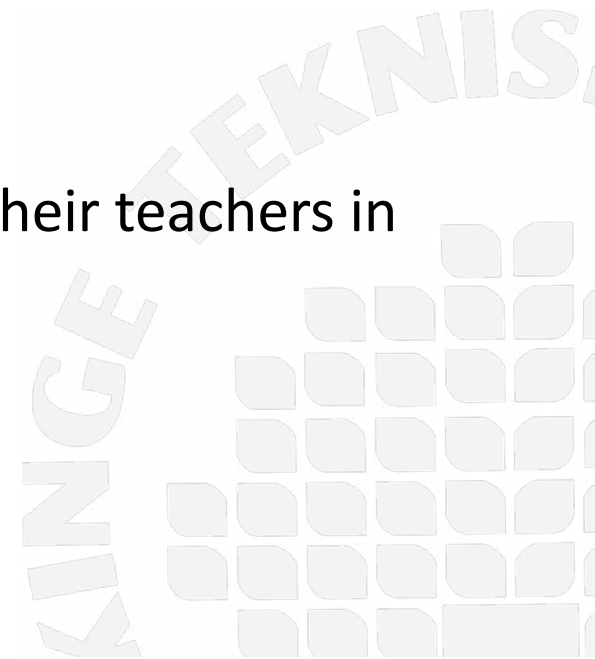
- Thematic Analysis





Focus Group

- 60 minutes interview
- Video and audio recorded
- 4 -6 participants coming from the same university
 - They will have similar experiences
 - Being in a familiar environment will promote participation
- Contacted by the researchers (which have been also their teachers in some courses)



Ethical Considerations I

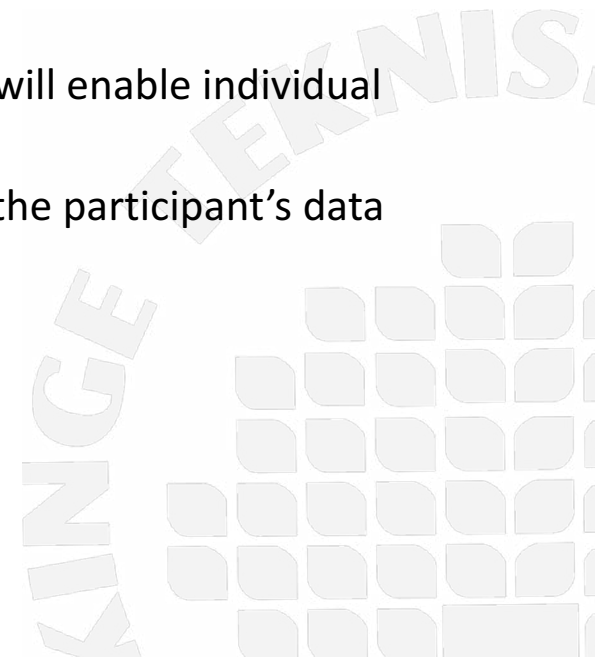
- *Subsequent Student Assessment:*

- We may be lecturers and/or examiners for some of the participants in the future.
 - will act differently based on their participation in and their input to the focus group?
 - may we privilege participants over non-participants by discussing (including revealing our opinions on) the nature of assessment at BTH?
- The use of focus groups rather than interviews, is likely to minimize any subsequent bias towards individual students.

Ethical Considerations II

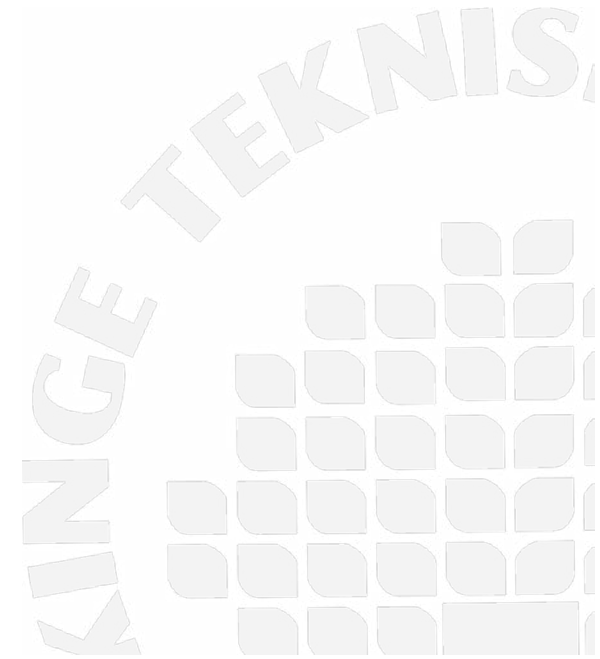
- *Data Privacy:*

- The data we obtained (video recording, audio recording, transcripts etc.) is kept securely;
- we will not make it available to others;
- it will be deleted when no longer required.
- Any report or other publication will not use the data in a manner that will enable individual participants to be identified.
- At any stage, the participant may withdraw from the experiment, and the participant's data will be deleted.



Thematic analysis

- Our original intention was to apply Grounded Theory
- Analysing the 1st interview we realized that "the theory" was accessible in the "surface"
- We applied Thematic Analysis instead



Thematic Analysis: What it is? How it works?

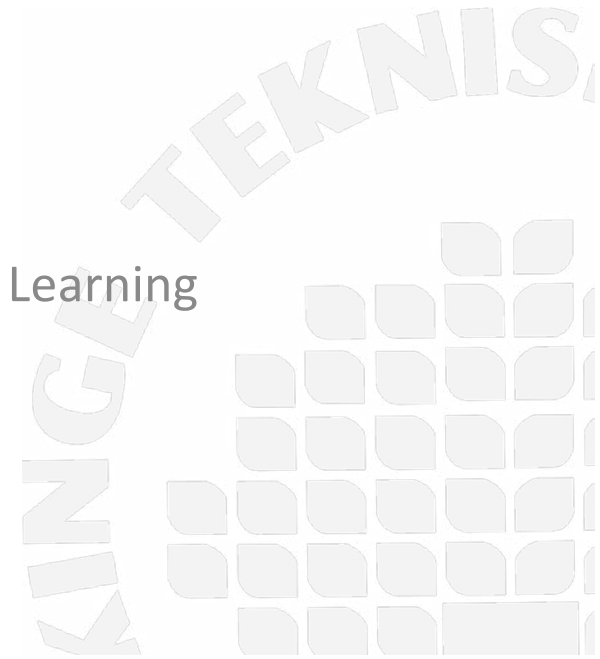
- Thematic Analysis technique to find patterns and hierarchies of themes in qualitative data
- Process
 - *Phase 1:* Familiarise with the data
 - *Phase 2:* Initial Coding
 - *Phase 3:* Organise data in themes
 - *Phase 4 and 5:* Refinement of the coding and theme organisation





The Study

Analyzing the Impact of Differences in Academic Cultures on the Learning Experiences of Overseas Master's Students.



