

**Explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the
challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's
English-language training firms**

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August 28th, 2020

Candidate Declaration

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I certify that the dissertation entitled:

submitted for the degree of: **MSc in International Business Management** is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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Date: August 27th, 2020

Supervisor Name: Klaus Walter

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Date:

Dedication

This is dedicated to my family, thank you all for supporting me to pursue my dreams and finish my master's degree.

In particular, I would love to thank my husband who supported my studies and accompanied me in writing my dissertation day and night.

I also dedicate this work to appreciate all my friends who encouraged me and helped me a lot.

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Explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language training firms

Kang Hu

Abstract

The lack of foreign teachers makes effective management of remote foreign teachers be necessary for Chinese language training companies. The aim of this research is to explore the role of psychic distance and identify the challenges related to psychic distance in remote foreign teacher management in order to understand the challenges being faced in a more comprehensive way. To meet the research aims, this dissertation was based on an extensive review of relevant literature and the implementation of empirical research that was conducted through a case study strategy by using semi-structured interviews with remote foreign teachers and Chinese managers. This research generated a number of findings: the mechanism by which psychic distance plays its role in the remote management of foreign teachers lies in the effective communication between teachers and managers; Foreign teachers and Chinese managers have different views on cultural distance and its influence; Chinese government policies in the administrative distance are vague in terms of remote foreign teacher management; Time difference and network problems are the predominant challenges caused by geography; high human resource cost is not the leading challenge associated with economic distance. The main conclusions drawn from this study include: both managers' and team members' perception are important; although both managers and teachers realize the existence of cultural differences, managers haven't paid adequate attention to them in management; administrative distance with changing Chinese government policies which could directly affect online foreign teacher management which is uncontrollable; Geographic distance challenged managers more than foreign teachers; economic distance caused high operating costs for companies. This dissertation recommends that a sound communication mechanism should be established internally; taking culture-related training as a part of work in daily management; managers need to pay attention to government policies and update relevant news with foreign teachers; remote foreign teachers should be managed as a team, and should start with recruiting suitable candidates and establishing a reasonable promotion system to control operating costs.

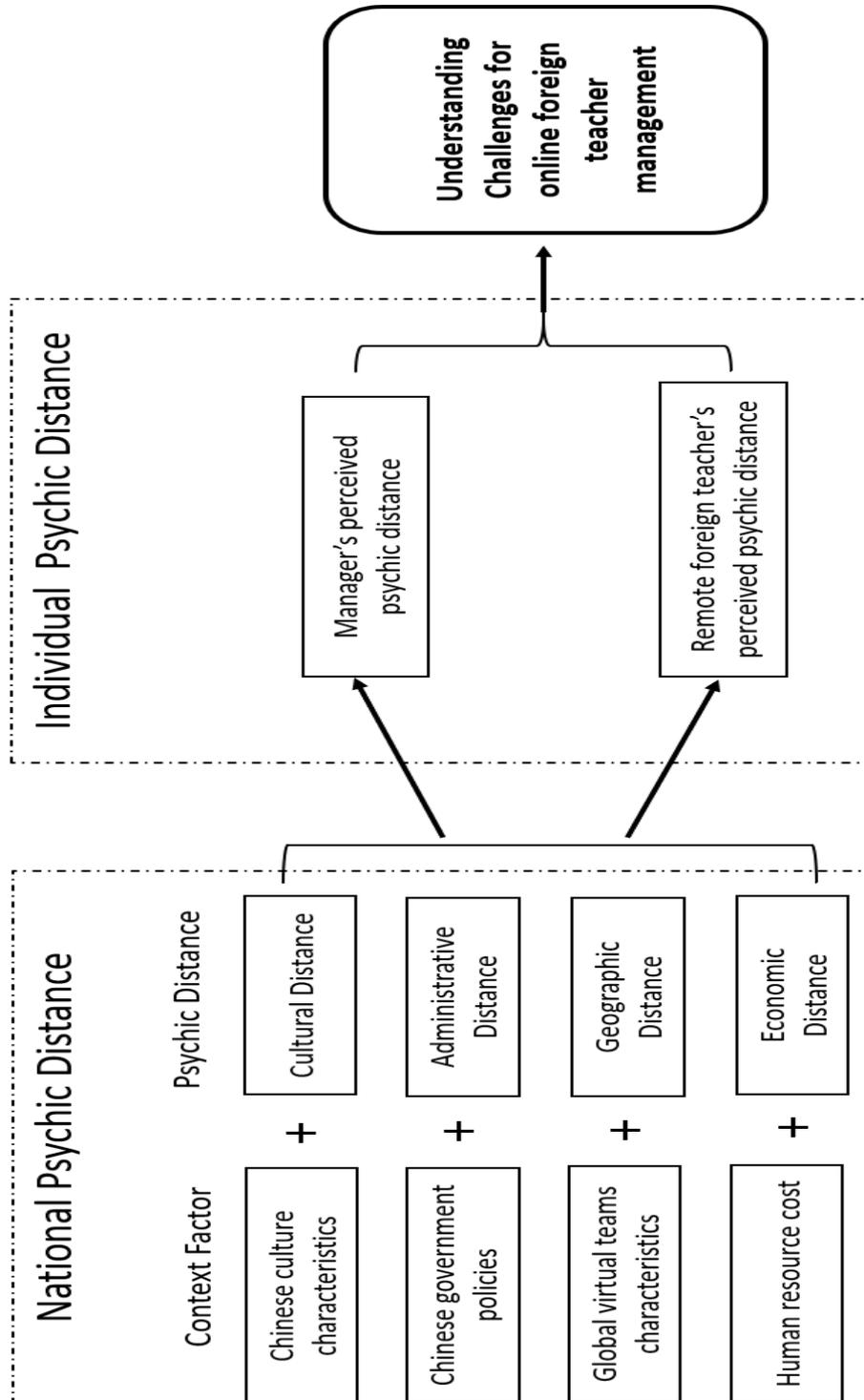
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1. The psychic distance Conceptual Framwork



2. Foreign teachers' view of psychic distance

Participant	Teaching Years	View of Psychic Distance
Teacher V	10 years	It gets to place an important role that we learn to understand one another.
Teacher E	About 3.5 years	It is important to give a lot of energy.
Teacher J	4 years	It is about some perceived differences between a home country and a foreign country.
Teacher A	5-6 years	I think that the longer you work, the less it gets.
Teacher H	4.5 years	It is something in your mind.
Teacher M	4-5 years	It makes me take the difference between China and my country into account when I was teaching.
Teacher D	6 years	It is inner thought reflected by real experience.

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3. Chinese managers' view of psychic distance

Participant	Working years	Size of company	View of Psychic Distance
Manager B	6 years	Large	It is about the difference between different culture or maybe different people or different ideas.
Manager S	2 years	Medium-sized	It is a kind of ideological difference that we often experience when dealing with people from other culture or countries.
Manager P	10 years	Small	Psychic distance includes many factors and communication is a very important way to shorten it.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The lack of teacher resources makes it more important to effectively manage geographically disperse foreign teachers for China's English-language training firms. Therefore, to better understand the challenges facing the management of online foreign teachers, it is necessary to introduce a more elaborate management concept that implies dealing with the challenges posed by the difference in terms of cultures, laws, geography, economy between China and foreign countries. Psychic distance, as a concept that has been applied to a lot of research areas widely, was taken into consideration. The study aims to explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers.

1.2 Research Purpose

The booming online English market in China has led to a surge in demand for English teachers. There were 300 million English learners in China according to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2018 (China Daily, 2019). And online learning, with 200m users and \$36.5bn of sales value in 2018, has become a big business in China over the past decade (Jia and Lucas, 2019). The value of China's online adult English market was estimated to be \$5.5 billion in 2019 and it was expected to grow by 15 to 17 percent every year. Meanwhile, "the market share of kids English is much higher by more than ten times" (Zhang, 2019). Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic makes distance education shine all over the world. The schools were closed in 185 countries and teachers had to switch to teaching online with crash training, as most of them lack of online teaching skills (Report, 2020).

However, the shortage of foreign language teachers is a longstanding issue worldwide (Kissau *et al.*, 2019). In 2016, the needed number of foreign teachers in the Chinese market was at least 100,000, while there were only 30,000 foreign teachers legally authorized by mainland China according to the Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs (Gamlam, 2016). The supply of teachers was even tighter since the Chinese government

decided to tighten supervision on after-school training centers in 2019 (XINHUANET, 2019) which caused increased difficulty in recruitment for online foreign teachers.

With the shortage of teacher resources, foreign teacher recruitment is more difficult and costly. Considering that, “the presence of an effective teacher is considered a major factor in a successful learning experience in any setting (Farmer and West, 2019)”. Therefore, how to manage the available foreign teacher resources effectively becomes more important. Nevertheless, the extant researches that relate to online education mainly focus on technology-related issues or training (Badia *et al.*, 2017) or teaching approaches from the perspective of pedagogy (Plutino, Borthwick, and Corradini,). A limited number of literatures pay attention to management of online teachers from a management perspective. However, they solely focus on the perspective of human resource management, such as the study of the career development path of teachers (Larkin, 2015). Foreign teacher management involves dealing with the challenges posed by the difference in terms of cultures, laws, geography, economy, and manager between China and foreign countries. Thus, to better understand the challenges facing the management of online foreign teachers, it is necessary to introduce a more comprehensive management concept.

Psychic distance, as a central focus of the international business literature for almost three decades, has been applied in many areas of business research (Sousa and Bradley, 2008). Although it is a controversial concept, the psychic distance has been applied to a multitude of research areas widely, such as foreign investment (Evans and Mavondo 2002, cited in Sousa and Bradley, 2006), international joint ventures (Hennart and Zeng 2002, cited in Sousa and Bradley, 2008), international market entry mode entry mode (Agarwal 1994, cited in Sousa and Bradley, 2006), international marketing strategy (Sousa and Bradley, 2005), new product development (Ganesan, Malte and Rindfleisch, 2005), and organizational performance (Evans and Mavondo 2002, cited in Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson, 2008). More specifically, it also refers to differences in language, culture, religions, education, political systems, business practices, level of development, time zone, and laws between the firm’s home country and the foreign country (Brewer, 2007), which matches with the field of online foreign teacher management.

Nonetheless, applying psychic distance to online foreign teacher management is a wholly new field that has not yet been developed. The research will take China’s

English-language training firms that hire foreign teachers remotely and transnationally as context. Additionally, as they will be regarded as having the same meaning, online foreign teachers and remote foreign teachers will be used interchangeably in this research.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Although the psychic distance concept has been used for many years, the applications of the concept are equivocal and the definition is controversial (Horner, Baack and Baack, 2016).

According to Sousa and Bradley (2005) there is no research has evaluated the role of psychic distance. Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson (2008) indicate that there is no clear consensus regarding the role of psychic distance in the current literature. While Griffith and Dimitrova (2014) argue that the psychic distance, as managerial perceptions, influences the development and implementation of strategic decisions. Based on its application, the main research directions in the literature in recent years include examining the impact of psychic distance on the international marketing strategy of the firm (Sousa and Bradley, 2005), studying the difference and connection of cultural distance and psychic distance (Sousa and Bradley, 2006, 2008), exploring the relationship between psychic distance and organizational performance (Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson, 2008), and constructing a measure index for the operationalization of psychic distance (Brewer, 2007).

Sousa and Bradley (2005, 2006, 2008) argues the psychic distance is the individual's perception of the difference between the home country and the foreign country. While Brewer (2007) agrees upon with the psychic distance is the impediment to information flows between a country market and a firm. Also, the psychic distance is defined as the distance between the home market and a foreign market that was caused by the perception difference towards both cultural and business” (Evans and Mavondo, 2002, cited in Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson, 2008). Similarly, Evans, Treadgold, & Mavondo (2000) suggest psychic distance represents the mind’s processing of cultural and business differences in terms of perception and understanding.

By introducing psychic distance into remote foreign teacher management, it not only provides a new way of thinking for effective management of online foreign teachers, but also extends the research scope of the psychic distance into the management field.

1.4 Research Objective

However, this study focuses on a comparatively young and underresearched area: online foreign teacher management. There is a lack of adequate research and a nuanced understanding of the application of the psychic distance in the management area, especially in online foreign teacher management. More specifically, I still know very little about the role of psychic distance. For this reason, in order to fill this gap in my knowledge, I decided to set out to address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of psychic distance?
2. What are the challenges in managing foreign teachers remotely, from the perspective of psychic distance?
3. How do online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance?
4. What do online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance?

These research questions will be answered to achieve the following corresponding objectives:

1. Identify the role of psychic distance.
2. Identify the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely.
3. Explore how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance.
4. Explore what online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance.

The first two objectives would be achieved in the Literature Review chapter, while Objective 3 and Objective 4 would be implemented through collecting and analysing of data. As you can see, the first two research objectives correspond to and the latter two. In Objective 1, the exploration of the role of psychic distance in the literature is based

on its definition, while Objective 3 will provide empirical data for it. And Objective 4 will provide empirical data for Objective 2.

