

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Adrift down under: An integrative review of international students' experiences in Australian higher education including shaping factors

Ethar Alsharaydeh*^{1,2}, Niusha Shafiabady^{3,4}, Sally Chan⁵

¹School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University, Australia

²Faculty of Health, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Charles Darwin University, Australia

³Department of Information Technology, Peter Faber Business School, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney, Australia

⁴Faculty of Science and Technology, Charles Darwin University, Australia

⁵Tung Wah College, Hong Kong, China

Received: April 9, 2024

Accepted: June 27, 2024

Online Published: August 5, 2024

DOI: 10.5430/jnep.v14n12p10

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v14n12p10>

ABSTRACT

Australia is currently one of the leading destination countries for International Students (IS), ranking third in popularity as a study destination. There is sparse research into the experience of IS including the factors influencing their experience within the Australian higher education system. This integrative review aims to synthesize knowledge on the IS' experience in Australian higher education, including the factors influencing their experience. The review included 15 qualitative studies, three quantitative studies, three mixed methods studies and two literature reviews. IS perceived their study experience in Australia as challenging. They reported English unproficiency, poor academic performance, lack of academic support, low-quality courses, and work-study imbalance as factors that lead to insufficient learning engagement. IS reported difficulties in adjusting to the culture due to language barrier, negative emotions, and stronger acculturation orientation toward their heritage culture. IS reported the difficulties in establishing rapport with both domestic students, university teachers, and obstacles in building meaningful relationships within the local community as factors hindering the development of rapport with these entities. Despite encountering the challenges, IS have recognised the imperative of seeking avenues to foster connections with their fellow peers, their teachers, and the broader Australian community. They noted that their proactive efforts to connect with others, participation in work integrated learning, engagement in extracurricular activities, and prolonged residency in Australia were influential factors that facilitated opportunities for connectedness. These findings emphasise the significance of fostering networks between international students, domestic peers, university educators, and the Australian community. Such networks facilitate cultural understanding, elevate academic achievements, and contribute to the holistic well-being of students. The findings offer valuable assistance in equipping stakeholders and higher educational institutions with essential insights to effectively support IS and address their needs comprehensively. These insights are significant for global education providers aiming to support IS and cultivate a positive study environment. Further research should explore the experiences of international nursing, medical, and healthcare students, considering their involvement with patients and the healthcare team in the Australian system, potentially influencing their experience.

Key Words: International students, Experience, Influential factors, Higher education, Australia

*Correspondence: Ethar Alsharaydeh; Email: e.alsharaydeh@westernsydney.edu.au; Address: School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University, Australia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Australia currently stands as one of the foremost destinations for International Students (IS), ranking as the third most favoured international study country after the United States and the United Kingdom.^[1] Over the past two decades, the influx of IS in Australia's higher education sector has undergone exponential growth, escalating from approximately 157,427 in 2001 to exceeding 445,925 students in 2019.^[2] Notably, the proportion of IS engaged in postgraduate studies surged from 35% in 2001 to 46% in 2020.^[2] In 2019, Australia hosted 8.4% of the 6.1 million IS globally enrolled in tertiary education. Regarding the national origins of IS studying in Australian higher education institutions in 2020, China maintained its status as the largest contributor at 33%, trailed by India at 14%.^[2] These students significantly bolster the Australian economy, as evidenced by their contribution of \$37.6 billion in 2019, supporting nearly 260,000 jobs.^[2,3] Additionally, expenditures from friends and relatives visiting IS amounted to \$369 million for the economy in 2018.^[4]

The decision of IS to select Australia as their educational destination is attributed to several factors including the global recognition and esteem for Australian degrees and qualifications, employment prospects, the secure and multicultural environment in Australia^[5] and the potential for immigration upon completion of studies.^[6] Regular surveys conducted by the Australian Government to assess IS satisfaction levels with higher education experiences consistently reveal approximately 90% reporting high satisfaction rates,^[7-10] indicating considerable success. However, Arkoudis et al. (2019) contend that such surveys may not always accurately reflect the reality of students' experiences. While IS may express overall satisfaction in surveys, deeper scrutiny via interviews reveals issues such as social integration challenges and a sense of detachment.^[11]