Participants

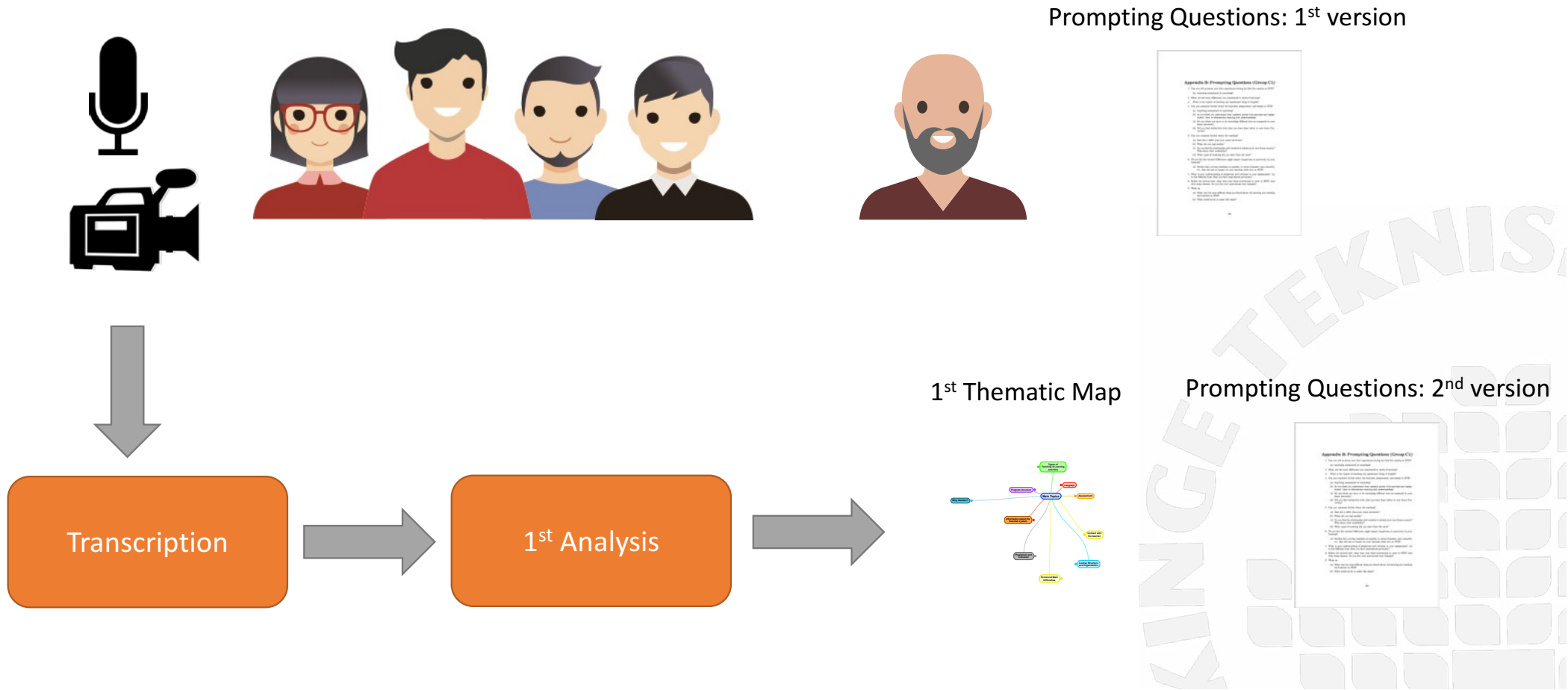
- *Group C1*: 4 students from the University of Science and Technology, Beijing, China. (out of 11 students)



- *Group I1*: 5 students from the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad, India. (out of 11 students)