1.5 Structure of the Study

This study begins with a presentation of theoretical foundations based on the literature review and follows it with brief outline of the conceptual framework. It then describes the methodology and research design. Next, it presents and discusses the findings. Finally, it concludes thoughts on the contribution of this research, its limitations, and suggestions for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter defines the term psychic distance, identifies the role of psychic distance in the management area, explores the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely, and justifies the need for empirical data on how Chinese managers and online foreign teachers view psychic distance and deal with relevant challenges.

As mentioned in the last chapter, the research within this literature review focuses on objective 1-Identify the role of psychic distance in management and 2-Identify the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely. Exploring the relevant areas of literature will lay a solid foundation for this study. The controversial definitions of psychic distance will be stated. And the role of psychic distance will be examined. Moreover, the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely will be explored. Notably, the value of reviewing the literature will provide a meaningful discussion and analysis of psychic distance, in a structured way that will allow us to understand the role of psychic distance plays in discerning the relevant challenges in online foreign teacher management. First and foremost, a sensible starting point is to investigate the meaning of the term psychic distance.

2.2 Defining Psychic Distance

Psychic distance is a concept of continuous extension and development in business literature. The initial reference on psychic distance could be dated back to Beckerman's article where he made a conclusion that both geographic distance and psychic distance may affect trade flows and used the term “psychic distance” for the first time (Magnusson, Schuster and Taras, 2014, Sousa and Bradley, 2006, Kokko and Tingvall, 2014). But psychic distance, as a concept, started to be widely accepted and cited in international business literature since the Uppsala internationalization school defined it as “the sum of factors preventing or disturbing the flows of information between firm and markets”(Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975, cited in Brewer, 2007, Magnusson *et al.*, 2014). Although the original concept had undergone subtle changes, it did not affect its widespread use in different research topics. Especially around the mid-1990s, psychic distance revealed a broad potential application, with 29% of topics concentrated on market selection and 25% of topics focused on outcomes caused by entry mode (Ambos and Håkanson 2014). Nevertheless, from the accepted initial conceptualization to selectively reification in recent years and uncritically used in various phenomena such as knowledge flow, team performance etc, psychic distance has been a controversial but powerful concept.

In order to put the concept into real world use, Kogut and Singh simply equate psychic distance with cultural distance based on Hofstede's identification and measurement of cultural dimensions (Dow and Larimo, 2009, Håkanson and Ambos, 2010). While Tanurea, Barcellosb, and Fleuryc (2009) argue the psychic distance is broader than culture distance in terms of definition. Meanwhile, Down and Larimo (2009) argued that the broader measuring factors should be taken into account not just national culture.

Unfortunately, although Brewer (2007) identified 15 variables to construct a measurable psychic distance index and analysed the relationship between the variables and the psychic distance to improve the understanding and operationalization of psychic distance, the research still focused on the differences between the firm's home country and the target country for the entry mode. Until Evans *et al.*, (2008) studied the relationship between psychic distance and organizational performance in the area of international retailing, which provided a new perspective of expendable range. Subsequently, Magnusson, Schuster, and Taras (2014) claimed studying the relationship

between psychic distance and performance and introducing the possible variables that may influence the relationship to explore psychic distance at the team level. However, that study just provided the conclusion that the psychic distance may have a positive rather than negative influence without analysis on how the psychic distance affected team performance.

While following Evans, Treadgold, and Mavondo's note that the psychic part relates to the individual's mind and the distance part is about how the world is perceived. The psychic distance was defined as "the individual's perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country" by Sousa and Bradley (2005), in order to evaluate the importance of psychic distance for selecting international marketing strategies. Subsequently, Sousa and Bradley (2006) distinguished psychic distance and cultural distance and concluded that "the psychic distance concept should be applied at the individual level" and "the cultural distance concept should be applied at the country level". On this basis, they refined both conceptualisation and measurement by claiming that both cultural distance and psychic distance are related, as the cultural distance could be an important determinant of psychic distance (Sousa and Bradley, 2008). In my perspective, the gradual and in-depth exploration and exemplification by Bradley and Sousa made the concept become solid enough. Hence, in this research, I will adopt the concept they elaborated, namely "Psychic distance is the individual's perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country" (Sousa and Bradley, 2005, 2006) as a theoretical basis.

Psychic distance, as a national-level distance, was employed in the online teaching industry means breaking new ground. "For more than three decades, commentators have suggested that distance is a multidimensional construct and should encompass factors such as differences in culture, language, religion, education, political systems, and industrial development (Dow and Larimo, 2009)." Based on this, psychic distance is equal to differences in the national-level and industrial-level. While Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson (2008, cited in Griffith and Dimitrova, 2014) indicate business and cultural distance are two aspects of psychic distance, which they were "employed as dimensions of a second-order construct". Therefore, to understand the role of psychic distance, we should construct a multidimensional perspective. According to Ghemawat (2001), the CAGE distance framework considers four distances including cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic, not only takes care of national distance but

also is fruitfully applied at the industry level. Despite this, there is no evidence showing whether all distances are equally important or not, even if Ghemawat (2007) accumulates a great deal of solid empirical bases. This research will borrow the CAGE distance framework theory to understand comprehensively on how psychic distance plays a significant part in understanding the challenges in online foreign teacher management. Accordingly, exploring the role of psychic distance is imperative.

2.3 The Role of Psychic Distance

As the psychic distance concept has been broadened, the role of psychic distance has been explored broadly such as the role of psychic distance in international marketing strategy (Sousa and Bradley, 2005), the role of psychic distance on how SMEs decision-makers coping with difficulties in international business (Child, Rodrigues, and Frynas, 2009), the moderating role of psychic distance on joint action and intercultural communication in cross-border exchanges (Johnston et al., 2012), the role of psychic distance in the collection and interpretation of information about business opportunities in foreign countries (Håkanson, 2014), the role of psychic distance in biasing humanitarian aid donations by individuals and fundraising for international humanitarian aid (Mittelman and Dow, 2018), contradictory roles of psychic distance in entry mode decisions including magnifying the threat of opportunism and increasing the need for local knowledge (Dow, Baack and Parente, 2020). However, there is still no clear consensus with respect to role of psychic distance (Evans, Mavondo, and Bridson, 2008) though the initial try to explore the role of psychic distance started in the 1970s (Kokko and Tingvall, 2014).

In line with the aforementioned concept of psychic distance, “it is the individual’s perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country that shapes the psychic distance concept (Sousa and Bradley 2005, 2006)”. Thus, exploring the role of psychic distance is associated with the exploration of individual’s perceived differences. Zaheer, Schomaker, and Nachum expressed that “international management is the management of distance” (2012, cited in Ambos and Håkanson 2014). With regard to the role of psychic distance, it cannot be applied directly rather has an influence on things as a predictor or mediator as “it is the mind’s processing, in terms of perception” (Evans and Mavondo, 2002).

Though psychic distance is subjectively conceived (Evans & Mavondo, 2002) and its impact on everybody in the company is not the same (Ojala and Tyrväinen, 2009), Sousa and Bradley state “psychic distance captures the manager’s individual perception of the differences between the home and the host country and is a highly subjective interpretation of reality”(2006, cited in Ojala and Tyrväinen, 2009). Additionally, the psychic distance was defined "as the manager’s perceptions of environmental factors that are believed to influence her/his decisions when considering the perceptual facet of distance (Nebus & Chai, 2014, Magnani, Zucchella, and Floriani, 2018)". Given the importance of manager’s (decision-makers') perception, there are more researchers explore the role of psychic distance through studying how the manager affects psychic distance. For example, Fletcher and Bohn (1998) argue the perceptions by managers of psychic distance lead manager to choose a psychically close overseas market to enter for reducing the uncertainties. Dow and Karunaratna (2006), indicate a manager’s perception of psychic distance influences his or her choices to which market to export. While Mavondo, and Bridson (2008) emphasize management’s perception of the environment is very important in the literature on the internationalization of the organization. In those cases, managers make decisions which lead to direct outcome in business activities. From this point of view, what the manager perceived matters a lot.

In a similar vein, the managers' perception plays an important role when it was put in the management of online foreign teachers. As the individual experiences of managers, influence on perceptions of psychic distance (Horner, Baack, and Baack, 2016). While managing online foreign teachers is like managing a global virtual team (GVT), which will be referred with further details in the later section. Moreover, GVT management requires dealing with cultural diversity, virtuality, and geographic dispersion including conduct cross-cultural training, offer technology training, and develop a career promotion (Adamovic, 2018). This implies the role of managers to be comprehensive and considerable. This research does not deny the role of a manager's perception, but a team member's perception should also be paid attention to. Especially in management, team members and decision-makers are interrelated. For example, the information provided by team members could be a part of managers' perception.

Additionally, “members of GVTs are under similar pressures to accomplish the organizations’ objectives” (Magnusson, Schuster, and Taras, 2014). Thus, individual foreign teacher’s perceptions should be taken into account as well regarding exploring

the role of psychic distance on foreign teacher management remotely. Unfortunately, there is even a dearth of literature that pays attention to non-decision maker's perceptions. Simultaneously, there is still no research has evaluated the role of psychic distance and its direct linkage to the management of remote foreign teachers. For this reason, on data collection and analysis, I interviewed different foreign teachers in order to get more favourable examples to justify it.

Furthermore, for studying the role of psychic distance, in particular how to apply it in practice, a pile of researchers expands the research extent based on its definition, differences that individuals' perceived. And various trends of measuring psychic distance up until the mid-2000s were formed (Mittelman and Dow, 2018). One of the trends focuses on national-Level exogenous differences (Dow and Larimo, 2009) which was also defined as psychic distance stimuli by Dow and Karunaratna (2006). The other one of them refers to measure decision-makers' overall perceptions of psychic distance (Håkanson et al. 2016). However, though exogenous national differences expand the range of measurement dimensions of psychic distance, those dimensions were assumed to be constant. Conversely, they change over time. "It may be inappropriate to assume homogeneity or stability in factors such as language, ethnicity, religion, and education across a single country" (Shenkar ,2001, Mittelman and Dow, 2018). In the meanwhile, individual perceptions between the home countries and foreign countries could be asymmetric (Hakanson and Ambos, 2010, Hakanson,2014). For example, the difference that the manager in country A perceived towards country B may different from what a manager in country B perceived towards country A. Therefore, to circumvent these problems, how to measure psychic distance is not the objective to discuss in this research.

On the other hand, Hajro and Pudelko (2010) indicate the context of organization shapes to leader's behavior to a large extent and "that it is difficult to understand their role without explicit consideration of the institutional context". Similarly, Dow and Karunaratna (2006) suggest measuring managers' perceptions should ideally conduct when the decision is made". More specifically, Nebus and Chai (2014), argue "perception is the manager's interpretation of the extent of his/her consciousness of foreign context elements relevant to the firm's decision". Those arguments illustrate the specific context factor should be involved when referring to psychic distance.

Hence, drawing on the ideas of different researchers, I will start from national-level multi-dimensions (namely CAGE distance framework theory as mentioned in previous section) related to psychic distance and fully consider the context factor of each dimension, when exploring the challenges faced by online foreign teacher management in the following section.

2.4 The Challenges Related to Psychic Distance in Managing Foreign Teachers Remotely

2.4.1 Cultural Distance

“Cultural distance includes differences in language and social norms (Child, Rodrigues, and Frynas, 2009).” From the 1980s to 2000s, cultural distance, as a concept, was substantially popular and even arguably exceed psychic distance in terms of citation frequency (Dow and Larimo, 2009). And the debate about their relationship or differentiation occurred very often. Followed Kogut and Singh (1988, cited in Fletcher and Bohn,1998), the cultural distance was used as a proxy for psychic distance. But Sousa and Bradley (2006, 2008) pointed out cultural distance and psychic distance are both different and interrelated. “Cultural distance is expected to be an important determinant of psychic distance”. So, they should not be used interchangeably. At the same time, Dow and Karunaratna (2006) argued that cultural distance is one of the components of psychic distance theoretically. After integrating the former two kinds of arguments, Dow and Larimo (2009) state cultural distance could be narrowed to the national cultural distance that refers to differences in cultural values at the national level. As one of the various types of psychic distance stimuli, it enables us to "highlight the other distance factors such as differences in language and religion".

Since this research explores the management of online foreign teachers in Chinese companies, Chinese culture characteristics are taken granted as a context factor. Though language was defined as one of the vital components of psychic distance, there is no adequate empirical investigation on differences in languages (Dow and Karunaratna, 2006). As Craig and Douglas (2006) state "communication is a key element of culture while language is a key component of communication". We can deem language is one of the manifestations of culture. However, the Chinese language is wholly different from English which may be the first challenge for both Chinese managers and foreign

teachers during the communication. For example , "Chinese language is full of ambiguous meanings that can be difficult for western people to follow" (Stober, 2014).