Previous literature underscores challenges encountered by IS studying in Australia which may impede their experiences in study in the Australian Higher education. Challenges include adapting to new cultures, overcoming language barriers, experiencing homesickness, and facing financial constraints.^[12] Moreover, other challenges among international university students are reported regarding their learning engagement, encompassing interactions within and outside classrooms, as well as their sense of institutional belonging, compared to other aspects of their academic journey.^[13] Recent data highlights a significant decline in satisfaction with the learning experience for both international and domestic students,^[13] likely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic, the promotion of international student engagement encounters challenges, notably with the surge in blended and online program delivery, a transformation influenced by the pandemic, leading to a hybridisation

of international student education. Challenges such as diminished socialisation opportunities and reduced face-to-face interaction contribute to feelings of isolation.^[14] Consequently, universities must establish specialised initiatives to ensure authentic avenues for student engagement and connection, thereby enhancing their overall experience.

To broaden the scope of research in the field of international Higher education student experiences, it is imperative to explore the factors impact IS study experience in Australia. Most existing studies have primarily focused on exploring the experiences of IS studying abroad, revealing that communication difficulties, cultural disparities, and unfamiliarity with new social and educational environments are commonly cited issues affecting their study experiences.^[15] The association between language and culture, and the importance of effective verbal, face-to-face, and written communication significantly impact IS' academic performance and their satisfaction with the education they receive.^[16,17] These studies have related IS experiences predominantly to English language proficiency as the main factor influencing their experience^[18,19] given that most IS originate from non-English-speaking countries such as China, India, and the Philippines. However, it is essential to explore and identify other factors that impact IS experiences. Such knowledge will provide stakeholders and educational bodies with necessary insights to offer adequate support to IS and effectively meet their needs. This integrative review aims to synthesize existing knowledge on the experiences of IS in Australian higher education, including the factors influencing these experiences.

2. METHODS

2.1 Search strategy

The literature review was conducted using a five-stage approach: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation.^[20] This approach has been used extensively to enhance the rigor of the review process in many published integrative reviews.^[21]

An extensive literature search was conducted, including qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary studies. The databases searched included EBSCO, CINAHL, Scopus, PsycINFO, Social work abstract, Cochrane library, Web of Science, PubMed and Google Scholar, using the identified keywords "international student*", "experience", "perception", "higher education", "influential factor*" and "Australia*". Table 1 presents the critical search terms and expanded terms. The search used all the key words and index terms across all databases. During the search process, consideration was given to the diverse terminology used, synonyms, and the spelling of key words. A manual search was also conducted.

Table 1. Critical search terms and the expanded terms

The searched term	The expanded terms
“international student*”	“foreign students”, “ overseas students” and “exchange students”
“experience*”	“experiencing” and “experienced
“percepti*”	“perception” and “perspective”
“higher education”	“university”, “postgraduate”, “undergraduate” and “postsecondary”
“influential factor*”	““influential factors”, “significant determinant”, and "key contributor"
“Australia*”	“Australia” and “Australian”

2.2 Selection criteria

2.2.1 Inclusion criteria

This review included studies focused on IS, postgraduate and undergraduate, studying for a higher degree in Australia. Studies exploring educators’ and academics’ perspectives on IS’ experience in studying for their higher degree in Australia were also included. The search included articles published in English from the year 2012 onward. The year 2012 was selected as the cutoff point in this literature because, according to the Australian government and Department of Immigration and Border Protection report (2014), there was an increase in the number of student visas granted to international students from 2012 onwards.^[22]

2.2.2 Exclusion criteria

This review excluded literature published in languages other than English or studies focused on limited sub-groups of students (i.e. students with mental and/or physical disabilities). Book chapters also excluded.