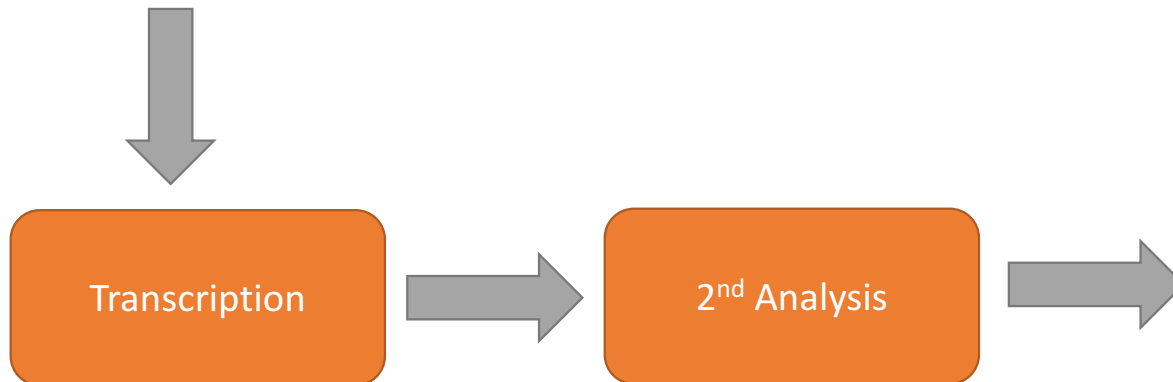


Structure of the Study: Group C1

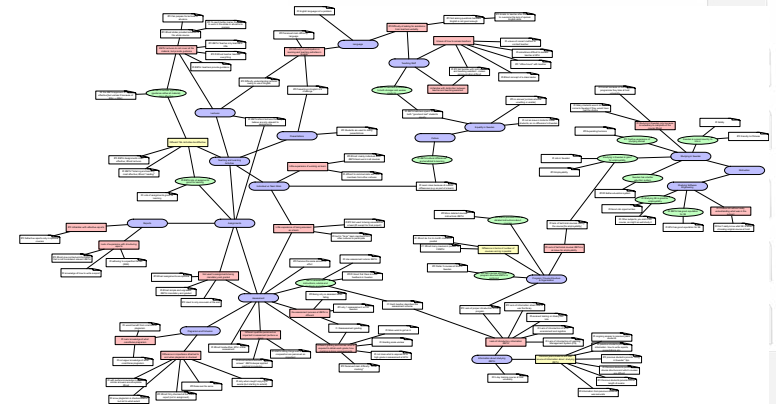


Structure of the Study: Group I1

Prompting Questions: 2nd version



2nd Thematic Map



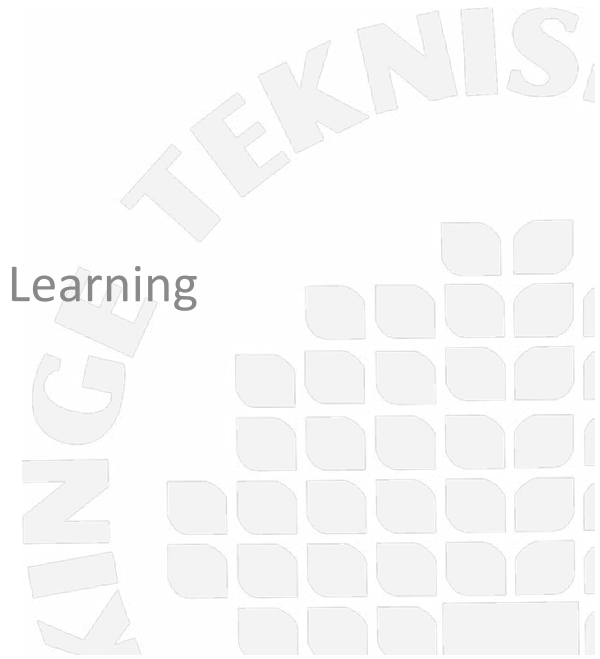


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Results of the Analysis

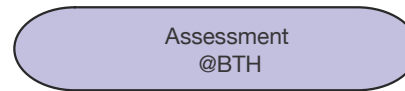
Analyzing the Impact of Differences in Academic Cultures on the Learning Experiences of Overseas Master's Students.



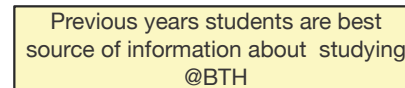
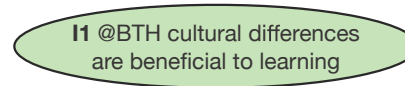


Legend

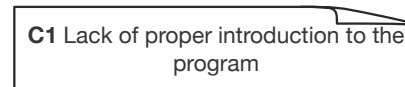
Main themes that are general pedagogical topic areas
(e.g., teaching and learning activities or assessment)



Sub-themes that typically correspond to academic
differences between BTH and partner universities



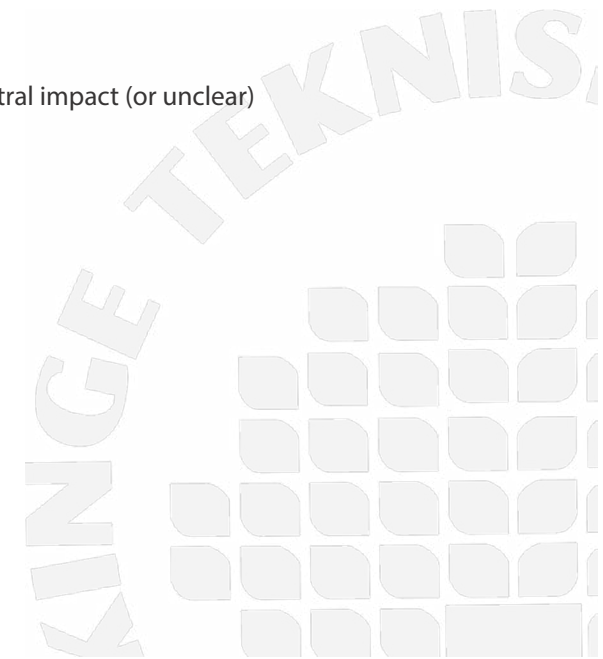
Codes derived from the transcript of the focus groups