Moreover, language and culture are inseparable and interdependent as the "forms and uses of a given language mirror the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken" (Choudhury, 2013). National culture reflects "the degree to which the cultural norms in one country are different from those in another country" (Sousa and Bradley, 2008). It is made up of shared values and norms system from the nationals. And those values and norms reflect in life and work (Hill, 2011 cited in Horner *et al.*2016). Combining with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, Stober (2014) observes that the different characters that Chinese culture distinguished with western culture, such as personal relationships take precedence over task and company; give priority to work rather than family and leisure; feel comfortable with uncertainty. Furthermore, AU, al et (2010) argued the Chinese culture emphasizes "values of authority, hierarchy, the subordination of individual rights and interests". When those cultural differences are reflected in the management of remote foreign teachers, problems that may arise encompasses misunderstandings caused by language barriers; foreign teachers cannot adapt to the way that Chinese managers manage them, for example, Chinese managers may manage foreign teachers in the same way as they did to Chinese employees, which is requiring the teachers to obey all instructions absolutely.

2.4.2 Administrative Distance

Government policies, as one of the attributes that create administrative distance, play a significant role in international activities (Ganesan *et al.*, 2005). Online English-language training, as a booming industry in China in recent years, is inevitably affected by Chinese government policies. Chinese government policies thereby are the context factor related to administrative distance. The Chinese government encourages the business development of online language training companies on the one hand, and gradually regulates the market by increasing various requirements on the other hand. With the increasing demand for higher education (Ding *et al.*, 2010) and the development of wireless wideband technology and application service leading the high development of the internet in China (Gang Ding, 2010), the Chinese government planned to accelerate the process of digital education by upgrading the level of informatization in elementary and secondary high schools and encouraging higher

institutions to involve high-quality online courses in their teaching plans. Furthermore, the government also encouraged social resources to take part in the project to explore the market-oriented operations way jointly. Hence, China's online education industry is booming with a lot of new online education companies that were established, and a large number of students registered (Huang, 2015). Consequently, online foreign teachers are in great need.

At the same time, as one of three formats of distance education, online education was regulated by the Chinese government including setting up teaching and curriculum standards and conducting teaching quality assessment (Ding *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, in 2018 and 2019, the Chinese government successively issued a series of policies to rectify online training institutions. Among them, policies related to the management of foreign teachers include that teachers employed by online education institutions must have corresponding teacher qualifications in accordance with the guidelines. Foreign teachers hired by training institutions should abide by relevant national regulations, and their study, work and teaching experience must be made public in their platforms (XINHUANET, 2019). These policies are not only contrary to the fact that online foreign teachers are urgently needed, but also tend to increase difficulty in foreign teacher management for those training firms. For the company, these policies do not give more specific implementation details such as what is the standards for corresponding teacher qualification. Likewise, for foreign teachers, they may worry about their personal privacy exposure.

Moreover, according to Lehdonvirta (2018) and Hagiú and Wright (2019), online foreign teachers, providing their teaching service remotely on the appointed platform over the Internet and paid by piece-rate (usually by per class) could be defined as “gig workers”. But it is not clear about how to classify their legal identification, regarded as employees or independent contractors. Therefore, there is no unified law apply for protecting their rights (Hagiú and Wright, 2019). Even if the online teachers have to work with their own equipment including home-based broadband, personal computer, and headset (Shade, 2018), they were classified as independent contractors instead of employees in order to cut costs and avoid employment-related liability.

However, the teachers were controlled like traditional employees (Steinberger, 2018). Hence, like other gig workers, the foreign online teachers bear the inherent risks, such as no health benefits, no pension plan, no stability, no formal labor protection, no tax

withholding, and not eligible to access basic healthcare insurance. Also, they have to pay for the securing insurance (car, home, health) by themselves (Anderson and Um, 2015, cited in Shade, 2018). These situations result in online teachers' concern for teaching online, which directly exacerbated the difficulties in recruitment and also increased the cost of companies.

2.4.3 Geographic Distance

Geographic distance is the physical separation between the two countries (Hutzschenreuter, Kleindienst and Lange, 2014). Unlike cultural distances changes over time (Dow and Larimo, 2011), geographic distance is relatively stable. In international trade literature, geographic distance was regarded as a factor of impediment due to the related transportation and communication costs. Though these costs have declined greatly over the past decades. However, both the associated monitoring costs and coordination demands caused by time differences were argued to increase (Hutzschenreuter, Kleindienst and Lange, 2014, Shenkar, 2001, Håkanson and Ambos, 2010). Magnania, Zucchellaa, and Florianib (2018) state that “geographic distance is measured as the spatial distance between the centres of a pair of countries or as the distance between their capital cities”. While Ghemawat (2001, 2007) argues that the difference in time zone and man-made geographic attributes including the country's communication infrastructures need to be taken into account except for indicating physical distance between the capitals of the two countries, when refers to geographic distance. However, there are few studies about the difference in time zones in the literature. Although the Internet has been developed dramatically in a recent decade, it is a problem to cross-time zone for management. For example, it increases uncertainty when there is a need to communicate instantly (Dow and Karunaratna, 2006). Extension to the management of online foreign teachers, Chinese managers need to span jet lag to manage foreign teachers from different countries. Moreover, just like the Internet has not eradicated the impact of geographic distance on trade intensity even if with the improvement in communication technologies (Ojala, 2015). Unexpected internet connection issues also could be challenges for online foreign teacher management need to tackle due to the complex network environment. Online teaching has high requirements for teachers' proficiency in using technologies such as teaching platform operations, and relies on technical support provided by the company to solve technical problems that occur during classes (Farmer and West, 2019).

As preceding notes, managing online foreign teachers, across geographic distances and time zones, who are located in different countries or areas, is consistent with the feature of global virtual team. Wherefore the characteristics of GVTs will be adopted as a context factor to explore the challenges related to geographic distance.

GVTs are made up of multinational members in two or more countries and communicate relying on communication technology instead of face-to-face interaction (Adamovic, 2018). With characters of “culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, electronically communicating” (Lindner and Brien, 2019), It demonstrates “a group of people who work interdependently with a shared purpose across space, time and organization boundaries using technology” (Lipnack and Stamps, 2000, cited in Magnusson *et al.*, 2014). Likewise, the online foreign teachers, have different nationalities, are located in different countries or places and work for a Chinese training company. The Chinese manager has to manage this multinational team by spanning countries, time zones, languages. While the management can only carry out via communicating online and formulating rules and corresponding penalties. For example, strict scheduling for online teaching becomes a vital tool for managing foreign teachers because of geographic distance (Hung and Lee, 2012).

But according to Adamovic (2018) there are difficulties for GVTs to communicate and coordinate effectively due to geographic dispersion. And the communication between team members highly depends on electronically which required the team members with skills on computer-based communication and technologies. Therefore, the company not only was required to provide basic technology training for teachers (Badia *et al.*, 2017), but also needs to be equipped with a technical support team that can communicate with teachers in English. In the meanwhile, geographic distance may affect manager’s daily communication and training cycle due to the time difference, the limitation of communication methods, and the feedback delay.

2.4.4 Economic Distance

The attributes economic distance includes differences in consumer incomes, differences in costs and quality of natural resources, financial resources, human resources, infrastructure, intermediate inputs and information or knowledge (Ghemawat, 2001). Although Ghemawat (2001) consider the income of consumer is the most important one, it just towards international trade. Meanwhile, though economic distance

associated with psychic distance is often mentioned in the international business literature, there are only a few scholars have studied in-depth the influences on economic distance in regard to foreign market selection (Magnania, Zucchellaa, and Florianib, 2018).

Online education was thought costly because of the more staff and technology to get involved in operation (Poulin and Straut, 2018). Online foreign teachers, as a scarce resource in the online education industry, its costs are inevitably involved in the management. Hence, in this research, the human resource cost will be regarded as a context factor related to economic distance.

Ghemawat (2007) argues that high per-capita income is associated with higher labor costs. Similarly, Ladd (2007) claims " the richer a country is as measured by its GDP, the higher competing salaries are". As distance education is still in a marginalized position in China, distance tutors are inferior to traditional teachers in terms of resources, social status, professional development, and income (Xiao, 2016). However, the Chinese online education companies usually prefer native English speakers who are from mainly English-speaking countries especially from the UK, US, Canada, Australia (Cheng, 2018). Therefore, the companies have to pay higher salaries in order to attract foreign teachers, which results in high operation costs.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

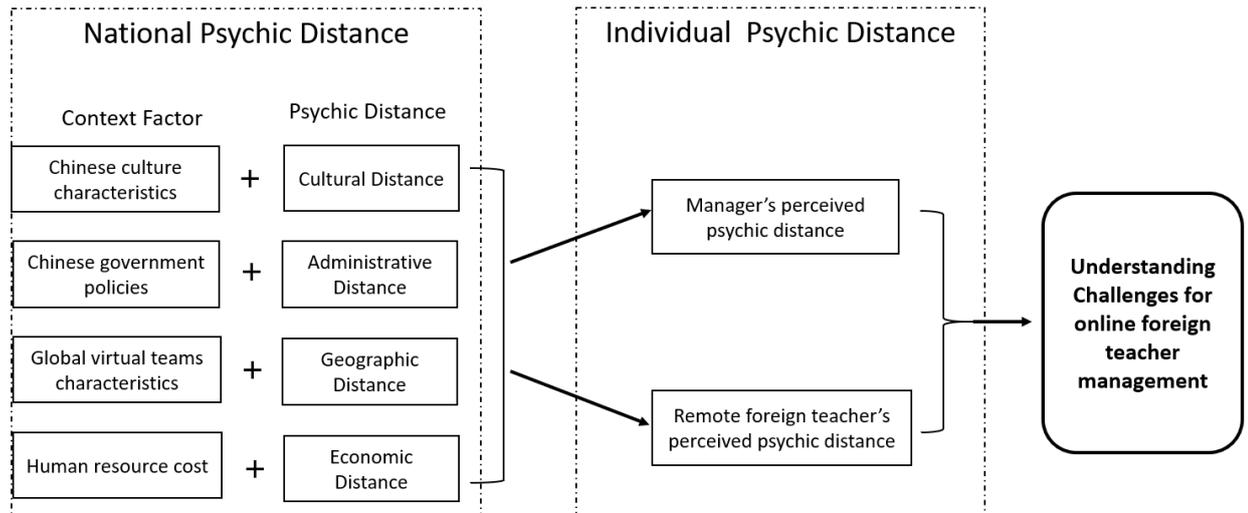
Based on studying preceding relevant literature, psychic distance is a contentious concept even if it has been investigated and constantly developed in the business literature. To start with the initial used of psychic distance, I witness its concept was extended and applied to different topics. But the core of psychic distance is the individual's perception of the differences. To align with the topic of this research, the adopted concept thereby is "individual's perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country" (Sousa and Bradley, 2005, 2006).

The review of literature identified the role of psychic distance in management. Namely having an influence on perception process as a predictor or mediator. Furthermore, in online foreign teacher management area, the differences that were perceived both by foreign teacher manager and foreign teachers play a significant role. In order to understand how the psychic distance has an influence on coping with the challenges for

online foreign teacher management, there is a need to identify the challenges associated with psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely. According to Dow and Larimo (2009) psychic distance incorporates two dimensions which are national-level differences and individual-level differences. Also, Ghemawat (2001) argued that CAGE distance framework could help managers identify and evaluate the impact of distance on different industries. It models differences in terms of the distances between countries along with a variety of cultural, administrative, geographic and economic dimensions (Ghemawat, 2007), which is in accordance with online foreign teacher management refers to dealing with the challenges caused by the differences in terms of cultures, laws, geography, economy, and companies' management. Additionally, Horner, Baack, and Baack (2016) employed CAGE distance framework as the component of psychic distance at national level.

Furthermore, Hajro and Pudelko (2010) claim the context factor should be involved when referring to psychic distance. Since the basic context is in the Chinese language-training company, it is necessary to understand the challenges may occur by combining the cultural distance with the Chinese cultural characteristics (Stober, 2014) reflects in the workplace. Ganesan et al. (2005) mentioned that government policy difference is one of the attributes of administrative distance which is significant for international activities. However, online English training, as an industry that rises rapidly in China recently relying on the support of technology and capital (Huang, 2015), is greatly influenced by China's foreign policy and the government's basic policies towards education. Like managing other global virtual teams, online foreign teacher management has to deal with communication problems and technical issues, due to the geographic dispersion and time difference (Farmer and West, 2019). Moreover, the human resource cost in foreign countries is different from the home country as one of the features of economic distance (Ghemawat, 2001). Similarly, the living cost and the minimum hourly wage of online foreign teachers' resident places are higher than that of China. Hence, the Chinese language-training firms have to pay a higher hourly pay to attract and retain teachers.