The initial search identified 1,208 titles. Another seven articles from references and citations that were seemingly relevant were retrieved and assessed. Duplicated entries were excluded, leaving 744 titles. The title, abstract and whole text was assessed by the first researcher EA based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 719 articles were removed, with 25 articles remaining (see Figure 1).

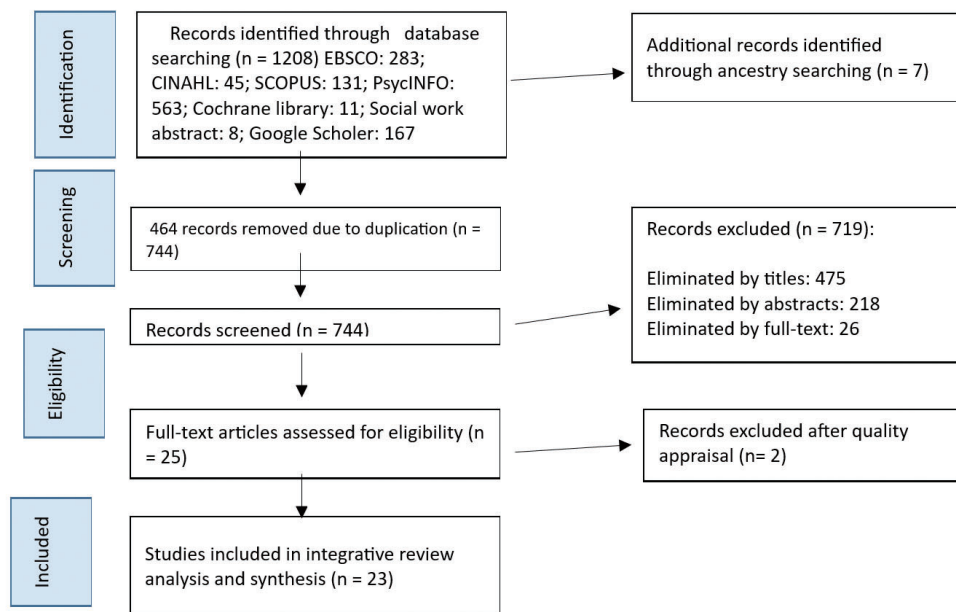


Figure 1. Search procedure and outcome

2.3 Data evaluation

The 25 articles were appraised for quality using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Assessment and Review Instruments^[23] by EA. After the appraisal, two studies, one literature review and one qualitative study were excluded because of unclear methodology. Finally, 23 studies were included in this re-

view; 15 qualitative studies, three quantitative studies, three mixed methods studies and two literature reviews.

2.4 Data analysis

Data (author, year published, study design, method, sampling approach, subjects’ country of origin and program of

study, and the key findings for each study) were extracted from the included studies into a summary table by EA and SC, and notes were compared. If a discrepancy was noted, it was discussed by all researchers to obtain consensus. Once completed, a summary table of the findings was generated (see the Appendix).

The synthesized findings involve analysing and integrating the quantitative and qualitative data extracted from the included studies. In the analysis process, the researchers conducted a thorough examination of the extracted data to identify key ideas, concepts, and patterns. These were assigned concise and descriptive codes that captured the essence of the information. Next, they compared and contrasted the coded data to uncover similarities, differences, and relationships between codes. The researchers specifically searched for recurring patterns or themes emerging from the coded data. By grouping similar codes together, they formed broader themes that encapsulated these patterns. The following themes were generated from the data which describe IS' experience in Australian higher education, including factors influencing their experience: Insufficient learning engagement vs. the influencing factors, Difficulty in cultural adjustment vs. the influencing factors, Difficulty in establishing rapport vs. the influencing factors, Finding opportunities for connectedness vs. the influencing factors. The first researcher referred back to the primary source to verify context and clarify the themes. A master list was generated, and the final placement of each theme was determined collectively. The researchers then synthesized each theme's essential elements and conclusions.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Data presentation

Insufficient learning engagement vs. the influencing factors

Learning engagement is defined as students' involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high-quality learning.^[24] The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2013) found that engaged students are more likely to persist in their studies, complete their degrees, and report higher levels of academic and personal growth.^[25] In the current review, IS reported insufficient learning engagement and regarded that to English unproficiency, poor academic performance, lack of academic support, low-quality courses, and work-study imbalance.