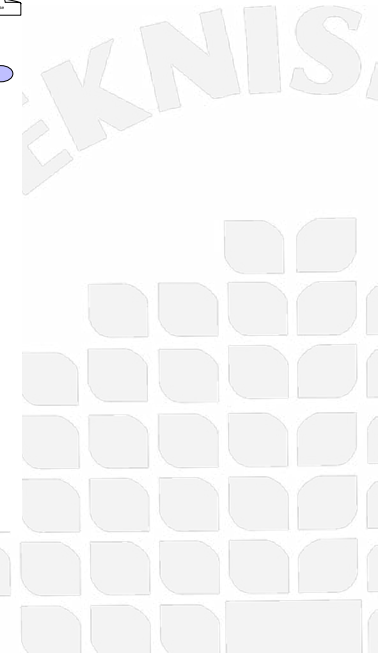
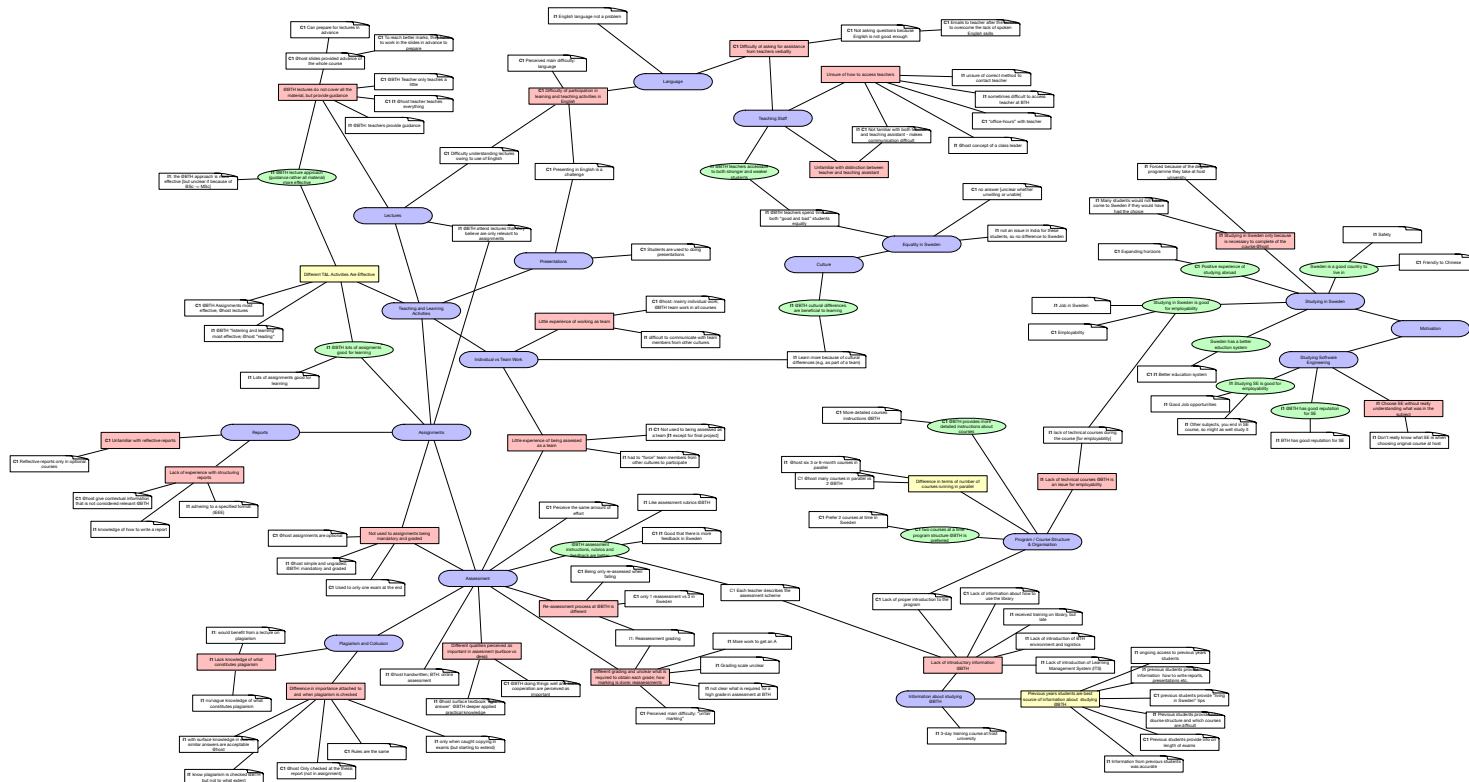
C1 Indicates Chinese group 1 & I1 indicates Indian group 1

Positive impact

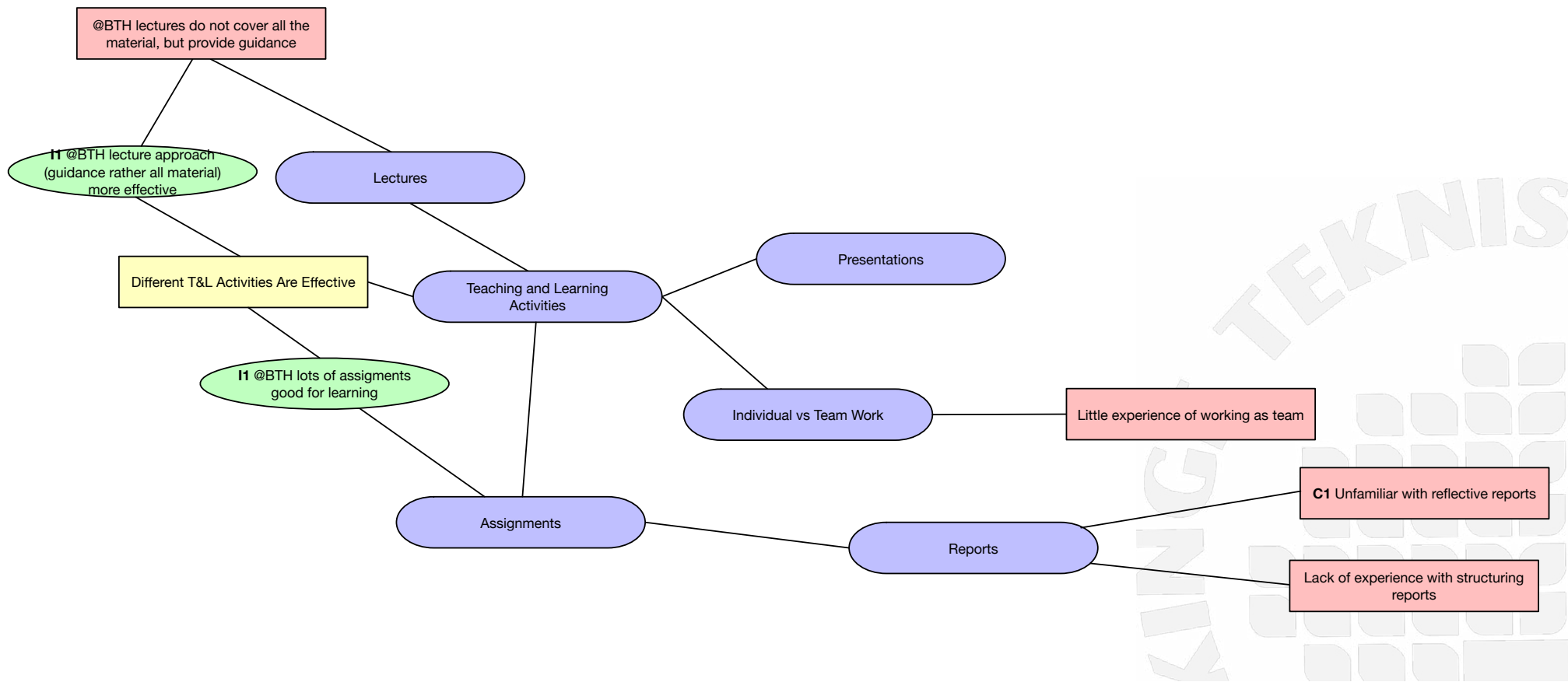
Neutral impact (or unclear)