Accordingly, building on the concept argued by Sousa and Bradley (2005, 2006), integrating the conceptual frameworks demonstrated by Dow and Larimo (2009) and that by Horner, Baack, and Baack (2016), combining with the related context factor identified by previous literature, the adapted conceptual framework as below:



The psychic distance Conceptual Framwork

According to the above-adopted framework, the relevant challenges identified by the review of literature could be concluded: Chinese culture characteristics associates with cultural distance may cause misunderstandings and management adaption issues; administrative distance accompanies with Chinese government policies may increase difficulties in online foreign recruitment; geographic distance plus the characteristics of GVTs may lead to delay on daily management, human resource cost embeds in economic distance may result in higher operating costs.

However, regarding to the role of psychic distance, there are a lot of studies support the importance of manager's perception (Sousa and Bradley,2006, Dow and Karunaratna, 2006, Mavondo, and Bridson ,2008, Ojala and Tyrväinen, 2009, Horner, Baack, and Baack, 2016). Reversely, there is scant research make effort on the role of online foreign teacher's perception in literature. In addition, how do online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance? What do they think of relevant challenges?

There is a need for empirical data based on research findings and reliable methods of data collection to explore answers for those questions.

2.6 Conclusion

To arrive at a deeper understanding of how psychic distance plays a role in online foreign teacher management, it is necessary to implement empirical research. More

specifically, the research will attempt to find out how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of psychic distance, how they view relevant challenges. The following stage of this study will illustrate the research methods used to capture the empirical data.

3 Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

As discussed before, this study proposes to probe the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language training firms. To achieve this goal, in Chapter 2 - Literature Review, Objective 1: Identify the role of psychic distance in management firstly. Then, Objective 2: Identify the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely. However, the aforementioned theories were extracted from the literature, which is not adequate to prove the value of the research. By combining those theories with practice, and taking this study one step further to achieve Objective 3: Explore how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance and Objective 4: Explore what online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance. Constructing scientific research methods to guide empirical data collection and analysis is necessary. Therefore, in this chapter, I will first state the research philosophy and approach. Then, I will provide the details of the research strategy. After that, I will talk about the means of collecting primary data including the sources, access, and ethical issues of the data. Finally, I will demonstrate the approach to data analysis.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

“The term research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).” There are different descriptions and classifications of research philosophy pertain to research methods (Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012). For instance, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) refer to four philosophies including ontology, epistemology, realism, and axiology. While Gog (2015) and Graue (2015) argue that comprise consists of ontology and

epistemology. And Tumele (2015) agrees that the different philosophies of researchers are the different paradigmatic perspectives on ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

After comparing nearly ten articles, I found that even the concepts of research philosophy are classified differently, but they are basically extended from ontology and epistemology. Just like Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) argued there are five philosophies in business and management. Interpretivism, as one of them, is associated with ontology. As they demonstrate in their book, interpretivism is used to pose new, deeper understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts. Furthermore, interpretivism refers to the assumption that social reality is in our minds, which is subjective and multiple. And it aims to provide an interpretive understanding of social phenomena within a particular context (Collis & Hussey, 2013).

In accordance with above, the objective of this topic is to explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers, which is subjective. Meanwhile, it includes context factors such as Chinese culture characteristics, Chinese government policies, characteristics of GVT and human resource cost. Accordingly, this research properly matches the philosophy of interpretivism.

There are three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Among them, the qualitative approach focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell and Creswell, 2017, Mayer, 2015). According to Collis and Hussey (2013), "interpretivism focuses on exploring the complexity of social phenomena with a view to gaining an interpretive understanding". Therefore, the qualitative approach aligns with the interpretivism philosophy. The research topic aims to explore the different distances, including cultural distance, geographic distance, administrative distance, and economic distance, which act together with specific context factors to affect online foreign teacher management. Consequently, the qualitative approach will be appropriate for this research.

3.3 Research Strategy

Although, there are different main research strategies including experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, and archival research (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009), Yin (2003, cited in Aczel, 2015) indicates “that a case study is reputed, because of its often-qualitative character”. This qualitative character makes "the case study is strongly associated with qualitative research". Because case studies could build up a full and deep understanding of a context by generating various perspectives based on multiple data collection methods, or integrating and contrasting of different views (Gray, 2013).

As the research topic is derived from practical problems and the combination of the theories that I have learned, but the application of psychic distance to the management of online foreign teachers in Chinese companies is a completely new field. I need to verify what I summarized in the academic literature that psychic distance and relevant context factors have jointly caused difficulties for foreign teacher management through practical case studies. Consequently, the case study research strategy will apply for the research.

Yin (1994, cited in Gog, 2015) states, as the unit of analysis of case study strategy, a case incorporates "an individual person, an organization, or part of an organization". The research aims to explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China 's English-language training firms. Thus, the basic context has been locked as commercial English-language training companies in China's online education industry. As mentioned in Chapter 2, psychic distance is "the individual's perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country" (Sousa and Bradley, 2005). To understand the challenges, it is inevitable to explore how psychic distance affects the management of online foreign teachers. Given the topic involves two types of people, one is the foreign teachers who perform online teaching, and the other is the Chinese managers who take charge of the foreign teacher management. Hence, it is necessary to study not only the influence of psychic distance that foreign teachers perceived, but also that of managers perceived. These foreign teachers and Chinese managers are so-called cases in this research. As the purpose of the case study is to construct a deep understanding, a multiple-case study can increase derived findings (Gog, 2015). Psychic distance is an individual mind activity,

what everyone perceives will be different, even if in the same context. In view of this, multiple case-studies will be adopted in this study.

3.4 Collection Primary Data

3.4.1 Sources

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), the case study is an empirical research strategy with multiple sources of evidence involved in a real-life context. It can help to get an abundant understanding of the research context. For collecting case study data, there are six sources such as "documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (Yin 2014, cited in Gog 2015). But the interview "is the most commonly used method in Masters-level research into business and organizations" (Fisher, 2011). It not only can help the researcher to collect valid and solid data but also can help to refine the ideas pertain to the research questions and objectives (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). To understand how psychic distance affect online foreign teachers and managers deeply, the individual interview will be employed to collect primary data.

Combined with the research topic, even if the context of the case is China's English-language training companies, the target population is online foreign teachers who are working for Chinese companies and Chinese managers who manage online foreign teachers, it is impracticable for me to collect data from all of them. Thus, it is necessary to select sample in order to collect as much detailed data as possible within limited time. As every single foreign teacher and Chinese manager is regarded as a case, however, according to Göttert (2015), the sample size should not exceed 15 cases. Therefore, I plan to respondents including 6-8 online foreign teachers and 3 -4 Chinese managers.

Based on the conceptual framework, culture distance and geographic distance, as constructs of psychic distance, require respondents have various cultural backgrounds. Simultaneously, given the multiple different nationalities of online foreign teachers in the current Chinese online education market and the resource that I can access. Those 6-8 interviewees should from different countries including English native speaking countries such as the UK, US, Canada, Australia and some other countries such as Germany, Philippines, South Africa and so on. In addition, due to the different scales of English language training companies in the online education industry may affect

psychic distance through the way of management or personal characteristics. The 3-4 Chinese managers should come from three different types of companies incorporates a well-known large company in the industry, an agent company that outsources foreign teachers, and an ordinary company with an English-language training business. Because of geographically dispersed and COVID-19, all interviews are conducted on Skype or Zoom in the form of video or voice calls. All interview audios will be transcribed verbatim.

There are three kinds of interviews classified: standardized, semi-structured, and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews are often related to qualitative research. The researcher who adopts semi-structured interviews usually conducts every interview via beginning with "a predetermined list of themes, and possibly some key questions related to these themes"(Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). On the other hand, semi-structured is more flexible which allows for adjustment during the process. Furthermore, the open-ended questions is helpful for gaining more deep insights from the respondents,. Accordingly, semi-structured with open-ended questions will be used for interview.

Based on the conceptual framework, this study implicates four themes: cultural distance, administrative distance, geographic distance and economic distance. Every theme, with relevant context factor, jointly define the psychic distance. So this study will employ those four themes and each topic pertains to one or two open questions for interviewees. In addition, according to the different identities of teachers and managers, the issues under the same theme are slightly different. For example:

Cultural Distance (for Chinese managers)

What do you think are the differences between Chinese culture and the foreign teachers' culture?

How do you think the cultural difference affects your management?

Cultural Distance (for foreign teachers)

What do you think are the differences between Chinese culture and your culture?

How do you think cultural differences affects your teaching?

Further detailed interview questions please see the appendix A. However, the nature of semi-structured interviews also requires to manage the time during the interview

(Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Thus, every interview will be controlled within 45 minutes.

3.4.2 Access and Ethical Issues

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) argues that the researcher's ability to collect primary data depends on gaining access to a suitable source, or sources that are accessible. Since I had more than four years of work experience in the online education industry. I had worked with a large number of online foreign English teachers from different countries and regions. Also, I have Chinese friends or former colleagues who are managing foreign teachers. Considered the time-saving and the possibility of being refused, invitations for the interview will be sent by Skype and email (attached by appendix B) to 19 foreign teachers and 4 Chinese managers who are from different scales of Chinese English-language training companies. At the same time, the whole interview process is supposed to be finished within one month.

Since human participants are involved, ethical issues must also be taken into account. According to Saunders et al. (2009), the corresponding prominent ethical issues are related to protecting the privacy of participants; ensuring participants have a right to withdraw whenever they want; do not push participants; never try to do harm for the participants; behave appropriate and be objective as a researcher. Therefore, after the respondents respond to the email or messages that they are willing to be interviewed, I will send the Plain Language Statement and the Consent Form (attached in appendixes C) to them. The former one is a formal statement that will Introduce the research study, state potential risks, benefits, and the right (eg participants could withdraw from the research study at any time) they have during the process and promise to protect the confidentiality of data. And the latter one is a consent that is declared by respondents to indicate they have known what the research is about, the interview will be recorded and they agreed to be interviewed voluntarily.

Moreover, the ethical issues that may be involved in data collection such as the company 's sensitive information, or personal privacy will be avoided. Additionally, any relevant information that may leak privacy will be anonymous when the data is used.

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis

Data analysis is a dominant step in qualitative research, which has a significant influence on the outcome of any research conducted (Flick, 2014, cited in Mayer, 2015). As the nature of qualitative data is diverse, it is hard to analyse it in a standard procedure. Also, choice in qualitative analysis may also indicate choosing two or more complementary ways to analyse the data to gain more insights from the data than from using a single analytical technique (Fisher, 2011 cited in Mayer, 2015). Consequently, coding and content analysis will be jointly employed in data analysis.

Coding is used to classify data with similar meaning. It includes identifying themes, dividing the research material into units, excluding the bulk of valueless material, and allocating the units to the themes. Content analysis is an additional step that could be taken when coding the material has been finished (Fisher, 2011). Although context analysis is time consuming, Bryman and Bell (2011, cited in Graue, 2015) defined context analysis as an approach to documents in which the researcher plays a role in the construction of meaning in texts. This approach allows "categories to emerge out of data" and to recognize "the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared".

In this study, every foreign teacher and Chinese manager is a unit. However, the whole research process is not chronological as part of the literature review is in parallel with interview conduction. Therefore, collecting and analysing data process should be intertwined. That means the audio/video-recorded of interviews will be transcribed verbatim subsequently so that I am familiar with the data. Then these transcribed files will be categorised and allocated to the three themes according to the objectives. Afterwards, it will be compared with the content after a few coding processes have been conducted. It may help to gain new insights within existing categories or may suggest new ones so that I can update or adjust the code.

3.6 Conclusion

In summary, this study will adopt interpretivism associated with ontology philosophy to understand the psychic distance and relevant context factors deeply. Correspondingly, qualitative case study involving online individual interviews will be employed. Finally,

coding and context analysis will be used to analyse data. Moreover, the following chapter will take the research methods into practice.

4 Case Study Findings: Description, Analysis and Synthesis

4.1 Overview

This chapter not only reveals the findings of the case study that described in the previous chapter, but also implements the analysis of those findings and compare the findings of the literature review to the empirical result. Meanwhile, the process aims to achieve both Objective 3: Explore how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance and Objective 4: Explore what online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance.

Placing the research context in China's English-language training companies, this study focuses on two groups of respondents: online foreign teachers, from various nationalities, who are working or worked for Chinese companies and Chinese managers who are from different companies and in charge of foreign teachers remotely. After continuous communication and confirmation, there were 7 foreign teachers, who are from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Philippines, Mauritius, were willing to accept interviews. Three Chinese managers, who are from different sizes of companies selected, were happy to be respondents. The transcripts of interviews for online foreign teachers are in Appendix D; the transcripts from Chinese managers' interviews can be seen in Appendix E. The structure of this chapter is as follows: First, describe the empirical findings in three subsections according to the research objectives. Then, analyse the aforementioned description theme by theme. Next, discuss the empirical result against the literature findings.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 View of Psychic Distance

The term “psychic distance” is rarely mentioned in real life. Generally speaking, people tend to interpret it from its literal meaning and rarely link it to their working. In the

interview, most foreign teachers had different perceptions of this term. The following are interpretations from 7 online foreign teachers.