IS experienced difficulties in speaking English which impacted their capacity to communicate with their teachers, tutors, and classmates,^[26–28] hindered their ability to interact with their teachers during class, ask questions and express their needs^[29] and negatively influence other academic-related matters such as studying and preparing for assess-

ments.^[16,17] IS spent many more hours in studying when compared to domestic students because of poor English skills.^[6] In Steinmetz & Mussi's (2012) study, postgraduate IS reported that engagement in academic work within the university environment is an essential component of their educational experience. However, language limitation was a roadblock to academic achievement.^[30]

According to Arkoudis et al. (2019) and Bianchi (2013), the challenges encountered by IS in their educational engagement extend beyond mere English proficiency.^[11,27] While language proficiency certainly constitutes a significant issue, additional factors contribute to the complexities of learning engagement for IS. Phakiti, Hirsh & Woodrow (2013) in their study among IS enrolled in the Foundation Studies Programme found that IS's personal factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, personal values and self-regulation are also significant factors in student learning engagement and subsequently their academic success.^[31] Other IS studying business and engineering perceived some of their teaching academics as underprepared, lacking subject knowledge or teaching experience, which they believed contributes to poor learning engagement. Wong, Cooper, and Dellaportas' (2015) study found that international accounting students felt that some of their highly qualified university teachers were not trained in effective teaching methods, resulting in inadequate responses to student queries and unclear explanations of subject matter.^[32] Similarly, Le and McKay (2018) observed instances where university teachers failed to deliver or explain subject matter clearly, leading to decreased engagement by students.^[16] University teachers who were unapproachable, unsupportive, unresponsive to emails, or failed to address students' inquiries were identified as a primary contributor to low levels of student engagement.^[17,27]

While teaching staff in Australia typically made themselves available to students during scheduled consultation times, some students found this approach to be inconvenient and excessively formal.^[32] The mismatch in expectations and presence of a hierarchy among academics was seen as a factor to contribute to this tension.^[33] IS perceived their instructors in their home countries to be more approachable and committed as they allow students to approach them whenever they like and by any mean e.g approaching their offices without appointment^[32] and appreciated the supportive encouraging teaching staff.^[29] In contrast, Doctorate students in Son's & Park's (2014) study reported that Australian supervisors were seen to be supportive, and approachable which facilitates their engagement.^[29] The pivotal role of university teachers in supporting international students is considered paramount.^[33]

IS expressed dissatisfaction with courses that had unclear outlines, low-quality materials, or inappropriate evaluations, which resulted in poor student engagement.^[27,34] On the other hand, they reported high levels of learning engagement when their study program and coursework were well-structured in terms of outline, teaching materials, and supplementary information. They particularly valued the consistency of information across different courses within a program without repetition in the teaching material.^[27,29]

IS valued the liveability of their campus during their studies and appreciated that as a factor impact their study experience. They sought high-quality facilities, such as well-maintained buildings, classrooms, well-stocked libraries, advanced computer labs, a gym, and an appealing campus with shops when choosing an academic institution. These amenities enabled them to remain on campus throughout the day, contributing to their learning engagement and involvement in campus life.^[27]