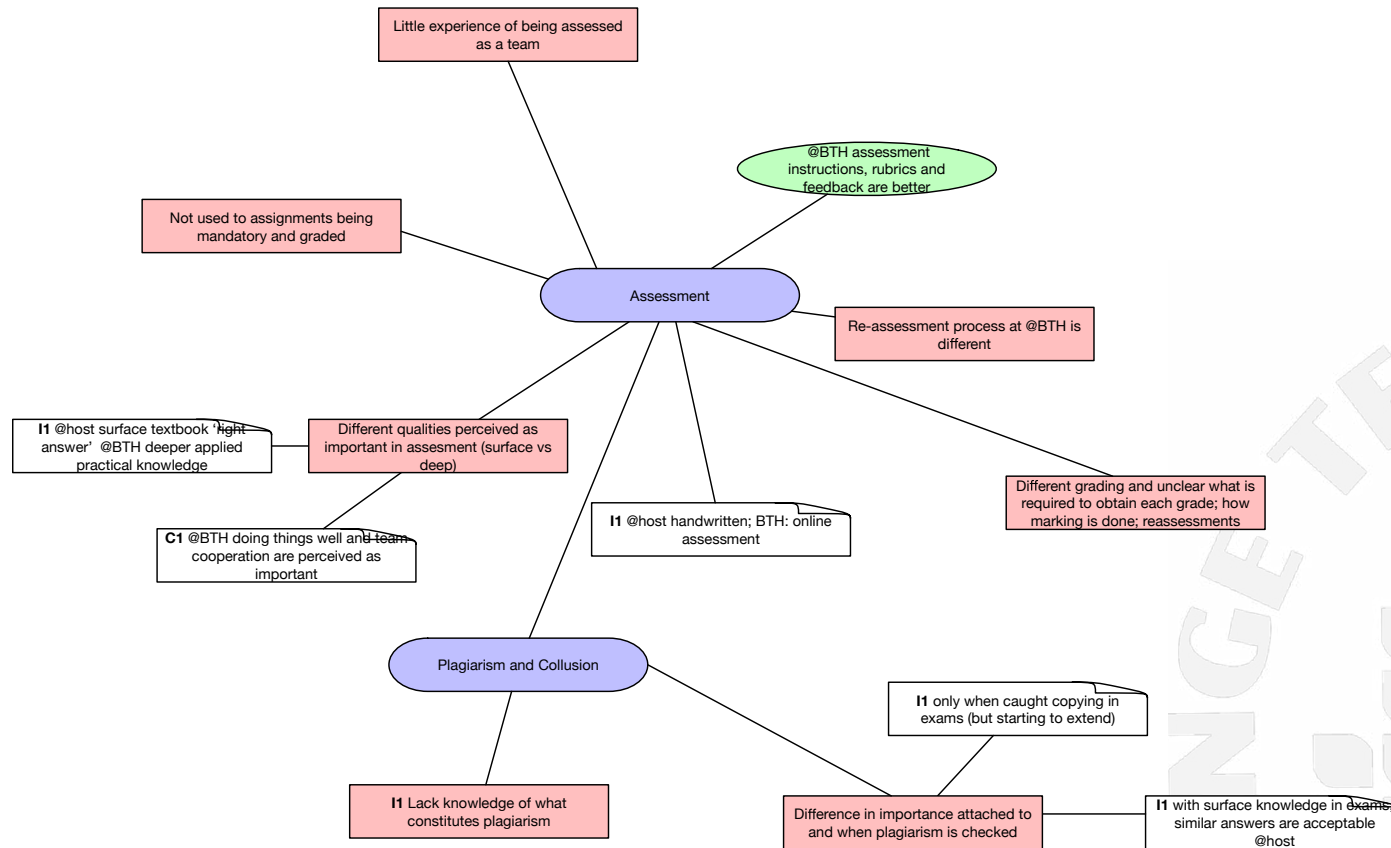
The Thematic Map



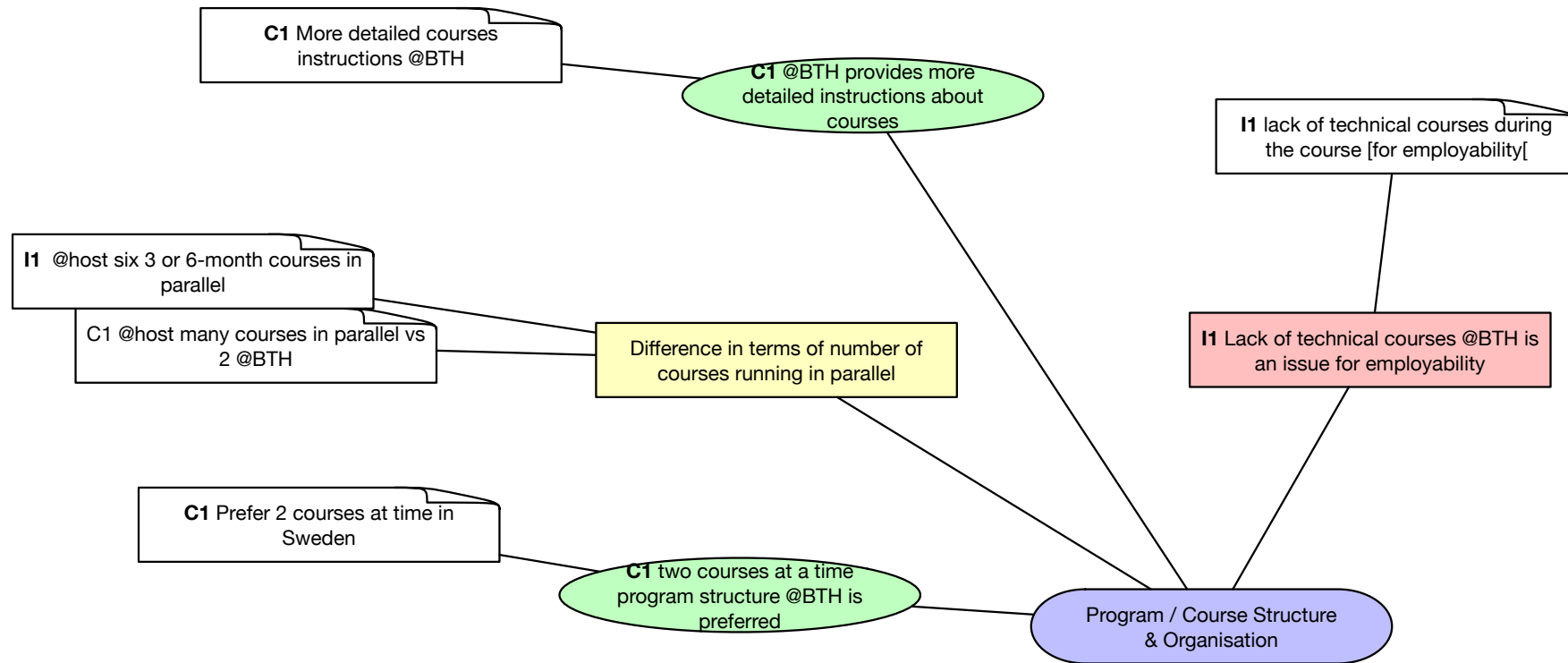
Teaching and Learning Activities