Participant	Teaching Years	View of Psychic Distance
Teacher V	10 years	It gets to place an important role that we learn to understand one another.
Teacher E	About 3.5 years	It is important to give a lot of energy.
Teacher J	4 years	It is about some perceived differences between a home country and a foreign country.
Teacher A	5-6 years	I think that the longer you work, the closer it gets.
Teacher H	4.5 years	It is something in your mind.
Teacher M	4-5 years	It made me take the difference between China and my country into account when I was teaching.
Teacher D	6 years	It is inner thought reflected by real experience.

Similarly, psychic distance is rarely considered in management. Two of three Chinese managers indicated that it is their first time to hear it. The following is the view of psychic distance of three managers who are from different companies:

Participant	Working years	Size of company	View of Psychic Distance
Manager B	6 years	Large	It is about the difference between different cultures or maybe different people or different ideas.
Manager S	2 years	Medium-sized	It is a kind of ideological difference that we often experience when dealing with people from other culture or countries.
Manager P	10 years	Small	Psychic distance includes many factors and communication is a very important way to shorten it.

4.2.2 Perception of Manager's Management

As mentioned in section 2.3, exploring the role of psychic distance is to explore the difference in an individual's perception. Although the perception of the manager plays a significant part, as the objects to be managed, the management perceived by online foreign teachers should also be taken into consideration when talking about the role of psychic distance. However, in terms of the perception of manager's management, there were only two teachers thought their managers managed very well and gave strong reasons to support their views.

If ever a teacher has a query, we were able to contact someone, we have a good support system... the company where I worked for takes very good care of their teachers. we have meetings once a month... at the end of the meeting we can ask questions. (Teacher E)

I can contact my assistant at any time. If I send an email to anyone in management, they answered me in 24 hours, and they're very open and transparent. We have a newsletter every month to tell us about the new things that are happening, can follow the Facebook page. (Teacher A)

In contrast, there were 3 of 7 teachers who had a negative view of their manager's management according to their bad experience. As teacher D commented:

I think they manage badly...They did not communicate very well and not very often. They didn't or do not seem to care about me. Like, I should just be quiet and teach. (One of them) was so pushy and aggressive, and patronizing and asking for us to do things without payment. (Teacher D)

Likewise, Teacher V said there was a lack of communication between managers and teachers. Also, she might not get a direct answer from her manager if she emailed to ask some questions. And Teacher H also mentioned the company required to change the signed contract in order to drop teachers' salaries and even asked teachers to do something for free. But the teachers were severely fined if they were one minute late for the class.

In addition, Teacher J indicated there was no team management since she never communicated with any other teachers and just talked to the manager one-on-one. This situation is consistent with what manager B said: "there's no certain thing called management for the online team and no way to control them" when talked about what's the most difficult to manage foreign teachers remotely.

4.2.3 Perception of Challenges Related to Psychic Distance

Online foreign teacher management is not simple transnational human resource management, it refers to various aspects including cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic dimensions. It coincides with the components of psychic distance when the psychic distance refers to a national-level distance. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of what both online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance. The empirical data was collected from those four dimensions.

4.2.3.1 Challenges Related to Cultural Distance

To recognize the challenges related to cultural distance, it is necessary to distinguish the difference between Chinese culture and other cultures first. However, regarding cultural differences, the answers from different foreign teachers varied. For instance, Teacher J illustrated:

We are different in terms of the language that we use. This is the primary difference in culture. So, the language, the lifestyle, maybe the set of beliefs or the tradition values, I think all these are very different between China and my country. (Teacher J)

While, Teacher A mentioned the biggest difference is “the individualism versus collectivism in China”:

It is more important that the group does well. So, it can be uncomfortable to praise one Chinese student in a group of three or six or 12, instead of praising the whole group. ... but you also want to give praise to the whole group so that they do not feel they're being singled out. (Teacher A)

And Teacher D argues that Chinese people are more sensitive in various ways such as they cannot accept being corrected directly in the class and they don't get used to aggressive teaching. Also, Chinese students would like to make personal connections first. For example, they ask to make friends with the teacher in the class.

However, Teacher V perceived the changes in Chinese culture. As a Westerner, compared with the stereotyped descriptions of Chinese culture in the education she received in the past, Chinese culture is changing over time. She found somethings she heard are not true anymore based on her online teaching experience. For instance, she was taught by professors that China is a very closed country and people have to work like 100 hours per week in China. And Chinese people don't think about their family

and friends. She argued that China is “becoming more liberated, more democratic, more open, more freeing towards of the world”.

Compared with foreign teachers, the answers given by three Chinese managers from different companies were very similar. According to Manager P, the differences lie in, firstly, Chinese people often express themselves in an implied way while the foreigners use the direct way; Secondly, Chinese people are cautious in their words and deeds in front of leaders and elders because the hierarchy is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people in China. Reversely, foreigners care about equality and freedom.

Likewise, Manager B said:

I think it's quite different from the way they speak, the way they think, also the way they act. ...when I talk to my employees...they prefer me to be pretty straightforward, point the point. ...when they talk to me, they throw their ideas to me directly. (Manager B)

Also, Manager S told the same story about those cultural differences:

Firstly, they are not shy when talking about salary expectations. ...Another difference is that they speak out if they do have opinions about it, whether the thing is good or not. ...For foreign teachers or foreigners, they may not get it if you don't say something clearly and directly. (Manager S)

The impacts caused by cultural differences on teachers mainly concentrate on teaching, though Teacher E didn't think there was big influence, 5 of 7 teachers thought it has affected their teaching. Some of them felt it affected the teaching style, as Teacher A commented:

You also have to have a little bit more patience. And you want to correct them so that their parents are satisfied, but not too much so that they get discouraged. (Teacher A)

Meanwhile, Teacher V felt that how cultural differences affected her was more from managers.

I think sometimes it really just depends on your boss. And how they are, how they interact with everybody- if they're attentive, if they respond ...depending upon the boss and the personality of the boss. (Teacher V)

Even for Chinese managers, it seems hard to say how cultural difference affected their management. Although, Manager P indicated most of the problems caused by cultural

differences can be solved via communication. Only Manager B said it is because of the cultural difference including language difference led to high communication cost.

A different language ... when I talk to them (foreign teachers) I used professional language. It's not simple English because I have to think about their idea, their thinking process and their background. I choose a way which they can take it better. ...So, I have to think twice when I do decide something, or when I try to apply something...this really is what I call the high cost, because I have to try to figure out how they can take that... basically we are trying to run a new plan is pretty like Chinese way, they may not take it. (Manager B)

Furthermore, in the end of the interview Manager B indicated that cultural distance a false proposition toward the online team as the foreign teachers won't really reach the Chinese culture.

4.2.3.2 Challenges Related to Administrative Distance

Generally speaking, transnational activities are affected by government policies. As a new form of work, online teaching involves remote employment of foreign employees for Chinese language training companies. Although these foreign teachers work internationally, they do not need to leave their home countries. At the same time, the foreign policy of the Chinese government has always been affected by the international situation. About Chinese government policies that related to online teaching, only Teacher D and Teacher H said they don't know anything about it and Teacher M said something irrelevant. The rest of foreign teachers almost gave the same answer. There are two relevant policies, first one is about changing requirements for online teachers, as Teacher V recalled:

when I first started with Company W in 2016, it wasn't a requirement as vendor to have a bachelor's degree... But then the law changed, I believe it was 2018, you had to have a bachelor's degree, or a teaching certificate you know like TEFL or TESOL or something like that. (Teacher V)

The other one is for the China language companies hiring online foreign teachers. Teacher J indicated:

An online education platform, they're required to publicly display the personal information of foreign teachers. So, this includes the names, the photographs and the teaching qualifications, the previous academic and professional experience. (Teacher J)

However, when asked about how they think the policy they talked about affects their job, these teachers reacted differently. Teacher D did not understand how it would affect

his teaching. Teacher A and Teacher H said they were not affected as they are qualified and matched the requirements from the beginning. While teacher V was affected because she does not have bachelor's degree.

So that affects me because I don't have bachelor's degree. I have my medical assistant diploma from a medical school. Some schools would accept that. And some schools won't accept that. (Teacher V)

On the contrary, when three managers talked about the Chinese government policies and the corresponding effects, their respective answers seem to contradict each other. As Manager P said even if the government encouraged online teaching because of COVID-19, there was no obvious policy on it. Hence, she did not think there was any influence for managing online foreign teachers.

But because of the virus this year, since the beginning of this year, Chinese government encouraged offline schools to open online courses. Because, during the lockdown, the online course has more advantages than offline classes for safety. ... Yeah, but it's not a policy yet, because for now, there are no obvious and supportive policies to support the online course business. (Manager P)

While Manager B mentioned there is a policy for the company, but for teachers is not very clear.

Chinese government only runs two licenses. Only through a license...so that will give your company an authority and your company can run some materials, or you can show actual figure, let's say a person, a foreign face online. ... then, according to the materials you teach, you have to get another license. This will be called a certificate for foreign teachers. But now it's not that well-known in the world, ...so we don't get another license or certificate. (Manager B)

Manager S mentioned a similar policy as foreign teachers said that related to the requirements for the foreign teacher's qualifications. But she seemed not point out the related influences.

4.2.3.3 Challenges Related to Geographic Distance

Unlike cultural distance with some extended meaning, geographical distance literally means geographically dispersed. Unlike the main impact on commercial activities, that is transportation costs, the challenges brought by geographic distance on online teaching are mainly revolving around time difference and network issues. It seems both Chinese managers and online foreign teachers had reached a consensus on this point. There were

four of seven teachers who regarded different time zones as a big challenge for the online teaching. As Teacher A shared with me:

There is a challenge mostly because of the time zones for the geography. I wake up at 3 am every morning to start. I finished by 8 am in the morning, but I wake up early. There's a lot of people that can be very challenged by geographic distances. Plus, if I go to another area that's maybe in another time zone, I have to adjust my hours that I'm working. (Teacher A)

Also, Teacher E talked about the same case even it is not about herself:

Compared to China, my timetable is dependent on the time of year, because we change our summer, winter times. So, for me, where I am based is fine. But I think that for my American colleagues they work at 4 am 5 am, 6 am, which is going to be very difficult. ...you can't teach for 10 years at 4 o'clock in the morning, I mean it's exhausting. (Teacher E)

In addition, both Manager P and Manager B mentioned different time zone as a challenge directly. And they also illustrate how time difference affected their management, as Manager B exemplified:

It's really hard for you to, to manage your team because you had like a single person, you cannot run 24/7. ...when I wake up and I see tons of emails that complain about your bad service. Or because of the different time things like missing class and no-shows that happen. (Manager B)

Though Manager S thought there is no challenge related to geographic distance for management, As the interview progressed, she pointed out:

It's hard to have all teachers together to do the training because they are in different time zones. So, usually we just provide one on one training online. We can't really participate in some activities or events at the same time (because of the time difference). But those activities or events actually are important to help to foster a good working relationship. And it also affects to some extent the efficiency of mutual communication. (Manager S)

For internet connection problems, there were three foreign teachers and two Chinese managers mentioned it during the interview. This problem didn't happen frequently, but due to the complexity of the network environment and the different network conditions, once the problem occurred, there was nothing they could do to fix it.

Mainly that's with the Internet itself. Sometimes the servers are unstable. I have great Internet in my city. ... the server in China is not reachable....You know there's nothing that I can do about it. (Teacher V)

Likewise, Manager B commented:

We always say, in China there's no internet and there's like huge Wi-Fi. We are not satisfied with the internet speed currently. So, basically, the experience of online classes is not good as I think the internet status comes first for experience. (Manager B)

4.2.3.4 Challenges Related to Economic Distance

The human resource cost was considered a context factor related to economic distance in this research. The most direct contact between economic distance and foreign teachers is about salary paid to them by the company. And what economic distance connects with the Chinese companies which hired online foreign teachers is about the cost of managing foreign teachers.

When talked about how to evaluate their pay, only Teacher A thought her pay was very good because her company paid very well. The rest of the assessment from foreign teachers may be similar but with different reasons or totally opposite. As Teacher E, who thought her pay was fine explained:

For me, it is an extra income. It's not my main income. ...I think you're at home, everybody has Internet, so you don't have any extra costs. Everybody has a computer, you don't have any extra costs. And you're not spending money like some people will have to drive to work... (Teacher E)

Despite this, Teacher E also shared a relevant story with us about her colleague who held a different argument with her:

There was a debate about this maybe happened a year ago, that some teachers weren't happy with the pay. They were comparing it to the wages of their own country, and they were feeling underpaid. (Teacher E)

While both Teacher V and Teacher J were not satisfied with their pay as they believed that salaries should be differentiated based on teacher's qualifications. On the contrary, though Teacher D thought the pay is ok, he also agreed with the differentiation of pay for different teachers.