According to Arkoudis et al. (2019), work-study imbalance is a significant concern for IS studying in Australia, negatively impacting their learning engagement and overall experience.^[11] Some students rely on financial support from their family, friends, or partner in their home country, leading to feelings of guilt for being a burden on their loved ones.^[35] Meanwhile, others are forced to work to make ends meet. These students often report that their wages are inadequate, necessitating the need to work multiple jobs to sustain themselves.^[36] This can result in exhaustion, stress, and ultimately, withdrawal from their academic programs, adversely affecting their academic engagement and performance.^[36] Therefore, the Australian education system should consider the importance of helping IS balance their work, study, and personal commitments.^[37]

Difficulty in cultural adjustment vs. the influencing factors

Acculturation can be described as the dynamic process of adapting and adjusting to a new culture, encompassing diverse experiences of cultural acquisition, preservation, and integration.^[38] IS enrolled in Australian universities have reported facing difficulties while adapting to the Australian culture^[39,40] and they regarded this to language barrier, negative emotions, and stronger acculturation orientation toward their heritage culture.

IS in Australia have reported experiencing difficulties due to a language barrier, which has impacted adjustment to Australian culture.^[26-28] Studies found that IS lacked confidence in speaking English in different spheres of interaction, such as interactions with members of the broader community in which they live.^[41] As they lacked the confidence

in speaking English, they tended to choose their peers and the broader community in the area where they lived with people from the same cultural and language background and avoid cultural adjustment to the Australian community.^[11,42] They also expressed feeling isolated in class, apprehensive while communicating with other students as they unsure of their intercultural skills.^[26,43] Thus, they chose to keep to themselves as they were uncomfortable speaking English in public, resulting in a sense of isolation.^[39,40] These negative emotions and experiences of IS were not adequately recognised nor addressed by educational institutions.

The negative emotions the IS experienced were also reported as a factor hinder their cultural adjustment to the Australian community. Son & Park's (2014) qualitative study found that leaving their families and children back home to study abroad was a significant emotional challenge faced by IS.^[29] They felt guilty for choosing to study overseas, which negatively affected their mental well-being, subsequently their culture engagement. McCrohon & Nyland (2018) reported IS also experienced stress regarding employment and permanent residency in Australia, leading to social isolation and difficulties in adjusting to the Australian culture.^[44]

In their mixed methods study among international business students in Australia, Pekerti and colleagues (2020) described how IS who reported that IS with a stronger acculturation orientation toward their heritage culture are likely to perceive Australians as prejudiced towards IS, perceive negative stereotypes, perceive discrimination, and have difficulties making friends with Australians. These students tend to spend more time with co-nationals, and perceive themselves as not fitting into Australian society, including university, which leads to more difficulty adapting to the Australian culture. However, IS with a stronger orientation toward acculturation to the Australian culture, along with spending more time with local hosts and feeling a sense of belonging within the Australian community, exhibited greater openness to acculturating to Australia. Consequently, these students demonstrated better adaptation to Australian life and reported higher levels of wellbeing compared to IS who lacked these factors.^[45]

Difficulty in establishing rapport vs. the influencing factors

Research indicates that IS experienced absence of harmonious interaction with their fellow domestic students, university teachers, and local people in the community. This suggests that there is a failure to establish a positive connection or understanding, leading to a lack of mutual trust, respect, or comfort in communication and interaction. In the current review, IS experienced encountered difficulties

in establishing rapport with both domestic students, university teachers, and locals in the Australian community. They reported challenges in interactions between domestic and international students, difficulties in forming connections with teachers, and obstacles in building meaningful relationships within the local community as factors hindering the development of rapport with these entities.