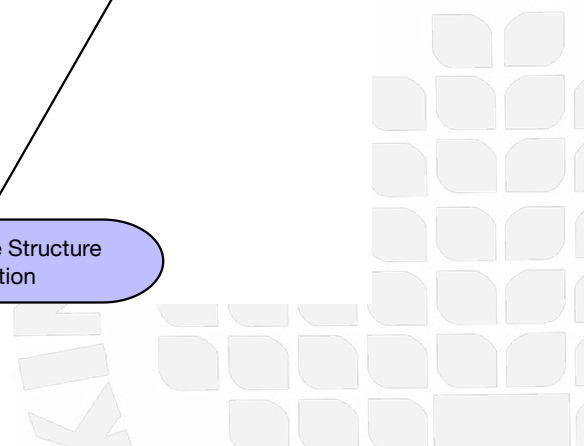
Assessment



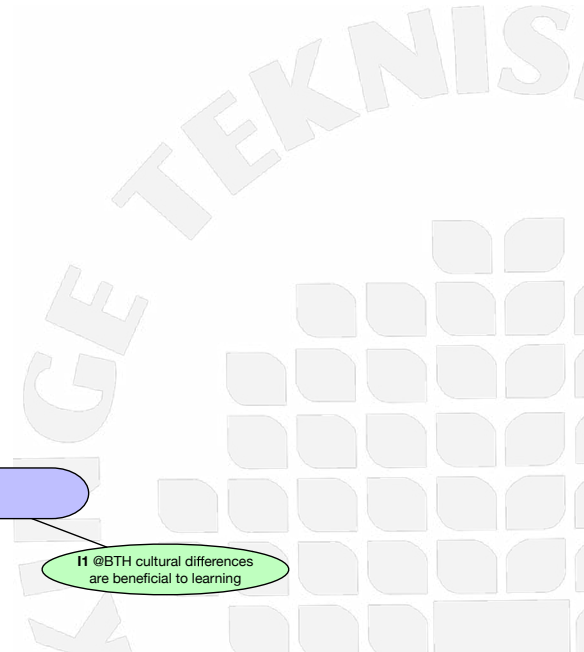
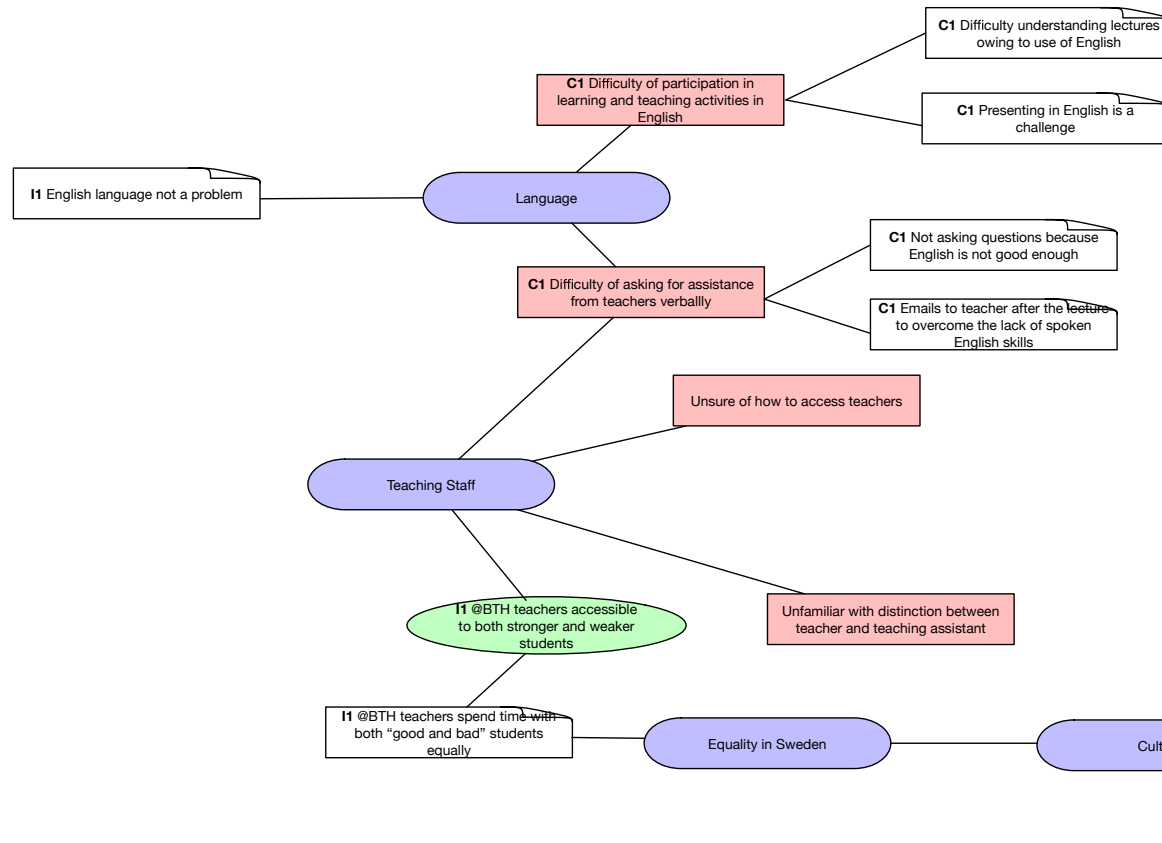
Program and Course Structure