I think that the pay is okay. I make enough...But I have researched pay. I try to find out what is reasonable what not...I'm really teaching in China... So, I take lower pay without a problem. I remember the culture, the economy and finance difference. ...But it is interesting that, that there is little attention paid to financial development, pay raises, rewarding good teachers... (Teacher D)

Likewise, the evaluation of management costs towards online foreign teachers from managers was quite different. Manager P just indicated the costs were within the budget

and acceptable. But Manager S thought before the COVID-19 online cost was much less compared to the cost of in-class foreign teachers. Now the costs are almost the same. However, Manager B argued it was a very high cost and gave a very specific explanation on it:

We signed a contract with vendor. It's the first cost. We tried to manage their classes or we change their timetable a little bit. So, there's the secondary cost. And then there's another cost that we called training costs. The worst thing could be they know their timetable but they don't show up or they missed the classes. So, there's another cost called the reimbursement that we have to try to make something up for our customers. And after the training if they move away, we cannot contact them anymore. So, we have to try to find other teachers, this is an extra cost. (Manager B)

Moreover, in the interview, we also got some very interesting findings. For example, although there is no relevant research showing which distance is the most important in CAGE framework distance, nearly 60% of teachers believe that cultural distance is the most important. However, only one teacher mentioned that his company has provided training on cultural differences for teachers. For another example, when talking about the biggest difficulty in management with managers, they all talked about the lack of synchronization of training due to the inability to face-to-face work, reduced communication effectiveness, and high turnover.

4.3 Discussion

Based on the above empirical data, in this part, data analysis will be conducted first in order to answer the research questions, especially the answers to questions 3 and 4. Then compare the empirical result from analysis and literature findings.

4.3.1 Analysis

4.3.1.1 Perception and Role of Psychic Distance

According to the table in subsection 4.2.1, we can see that only 2 of 7 foreign teachers pointed out psychic distance is about taking the difference between their home countries and foreign countries. While there were 2 of 3 Chinese managers gave the same opinion as these two foreign teachers. Interestingly, their understanding of psychic distance seems to have nothing to do with how long they have worked.

On the other hand, even if those teachers and managers referred to differences between home countries and foreign countries, some of them mentioned cultural differences

when they expanded the explanation after giving their opinions. It shows that their cognition of psychic distance may be more derived from the understanding of cultural differences.

From online foreign teachers' evaluation of managers' management on both positive and negative sides (see subsection 4.2.2 for details), we can find some commonalities. Teachers argued that good management has the following characteristics. First, a good support system, which means the management team can assist to help solve the problems encountered or answer questions that teachers had in a timely manner. Of course, this is also determined by the features of online teaching. Second, open and transparent communication within the team. Third, take very good care of in-service foreign teachers, which is also the key foundation for stimulating teamwork in human resource management. On the contrary, bad management generally includes the lack of communication or poor communication, not caring about teachers except for teaching, disrespecting of rules such as modifying contracts forcibly, and requiring teachers to provide services for free.

What is more interesting, a teacher and a manager indicated directly there was no so-called team management in their online teachers' team just one-to-one communication between the manager and the foreign teacher instead. This statement was also confirmed by other teachers and managers in later interviews.

Based on the above facts, we can conclude that in the remote management of foreign teachers, the mechanism by which psychic distance plays its role lies in the effective communication between teachers and managers. On the one hand, foreign teachers can give feedback on the differences they perceived through communication. On the other hand, the foreign teacher manager can make adjustments in the process of management after receiving this feedback. Given that effective communication is two-way, we can think that the perception of foreign teachers also contributes to strengthening the role of psychic distance in management.

4.3.1.2 Challenges Caused by Cultural Distance

Neither did all companies carry out management in the form of a team nor did all teachers give a positive evaluation of the manager's management. Hence, when talking about cultural differences and how it affected teachers, most of the answers they gave were the differences they perceived in the classroom and the challenges that these

differences pose to teaching. For example, the language barrier caused by students' insufficient language skills, and adaption needed in teaching because of the characteristics of individualism to give way to collectivism. Also, Chinese students are not accustomed to accepting aggressive teaching and prefer to make friends with teachers first. Although these cultural differences that teachers perceived may be related to their own teaching style, some of them are indeed a manifestation of Chinese culture characteristics. For example, Chinese people value relationships. Even in management, managers may wish to establish a good working relationship with subordinates to facilitate their management. Manager S mentioned several times in the interview that it is very important to foster a good working relationship with online foreign teachers, which also proved this point. Different from other teachers' views, Teacher V believed that although there are cultural differences, the impact of such differences on the work mainly comes from her manager. For example, if the manager knows the cultural differences and tries to avoid it when interacting with teachers, it won't have a negative influence at least.

The Chinese managers reached a consensus when talking about the differences between Chinese culture and foreign culture. They thought these differences are the implied way versus the direct way and hierarchy against equality. Back to the previous section, some foreign teachers mentioned that they were required to provide free services to the company. This is actually a type of cultural difference. Because of the potential hierarchy in China, subordinates often just follow the orders from managers in the workplace. Managers may feel that providing additional services is a chance for subordinates to show their passion on work. However, there may not be such culture in other countries.

Nevertheless, when it comes to how cultural distance affects their management, it seems to be difficult for managers to express clearly. Interestingly, even though manager B referred to the language difference as causing high communication costs, he still believes that the remote management of foreign teachers is not affected by cultural distance. This also coincides with the viewpoint of Teacher V mentioned above. Because if managers only know the existence of differences, but do not pay attention to them in management, there will always be a gap in the communication between the two parties.

4.3.1.3 Challenges Caused by Administrative Distance

As the description in subsection 4.2.2.2, we can see that the impact of the policy seems to be different for companies of different sizes. Manager P's company is relatively small. According to her knowledge, the Chinese government has no clear policies on online education. As the founder of the company, she has always worked in an attitude of embracing change, thus, she did not feel the challenge brought by the policy. Manager B works for a big company. As he said, although the government has requirements for the company's qualifications, the requirements for foreign teachers haven't been clear. For the company, once such a vague policy suddenly becomes unambiguous, the company will bear the risk of rectification. Although manager S serves in a medium-sized company, she just worked as a foreign teacher manager for two years. The understanding of policies is limited to the requirements of teacher qualifications, and she is not sensitive to the relevant national policies.

Surprisingly, foreign teachers know very little about government policies that are closely related to their work. Let alone do they pay attention to the policies proactively, some teachers even thought that there is no need to care about it. Even if there were four teachers who mentioned two related policies, they didn't know that as one of them, having a certification such as TEFL or TESOL was a tacit requirement in the industry rather than requests from government documents. Because the Chinese government didn't claim those teaching certifications specifically.

4.3.1.4 Challenges Caused by Geographic Distance

Based on subsection 4.2.2.3, for teachers, the most direct impact of geographic distance comes from the adjustment of schedule caused by the time difference, and the breakdown caused by poor network conditions. More specifically, as Teacher E mentioned, it is exhausting for a teacher to insist on getting up at 4 am for teaching. For those who still need to live a normal life locally, this is not a satisfactory career development status in the long run. Reflecting on the management, the managers may need to provide enough generous rewards to motivate these teachers to continue their work. And the companies may also face the teacher turnover caused by geographical dispersed. Furthermore, teachers cannot solve network-related problems on their own. Hence, they are very dependent on technical support. In the interviews, different

teachers also mentioned that their dependence on technical support even exceeded the manager.

From the perspective of managers, they also felt the management challenges caused by time difference and network problems. First of all, the increase in their own workload, such as the need to reply to a large number of accumulated emails, and train teachers one by one. Second, the timeliness and efficiency of communication cannot be guaranteed due to the time difference. Third, operating costs increase due to network issues. Because of the dependence of online teaching on the Internet and the inability of teachers to deal with Internet-related issues. Correspondingly, this requires managers to be equipped with enough technical support proficient in English or assistants who can communicate in English together with technical support to help teachers. There is no doubt that it further increases the cost of human resources.

4.3.1.5 Challenges Caused by Economic Distance

Due to the economic gap between China and their countries, the pay that foreign teachers got from Chinese companies may be less than their local pay. However, when talking about the evaluation of pay (see subsection 4.2.2.3 for further details) that the main factor related to the Economic distance, although few teachers were satisfied with their pay, most of them could treat it objectively. Meanwhile, there were three of the seven teachers unanimously stated that their salary was not in line with their qualifications and that their salary was never raised. It can be seen that some companies have an unreasonable salary system for foreign teachers, and they didn't involve the incentive to reward good teachers.

When asked how to evaluate the costs related to online foreign teachers, although three managers from different companies gave different answers. We can still see from the answer given by manager B who is from a large company that the cost of online foreign teacher management is multifaceted. In addition to paying the teachers' salary, the accumulated operating costs also include paying the supplier's channel fees for obtaining teacher resources and training costs for foreign teachers as well as daily management expenses.

4.3.2 Synthesis

4.3.2.1 How Online Foreign Teachers and Chinese Managers View Psychic Distance

As analysed in subsection 4.3.1.1, most foreign teachers and Chinese managers found it difficult to give clear answers at once when asked how they view psychic distance. However, 40% of the interviewees still pointed out its basic core, namely dealing with the difference between the home country and foreign country. This also provides support for the definition given by Sousa and Bradley (2005, 2006): psychic distance is the individual's perception of the differences between the home country and the foreign country. Although the CAGE distance framework which refers to four distances including cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic (Ghemawat 2001) has been widely used as an international business strategy. However, psychic distance, as a term that is rarely mentioned in management, is more often perceived due to obvious cultural differences. This also explains why there was a frequent debate on the relationship between psychic and cultural distance in the literature (Dow and Larimo, 2009).

At the same time, taking the perception of the difference in management as the keynote, communication was specifically pointed out and emphasized many times in different kinds of distances during the interview. Unlike the emphasis on the influence of manager's individual perception of the differences between the home and the host country (Sousa and Bradley, 2006, Ojala and Tyrväinen, 2009), two-way effective communication between foreign teachers and Chinese managers is the key to promoting the role of psychic distance in the management of foreign teachers. Therefore, in addition to the manager's perception is very important, the role of team members' perception in management should not be ignored. As Magnusson, Schuster and Taras (2014) believed, psychic distance, as a personal inner feeling, cannot directly manage or regulate people's behaviour, but influence management by gaining a valid predictor through perception differences. The role of psychic distance in the management of foreign teachers is a mediator based on the communication. This finding is also consistent with the results obtained from the literature to identify the role of psychic distance in section 2.3.

4.3.2.2 What Online Foreign Teachers and Chinese Managers Think of Challenges Related to Psychic Distance

Regarding the challenges caused by cultural distance, foreign teachers and Chinese managers were both aware of the language barrier. It also aligns with that language difference was taken as one of the types of psychic distance stimuli (Dow and Karunaratna, 2006). In addition, the Chinese managers all agreed that Chinese people often express their meanings in an obscure way compare to foreigner's straightforward way. Likewise, Stober (2014) mentioned in the literature that it is difficult for western people to understand the ambiguous meanings in the Chinese language. When talking about the challenges caused by Chinese culture characteristics, there are three points that foreigners need to adapt just as Stober (2014) concludes: valuing personal relationships, working takes precedence over family, and get used to uncertainty. However, only the first one was confirmed in empirical findings among these three points. As analysed in subsection 4.3.1.2 both Chinese students and managers reflected this character in the process of interaction with foreign teachers, which is quite hard for teachers to accept. While the second point was even overthrown by a foreign teacher. She believed that certain characteristics of Chinese culture were also changing with the times. And she felt that most Chinese people also care about family and friends rather than just being obsessed with work. In addition, the value of hierarchy and subordination as one feature of Chinese culture mentioned by AU, al et (2010) was also confirmed by the manager in the interview.

For challenges related to administrative distance, the findings came from Literature Review rarely in line with that of empirical data. As the Chinese government claimed foreign teachers hired by training institutions should abide by relevant national regulations, and their study, work, and teaching experience must be made public in their platforms (XINHUANET, 2019). Despite this, there is no specific legal document to regulate relevant issues. The companies that hire foreign online teachers may bear the risks and the foreign teacher may worry about leaking their privacy. However, there were only a Chinese manager and a foreign teacher supporting these two viewpoints respectively. The majority of managers and teachers didn't care about the relevant government policies and never realized the potential challenges led by administrative distance. Other challenges concluded from the literature review were not verified by empirical data, such as due to China's online education industry booming (Huang,

2015), Chinese government policies make the shortage of online foreign teachers more serious. And the foreign teacher will have a concern about protecting their legal rights since there is no unified law that applies to protect gig workers (Hagiu and Wright, 2019).

About geographic distance, the challenges concluded from the literature review include the increasing monitoring costs and coordination cost caused by time differences (Hutzschenreuter, Kleindienst and Lange, 2014); internet issues because of the country's communication infrastructures (Ghemawat, 2007), high requirements for online foreign teachers' skills in using technologies to solve the technical issues happened in the class (Farmer, T. and West, R. 2019) and increasing uncertainty due to cannot communicate instantly (Dow and Karunaratna, 2006). Correspondingly, the first two points have been confirmed by Chinese managers in empirical findings since the increased workload caused by time difference and higher operating costs because of the poor network conditions. While for the third point, as online foreign teachers mainly relied on companies' technical staff to tackle internet problems, hence, it will not be a challenge for them. Similarly, for the last point, the empirical data did not indicate any particular uncertainty due to untimely communication.

With respect to challenges related to economic distance, there are extremely limited studies on it even if in the popular research area-foreign market selection (Magnania, Zucchellaa, and Florianib, 2018). The only relevant challenge got from the literature review is human resource costs. Because Chinese language training companies prefer to hire native English speakers who are from the UK, US, Canada, Australia (Cheng, 2018) while in the high per-capita income countries associates with higher labour costs (Ghemawat, 2007). But based on the analysis in subsection 4.3.1.5, the teachers from high per-capita income countries could understand the pay difference and did not ask the same pay as in their home countries. However, human resource cost is just a small portion of the cost of managing foreign teachers remotely. There are various multifaceted operating costs, especially for the big companies. Thus, empirical result and Literature Review findings reach an agreement on economic distance.

4.4 Conclusion

The whole chapter follows the model "describe, analyse, synthesize". There are three subsections under section findings. The first one describes how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance in real cases. It not only achieves research objective 3: explore how online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance, but also corresponds to section 2.2 Defining Psychic Distance in the literature review. The second one describes how online foreign teachers think of their manager's management, which connects to Objective 1: Identify the role of psychic distance and corresponds to section 2.3 The Role of Psychic Distance in Literature Review. And the last subsection was divided into four parts by themes to describe relevant challenges that were perceived by foreign teachers and managers. On the one hand, it achieves Objective 4: explore what online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance. On the other hand, it corresponds to section 2.4 The Challenges Related to Psychic Distance in the literature review part which links to Objective 2: Identify the challenges related to psychic distance in managing foreign teachers remotely.

In like manner, the analysis part was divided into five subsections based on the description part and covers four research objectives at the same time. The first subsection covers Objective 1 and 3 to analyse the role of psychic distance in online foreign teacher management and the perception of psychic distance both from teachers and managers. The rest four subsections cover Objective 2 and 4 to analyse the corresponding challenges following by four themes including cultural, administrative, geographic, and economic distance in order.

Since Objective 1 and Objective 2 respectively link to Objective 3 and Objective 4 and they have been achieved in Literature Review. Thus, in the Synthesis part, based on the analysis following Objective 3 and 4 to discuss the similarities and differences between empirical results and findings concluded from Literature Review. In this way, this study not only provides empirical support for Literature Review findings, but also get some clues for future research in this area.

5 Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The previous chapter-Case Study Findings contains too much information that required to be summarized. This chapter, in the way of answering the research questions, will summarize the findings from both the literature review and the empirical research and make conclusions based on the findings. Simultaneously, recommendations for managerial practice and future research will be discussed, in terms of how to manage foreign teachers remotely by taking the role of psychic distance into account and how to progress the further study of psychic distance. Importantly, the contributions and limitations of the research will be stated.

5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions

This section will summarize the result of the literature review and the empirical research to answer the research questions and make conclusions.

(1) What is the role of psychic distance?

As perception in the mind, psychic distance cannot be applied to things directly. Its role in managing is a mediator that based on communication between managers and team members. While effective communication is an interaction leaned on both parties. Thus, both managers' and team members' perceptions are important in remote foreign teacher management.

(2) What are the challenges in managing foreign teachers remotely from the perspective of psychic distance?

Following the CAGE distance framework to identify the challenges related to psychic distance, the relevant challenges were concluded from Literature Review as below:

Cultural distance: misunderstanding caused by language barriers and adaptations to Chinese management associate with Chinese culture characteristics such as valuing personal relationships, give priority to work rather than family, get used to uncertainty, and value of authority and hierarchy.

Administrative distance: Chinese government policies led foreign teachers' personal privacy exposure; and there is no relevant law to protect foreign teachers' legal rights; which in turn, increased the difficulty of recruiting online foreign teachers for Chinese training companies.

Geographic distance: the increased monitoring and coordination cost caused by time difference; internet connection problems due to the country's communication infrastructures; high requirements skills in using technologies for foreign teachers and increasing uncertainty because of untimely communication.

Economic distance: higher operating costs include human resource cost.

(3) How do online foreign teachers and Chinese managers view psychic distance?

It is difficult for the majority respondent to give a clear answer to this question at the beginning. Even though there were still 40% of interviewees indicated it is about dealing with the differences between the home country and foreign country, their perceptions mainly derived from the understanding of the cultural difference. This result implies that psychic distance has not had enough attention in management, at least in the management of online foreign teachers.

(4) What do online foreign teachers and Chinese managers think of challenges related to psychic distance?

About cultural distance, both foreign teachers and Chinese managers realized the communication issues caused by language barriers; and recognized some value differences associated with Chinese cultural characteristics such as emphasize the relationship. In addition, Chinese managers pointed out compared to foreigners, Chinese people prefer to express in an implied way and stress authority. However, there were near 60% of foreign teachers thought cultural distance is the most important distance among four types of distance. It can affect their teaching style to some extent. In contrast, Chinese managers failed to tell the influence of cultural distance although they were aware of the differences. Thus, the value of cultural distance has not been developed in management.

Most foreign teachers' perception of administrative distance is about the changes in the requirement of qualifications for foreign teachers from the Chinese government. Hence, they didn't think there was necessary to care about it. Though part of managers knew the relevant government policies. But they could do nothing about those ambiguous policies. Hence, Administrative distance is one of the factors that can directly bring challenges to online foreign teacher management and it is uncontrollable. If policy changes, the companies not only have to take the risk of being rectified but also spend a lot of time communicating with foreign teachers.

For geographic distance, the challenges for foreign teachers mainly lies in adjustment of schedule caused by the time difference. While for managers, it contains an increased workload, communication delay, and increasing operating costs.

For foreign teachers, there were no challenges related to economic distance. What they perceived such as there is no incentive system or their pay never raised, and their salary does not match their qualifications. In the final analysis, those all relate to management. However, for managers, the big challenge is how to control the cost as there are different kinds of operating costs including human resource costs in particular for the big companies when managing foreign teachers remotely.

5.2 Recommendations for Practice

Following the conclusion in section 5.1, this research may provide some fresh views for the management of Chinese language training companies. Since team members' perceptions are important for management. Chinese managers should communicate with foreign teachers actively and treat feedback and suggestions from foreign teachers seriously. Also, the value of cultural distance should be brought to the attention of the management staff. Managers have to face up to the differences and incorporate relevant training sessions into daily management to help foreign teachers understand the cultural differences. Moreover, although the changes in government policies cannot be predicted, managers should keep an eye on government policies and inform foreign teachers once there is any change that may relate to them or companies. It can not only help build trust between the remote foreign teachers and managers, but also reduce the communication cost. In addition, due to the fact that geographic and economic distance may cause high operating cost, at the beginning of recruiting, it is necessary to avoid recruiting a large number of candidates whose time zone is too different from China time and to test the network status as well as the ability of foreign teachers to deal with basic network connection problems. Moreover, the remote management of foreign teachers should also adopt the form of team management rather than one-to-one management. Lastly, consider allowing teachers with excellent performance to join the management team to assist managers, which not only reduces the workload of managers but also encourages teachers by providing career promotion.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Although this dissertation has studied thoroughly how psychic distance affects remote foreign teacher management, how to apply psychic distance to the management is still a developable field. As the research touched that communication and cultural distance value in management, and cultural distance changes overtimes. Further study could concentrate on communication and cultural distance in management that were referred to only slightly. For instance, how communication affects the role of psychic distance in management both from the perspective of managers and team members. Also, what the changes of cultural distance are and how those changes affect psychic distance. Furthermore, how communication and cultural distance could be used to optimize management to realize the application of psychic distance in management.

5.4 Contributions and Limitations of the Research

5.4.1 Contributions

First of all, this study employing psychic distance in remote foreign teacher management for the first time, would provide new ideas for expanding the research scope of psychic distance. Secondly, there are many studies on psychic distance, most of which are taking conceptualization and measurement as the angle from which they approached. However, based on reviewing the literature, this study begins with four constituents that drew on the CAGE distance framework and integrates the corresponding context factors for the first time to develop an enriched model of how psychic distance influences managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language firms. Thirdly, there is no consensus with respect to the role of psychic distance even in literature and no distinct definition. But according to the empirical research, this study gives a clear definition of the role of psychic distance in management area: It is a mediator that based on communication between the manager and team members. Meanwhile, empirical research justifies that non-decision maker's perceptions also play a significant role in the management.

5.4.2 Limitations

The limitations of this research lie on issues relevant to implementing the case study strategy. In the first place, due to the comprehensive impact of various aspects such as time constraints, time difference, etc., the number of samples especially managers is

relatively small. Though I have tried to select the respondents according to the size of the company to avoid the effect that may have, the result of this study may not apply for all China's English-language training companies. Then, the interview, as the only source of data generates piles of data and some potential key points may be neglected during the analysis process even if I transcribed all interview audios verbatim. Thirdly, taking semi-structured interviews as the data collection technique which has high requirements for the interviewer's skills. On the one hand, the interviewer should be able to control the direction to ensure that the results of the interview will not deviate from the purpose of the interview. On the other hand, the interviewer must maintain objectivity to make sure the empirical result is reliable. But I have a shortage of practical skills in carrying out interviews, sometimes I might explain too much which probably affected the respondents' answers. Sometimes I failed to control the pace so that the interviewee provided a lot of irrelevant information.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview questions

Interview questions for foreign teachers

1. How long have you worked as an online teacher?
2. What do you think of the psychic distance?

Cultural Distance

3. What do you think are the differences between Chinese culture and your culture?
4. How do you think the cultural differences will affect your teaching?

Administrative Distance

5. What kind of Chinese government policies related to online teaching did you know?
6. How do you think those policies affect your job?

Geographic Distance

7. In terms of geographical differences, what kind of challenges do you face?
8. How do you deal with it? or How do you think it affects you?

Economic Distance

9. How do you evaluate your pay from this job?
10. What do you think of your manager's management of the teachers' team?

Interview questions for Chinese managers

1. How long have you worked as a foreign teacher manager?

2. What do you think of the psychic distance?

Cultural Distance

3. What do you think are the differences between Chinese culture and foreign teachers' culture?
4. How do you think the cultural difference will affect your management?

Administrative Distance

5. What kind of Chinese government policies that are related to online foreign teachers have you studied?
6. How do you think those policies affect your management?

Geographic Distance

7. In terms of geographical differences, what kind of challenges do you face?
8. How do you deal with it? or How do you think it affects you?

Economic Distance

9. How do you evaluate the cost of online foreign teachers?
10. In view of above distance, from a management perspective, what do you think is the most difficult to manage foreign teachers remotely?

Appendix B – Invitation email for interview

Hello xx

It has been a long time no contact. I hope this email finds you very well!

This is Abby who worked for XX, a Chinese online English teaching platform, and had worked together with you for a while. I am doing my master's degree in Dublin, Ireland now.

Will you or any of your friends may be interested in accepting the online interview for about one hour?

I am currently writing the dissertation for my master's degree. In order to collect the primary data, I need to interview some online foreign teachers who are native English speakers and work/worked for Chinese companies. Also, my topic is " Explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language training firms".

Please let me know if you are interested in this online interview and we can talk about further details.

It will be extremely appreciated if you can accept this invitation. If not, I apologize for my sudden bother.

I wish you and yours all the best.

Best regards

Abby

Appendix C – Plain language statement & Informed Consent Form



GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN
Plain Language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

Research Topic: Explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language training firms

Investigator: Kang Hu

Contact:

Mail: abby_wowtalk@163.com

Tel: +86 151 100 87025

University department: Graduate Business School, Griffith College

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

The Research Study will involve the completion of online questionnaires from remote English teachers who are on board now or who worked for Chinese education companies before.

And it may involve interviews from a Chinese entrepreneur who is running an agent company specializing in hunting online English teachers. Or may interview some managers in China's English-language training firms who are in charge of managing online foreign teachers.

The respondents can speak English very well.

The interview will be online with audio recording.

It may spend 2-3 weeks to collect all data.

III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)

There is no risk for my respondent as the interview will be conducted online and they can skip the questions they are reluctant to answer.

IV. Benefits (direct or indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study

For online foreign teachers, what they expressed in the interviews may be presented to the Chinese managers as feedback from the teachers, which will help improve the teachers' working conditions.

For the Chinese managers, they can know more about online foreign teachers, such as what they care about for the online teaching job as well as how to manage them effectively in the future.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Any confidential data that was provided by participants is subject to legal limitations and will be protected.

VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period

Any data related to the personal detail of participants will be destroyed in accordance with the GDPR rules as soon as my Viva is complete and I have my final dissertation result.

VII. Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I state that the participants could withdraw from the Research Study at any time based on their willing.

VIII. Any other relevant information

I will inform my participants that if the sample size is not big enough that may have implications for their anonymity or privacy but I will do it after they agree.