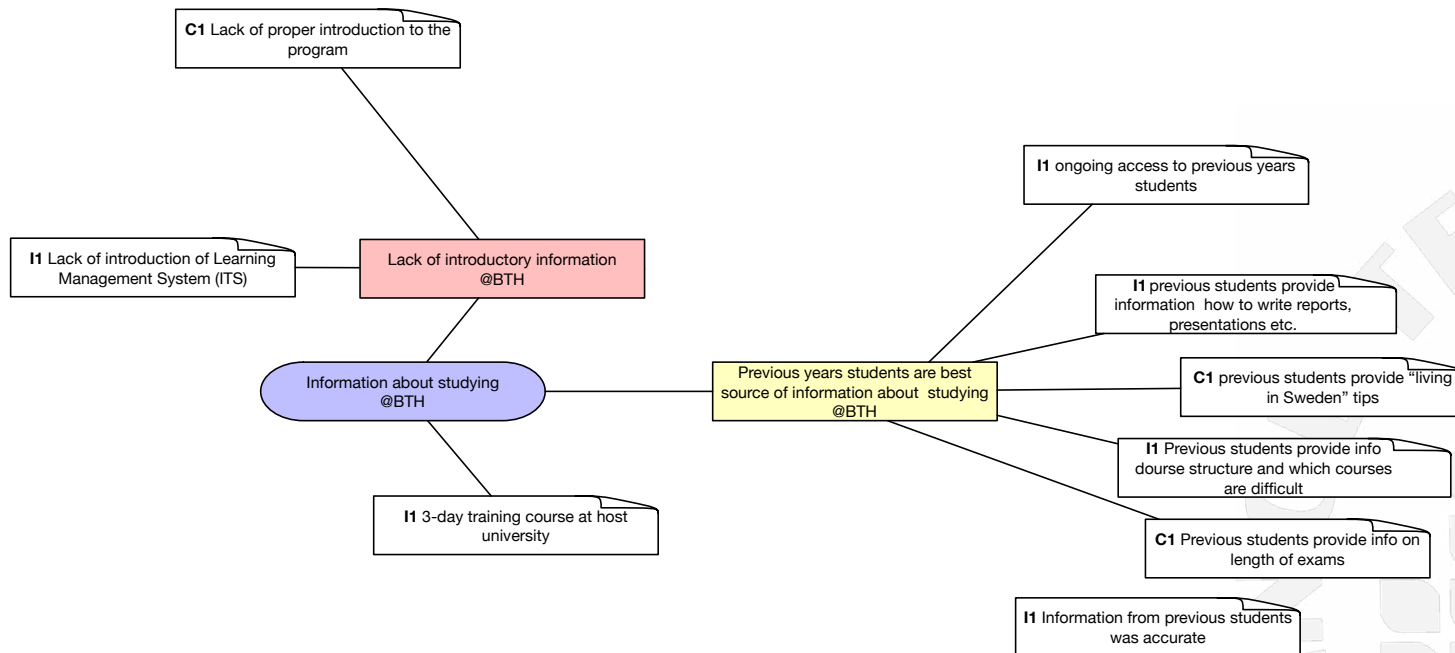
NIS



Language and Culture

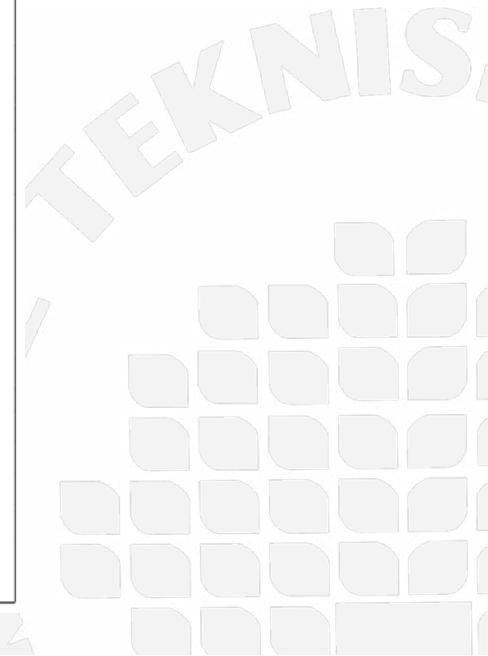


Information about Study @BTH



Main Results

Academic Difference	Impact
Unsure of how to access teachers for assistance	-
Unfamiliar with distinction between teacher and teaching assistant	-
Difficulty of asking for assistance from teachers verbally (C1 only)	-
Teachers are accessible equally to both stronger and weaker students (I1)	+
Difficulty of participation in learning and teaching activities in English (C1 only)	-
At BTH, lectures do not cover all the material exhaustively, but instead provide guidance	-
Different teaching and learning activities are regarded as the most effective	neutral
At BTH often required to work as a team, but little experience from host university	-
At BTH often assessed as a team, but little experience from host university	-
Many more assignments at BTH - and this is good for learning (I1 only)	+
Unfamiliar with how to write reflective reports (C1 only)	-
Lack of experience with structuring report assignments	-
At BTH, assignments throughout the courses are mandatory and are graded	-
At BTH, assessment instructions, rubrics, and feedback is much clearer	+
Re-assessment process at BTH is different	-
Marking and grading process at BTH is different, and unclear to students	-
Different qualities are perceived as being important in assessment: show deeper learning at BTH	-
Difference in importance attached to plagiarism and when it is checked	-
Lack knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism (I1 only)	-
Cultural differences at BTH are beneficial to learning (I1 only)	+
BTH provides more detailed instructions about course structure and organisation (C1 only)	+
Difference in the number of courses running in parallel	neutral
Two courses at a time is better structure for the programme at BTH (C1 only)	+
Lack of introductory information at BTH	-
Previous years' students are the best source of information about studying at BTH	neutral



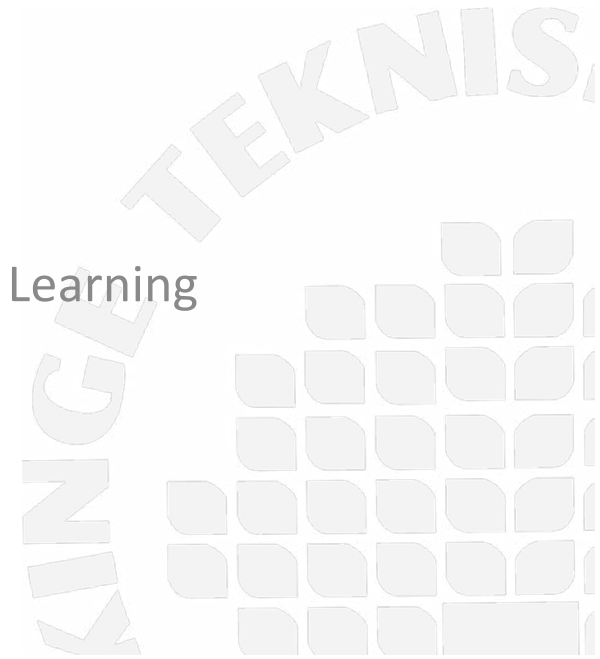


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Threats to the Validity

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Main Threats to the Validity

- **Validity:**
 - Mitigated by choosing a well know method to analyze this type of phenomena
- **Reliability:**
 - Subjectivity is rooted in this type of studies
 - Mitigated by fully transcribing the interviews and cross validating the classification and coding
- **Generalisability:**
 - With this study we do not aim for any kind of generalisability, but to understand the phenomena

Other Threats to the Validity

- Reluctance to express opinions in front of peers
- Reluctance to talk about certain problems in front of the professors
- Participants biased by their opinions regarding the courses taught by the researchers
- Reluctance to talk about unethical or compromising problems
- Language barriers
- Presence of the Class Leader

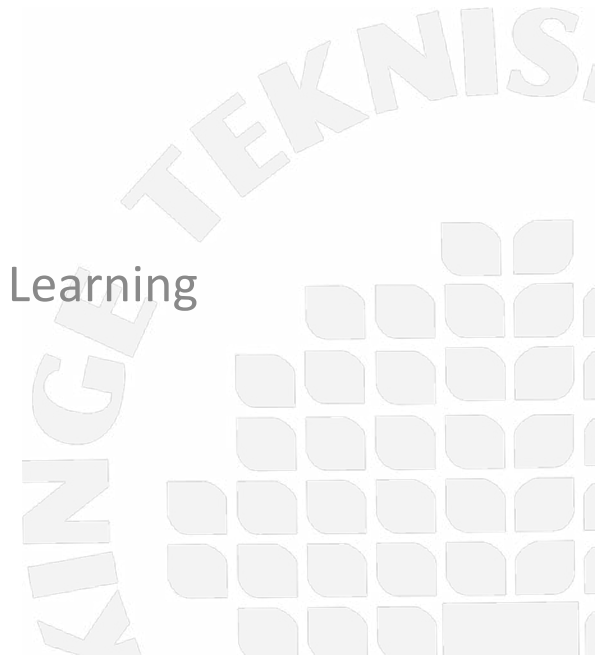


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Future Work

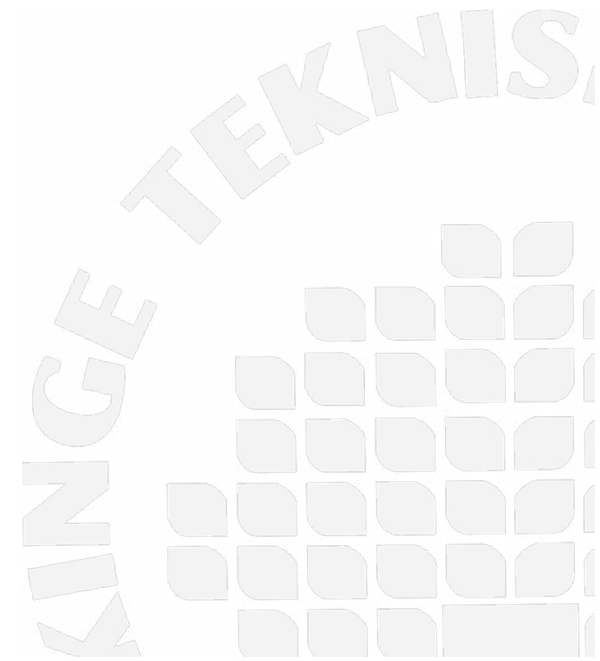
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Future Work

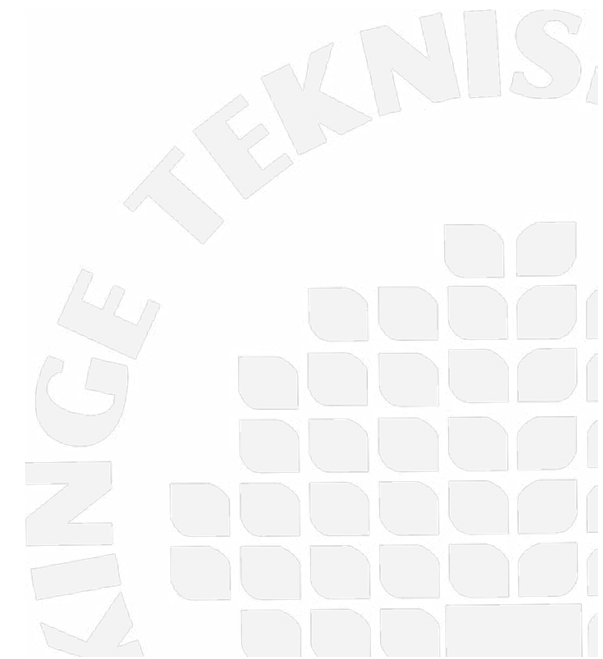
- To continue this work by conducting additional focus groups with cohorts from other universities
- We would also like to strength the reliability of the conclusions by interviewing
 - Program managers
 - Collaboration projects coordinators
 - Teachers both here and in their home universities



Future Work

Replications in other Settings / Universities?

You are more than welcome onboard!!!





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