I will make sure there is no dependent relationship between my participants and me. If there is, I state that their involvement or non-involvement in the project will not affect their ongoing assessment.

A Plain Language Statement should end with the following statement:

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person.

Please contact:

1. Dr Garrett Ryan,
2. Griffith College Research Ethics Committee

South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Ireland

Mail: garrett.ryan@griffith.ie

Tel: +353 1 4163324



GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN

**Griffith College GBS
Informed Consent Form**

I. Research Study Title

Research Topic: Explore the role of psychic distance in order to understand the challenges of managing remote foreign teachers in China's English-language training firms

Investigator: Kang Hu

Contact:

Mail: abby_wowtalk@163.com

Tel: +86 151 100 87025

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

The purpose of the research: to collect and analyze data on exploring the role of psychic distance, to understand what challenges of China's English-language training firms facing in managing online foreign teachers.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

I will be asked to:

attend online meeting for interview with audio recording

complete the online questionnaire

I clarify hereby that:

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me) Yes /No

I understand the information provided Yes /No

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study Yes /No

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions Yes /No

I am aware that my interview will be audiotaped Yes /No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

I am aware that the data is collected for research purpose only and confidentiality of information will be destroyed in accordance with the GDPR rules as soon as author's Viva is complete and has her final dissertation result.

VI. Any other relevant information

I was clear that I will be informed by the investigator that if the sample size is not big enough that may have implications for my anonymity or privacy with my consent.

I state that there is no dependent relationship between the investigator and me. If there is, my involvement or non-involvement in the project will not affect our ongoing assessment.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D – Interview transcriptions of foreign teachers

For the full transcriptions, please visit URL as below:

<https://1drv.ms/w/s!Atk-UHD0B17uiF-G1CSxRtdDEmpK?e=HpSsfZ>

Sample - Interview transcription with Teacher E

Kang: My first question is how long have you worked as an online teacher?

Teacher E: I've been working for a teaching online English to Chinese for yes 3 and a half years now.

Kang: OK, what do you think of psychic distance?

Teacher E: I think it's important to give a lot of energy. I think there's a lot more energy needed in online classes than off-line classes. Just because we need to interact more with the students and get them to interact as well. And keep them focused it's difficult to get them to focus on online class.

Kang: For the cultural distance, what do you think are the difference between Chinese culture and your culture?

Teacher E: I think education is very different. I think the Chinese have longer days in education. I mean my students will go to school early and finish very late whether they're in school or not at school. Because I have homework or after classes activities or on weekends. I think compared to my culture, they do a lot more. I think Chinese culture expects a lot more from their children than my culture.

Kang: how do you think a culture difference will affect your teaching?

Teacher E: To be honest, I don't think there's a big difference because I think children are children wherever they are from. Maybe the Chinese children are more disciplined and will be more focused because of the background of education. and background culture. And I think also maybe they want to learn more than my own culture. So I think that would be the main difference. I mean the main difficulty.

Kang: About the administrative distance, what do you think of the Chinese government policies that are relevant to your online teaching job based on your study?

Teacher E: Recently, I heard the Chinese government asking for the online teachers to have qualifications. And I think that's a very important thing. Because you can't improvise teaching so it's important to know what you are doing. And also, I think the Chinese government has lowered the amount of time that lean for the class. And I think that's also very good because asking someone to concentrate for one hour is impossible. It's very difficult. It's too long. I think lowering the time of the lean for the class is a good thing. I think the government has stepped in and paid attention was going on and I think they've taken some good initiative.

Kang: Next one, what do you think of your manager's management for the teachers' team?

Teacher E: I think the management is really good because they have... they have Facebook pages, they have blogs, they have, they are very good with the teachers. If ever a teacher has a query and was able to contact someone, we have a good support system whether it be straight away when we were in class if we have a problem. Or off the class, if we have an issue, we can contact them and they get back to us on different issues whether it be classroom management or schedules or pay. I think the company where I worked for is very, takes very good care of their teachers.

Kang: how do you communicate with your colleagues or team members?

Teacher E: We have meetings once a month. But is moreover the management has a meeting, and at the end of the meeting, we can ask questions. But to interact with the other colleagues, we will have a Facebook page and that's where we can ask questions and we can we help each other out using Facebook.

Kang: Even the Chinese managers they use Facebook?

Teacher E: They are some yes, some will be, I think they must be in a team in the Facebook team. One person is responsible for reading through what the queries are on Facebook and then they'll say you need to contact this person, or you need to contact this department. Yes, they are very present. And we get emails. We get an email once a week with updates on what's going on. So, it's quite interesting.

Kang: In terms of geographical distance, what kind of challenges do you face?

Teacher E: I think because I am in France in Europe. Compare to China, my timetable is depending on the time of year, because we change our summer, winter times. My schedule is usually between 11 and 3 so 11 AM and 3 PM so which is good for me. It's during the day and I'm able to do things in the morning and I can do things later in the afternoon. For me, where I am based is fine. But I think that for my American colleagues they work 4 am 5 am 6 am which is going to be very difficult. But I don't know how long they can work that way. Because if they have families and other jobs, you can't teach for 10 years at 4 o'clock in the morning. I mean it's exhausting. I think that will be the major challenge with geography. I think the time difference will be the only issue.

Kang: For the economic distance, how do you evaluate your pay from this job?

Teacher E: there was a debate about this maybe happened a year ago, that some teachers weren't happy with the pay. They were comparing it to the wages of their own country, and they were feeling underpaid. I don't think, for me the case is, I mean obviously everybody wants to be paid more. But compared to other things I think it's OK, I mean, to me, it's an extra income, it's not my main income and so I think that makes a difference. As if it were to be my only income then yes it would not be enough. For me, it is an extra income. It's not my main income. I think that makes a difference if it were my only income. Then, yes, it wouldn't be enough. But for me it is an extra income, so, I accept. And I think you're at home, everybody has Internet, so you don't have any extra costs, everybody has a computer so you don't have any extra costs, so you're not spending money like some people will have to drive to work so they have a car and they

have petrol, and they have a time where is here you're at home behind a computer, your costs are very low. That's how I see it. So, it's OK for me.

Kang: Which distance above do you think is the most important? Like we talked about cultural distance, Administrative distance, geographical distance, and even economic distance.

Teacher E: I think the economic distance because the company has different incentives to try and encourage the teachers to stay. And I think that does make a big difference. Because I've been teaching for so long. I believe I am a good teacher. I got interesting incentives which makes my pay goes up. I can understand if people don't have those instead, the pay is not very interesting. Because I didn't think the distance, I don't think it's a problem. I don't think cultural differences is a problem. My friend is actually very interesting to discover different cultures. So, I would say definitely the economical perspective would be the most important.

Appendix E – Interview transcriptions of Chinese managers

For the full transcriptions, please visit the following URL:

<https://1drv.ms/w/s!Atk-UHD0B17uiGAtZyIAKquCPuVD?e=LfaVFS>

Sample - Interview transcription with Manager P

Kang: Thanks, as I know, you run your own business, for outsourcing foreign teachers for some schools and companies, right?

Manager P: Yeah, that's right.

Kang: Okay, so how long have you worked as a foreign teacher manager?

Manager P: This is my 10th year working as a foreign manager since 2011.

Kang: Did you hear about psychic distance before?

Manager P: psychic distance? Yeah, I heard something about it. etc. We talked about it sometimes before with foreign teachers, yeah.

Kang: Ok, so how do you think of the psychic distance

Manager P: In my opinion, psychic distance includes many factors, yeah, and the psychic distance not only exists between foreigners and Chinese people, but the psychic distance also exists among many social groups even there is a psychic distance in many families. I think communication is very important to shorten the psychic distance, yeah, normally before I recommend offers to foreigners, Yeah, first of all, I always try my best to get to know why they come to work in China. Because some foreigners love teaching in their whole life. They come to help more kids to learn English well, some

foreigners come to explore the Chinese culture or try Chinese food and some come for money only, then I can provide the best support and service for my foreign teachers. Yeah, to shorten the psychic distance.

Kang: Okay, thank you. About the cultural distance, what do you think are the differences between the Chinese culture and the foreign teachers' culture?

Manager P: Oh, this is a good question. I am gonna answer questions in four points, yeah, the first one will be a language explanation, Yeah, because you know the way other Chinese people express is more implied, but the foreigners express themselves more directly. Yeah. Chinese people show off personal honor, but keep modest. Instead, most foreigners are very direct here, they are wanting to express personal rights by extremely disappointed or angry if they feel, Yeah. And the third point will be equality. Yeah. As you know, the idea of hierarchy has existed in our minds since ancient China. Even in modern society, we all behaved in front of our leaders and elders, yep. However, foreigners more emphasis on equality and freedom. Yeah. For this point, something comes to my mind. Yep, a few years ago, one of our foreigners met our boss in the lift, and the boss didn't say hello to him. Honestly, normally, our employees say hello to our posting activity, and this foreigner got very upset because of this. And he complains for a very long time.

Kang: Okay. Thanks for your lovely story. So, how do you think the cultural difference affect your management?

Manager P: Generally speaking, most of the problems can be solved via communication. I mean friendly and sincere communication. And I will learn to consider problems standing in a foreigner's shoes. Yeah. Especially as a foreigner HR. I do not stand for any side. Yeah, I'm here to help them out. I always tell myself that I work for responsibility and reputation. Yeah, so far so good. Yeah.

Kang: Okay. So, for the Administrative distance what kind of Chinese government policies that are related to those foreign teachers, have you ever studied?

Manager P: For now, honestly speaking, the Chinese online course business developed not as good as this year. You know, yeah. Because of the virus this year, so the online course business start to go up. Yeah. And before 2020, before the virus, the Chinese government or Chinese parents with more emphasis on offline classes. So honestly speaking, there were no positive or supportive policies for online foreign teachers. But since the beginning of this year, the Chinese government has encouraged. I was just talking about before the virus. before 2020. Yeah. the Chinese government didn't emphasize on online course business. But because of the virus this year, since the beginning of this year, the Chinese government has encouraged offline schools to open online courses. Become during the lockdown, the online course has more advantages than offline classes for safety. So once the Chinese government came out with this new encouragement. Yeah, but it's not policy yet, because for now, there is no obvious and supportive policy to support the online course business. Yeah. but it means that more and more foreigners can apply for our online course. Yeah.

Kang: Okay, I got your point. So how do you think those kinds of potential policies affect you and management?

Manager P: For online course is fine. We just need to conquer the time difference and internet problem. Yeah. But for offline the visa policies in China change every year in different cities in China which influenced our recruitment. I mean, there's no visa policy in China range every year in different cities. Yeah, that influenced our recruitment and management really, and also has many foreigners coming to China. But generally speaking, the market here is getting more and more normalized. Yeah.

Kang: Okay. Let's talk about geographic distance. My first question about geographic distances is in terms of geographic difference, what kind of challenges do you face?

Manager P: For this question, the geography distance, I wanna answer in two points. For the online course part, you know, for the minus interest they abroad for long term. We need to conquer the time difference. And the Internet problems. Also, honestly speaking, the online teachers, you know, they really even had real teaching experience here in China. So, actually, they don't get to know our case English level indeed. So, they just follow our lesson plan. Yeah, that's the point. And for offline foreign teacher management, you know here In China, some suburban cities are difficult to recruit for teachers because foreign teachers prefer for international tier cities with higher payment or second-tier cities instead of those in a suburb whose salary is far lower. So, this is a headache.

Kang: Okay, do you think what are the challenges for managing online foreign teachers who are located in other countries? I think you have already given me the answer, right?

Manager P: I can answer this question in detail. In addition to the time difference, as I mentioned about them. The problem is that online foreign teachers didn't have real teaching experience in China. So, we need to improve our lesson plan a little bit little. Our foreign teachers can do a good job during that session. Because they cannot attend our offline training very often and they cannot get to know our children's level indeed. We need to improve our lesson plan.

Kang: Okay, so about the economic distance. How do you evaluate the cost of online foreign teachers?

Manager P: For in for this question, am I going to answer the question in two points. Actually, for some younger children. Yeah. The cost of online foreign teachers or offline foreign teachers is within the budget. So, it's acceptable for sure. But for some, like short-term classes, like summer camp or winter camp, because of the competition in China. So, schools have to lower the study fees for children. Schools will lose their benefits. Yeah. lost their profits. Yeah. To make this happen. Yeah. They have to do this to expand their markets.

Kang: Okay. Thank you. So, all because of the above distance like we talked about cultural, administrative, and economic and even geographic distance. So, as a manager, what do you think is the most difficult to manage those foreign teachers remotely?

Manager P: There's an old saying goes in our career. That nothing is trivial in foreign affairs, what never changes in foreign affairs is change. So, attitude is the most important to you. We have to learn to face and solve problems every day every year.

Yeah. Because there is always something that did happen out of our expectation. But as HR, as a foreign teacher manager, we always tell our teachers that we work for responsibility and reputation then for money, but only for good money. For this point, I can say that and most of the things are under control. Yeah, we just need to face and solve.