Instances of Difficulty in establishing rapport often arise from domestic students' failure to include or invite IS to social gatherings or events at their homes.^[27] This behaviour extends to scenarios in which domestic classmates show disinterest or boredom towards the opinions of international students, especially if the international students have proficiency issues in English. This lack of interest negatively affects their self-esteem and confidence.^[27,34] IS complained that the majority of their domestic peers were unwilling to participate in group work with them and showed reluctance to socialise with IS.^[11,29]

In Haugh's (2015) qualitative study, IS reported lack of rapport with their teachers and administrative staff. The adverse responses, including "judgmental looks," from their teachers when they faced challenges in completing assessments primarily due to their limited English proficiency, created an unwelcoming atmosphere. This made it difficult for other IS to establish a good rapport with their teachers and to seek additional assistance. Other IS from the same study reported difficulties in establishing a positive connection with administrative staff at the International Office. They cited receiving inadequate attention despite waiting for extended periods to receive assistance. This lack of positive connection and rapport led the IS to perceive themselves as undervalued based on their status as international students.^[41]

In Yates's (2013) qualitative study, international students expressed disillusionment due to the challenges they faced in establishing meaningful connections consequently rapport with local individuals in the community.^[42] IS reported receiving verbal and physical signs of discrimination from local people, which made them hesitant to form connections with community members to avoid further incidents. They perceived such behaviour as being directed towards them because of their racial background.^[27] These experiences underscored the sense of powerlessness that international students found themselves in when they encountered behaviours that negatively affected their connections with people in the community.

Finding opportunities for connectedness vs. the influencing factors

Despite encountering the challenges, IS have recognised the imperative of seeking avenues to foster connections with

their fellow peers, their teachers, and the broader Australian community. They noted that their proactive efforts to connect with others, participation in work-integrated learning, engagement in extracurricular activities, and prolonged residency in Australia were influential factors that facilitated opportunities for connectedness. This underscores the significance IS place on establishing meaningful relationships with these parties, demonstrating a proactive inclination and enthusiasm towards engagement.

IS sought these opportunities in several ways within the university context and outside of their university experience.^[40] International students found it challenging to comprehend the apparent lack of interest from domestic students, yet they remained eager to establish connections with their domestic classmates.^[43] For instances, the Chinese and Vietnamese students in Le & McKay's (2018) study and Singaporean students in Macionis, Walters & Kwok's (2019) study adopted the proactive approach to communicate and connect with domestic students by starting the conversation.^[16,34] IS expressed the importance of creating connections with their domestic classmates and staff as they can learn more about the local culture and customs, which can help them adjust to their new environment and build networking. They can also share their own culture and customs with domestic students, promoting mutual understanding and appreciation.^[28,45]

IS reported well-documented benefits from participating in work integrated learning related to their programs. In Mitchell, Del Fabbro & Shaw's (2017) study and Jackson's (2017) research, it was found that IS experienced numerous benefits from participating in work integrated learning programs related to their courses. Nursing, business, and IT students from various countries appreciated attending clinical placements during their studies, which they felt improved their technical skills and knowledge, communication skills (both verbal and written), confidence, and professional networks and connections.^[37,40] Additionally, some IS found connections with the Australian community by residing in large cities and practicing the language with locals.^[29] Furthermore, Yates & Wahid (2013) found that these students sought to engage in extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs to improve their language skills and find employment opportunities outside of university.^[42]

A study found IS felt more connected to the community if they stayed in Australia longer as they had more opportunities to meet and foster strong connections with Australian friends. This could help them to understand better the different cultural issues, allowing them to better adapt to and accept the Australian culture both in and out of the classroom.^[34] IS who were proactive in looking for opportunities

to be exposed to local people (students, staff, and people in the community), learned and appreciated different cultures and languages were more likely to develop intercultural competencies.^[28,45]

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this integrative review was to synthesize the knowledge on the international student's experience in Australian higher education, including factors influencing their experience. The synthesized findings indicate that IS encounter obstacles in fostering learning engagement attributable to various factors. These impediments include encountering underprepared and less proficient academic staff, inadequately prepared course materials, and language barriers, all of which act as deterrents to their learning engagement. Moreover, the management of extracurricular tensions, such as achieving a balance between study and work commitments, maintaining familial relationships, and coping with financial burdens, further complicates their overall educational experience.

The findings of this review elucidated that IS experienced subpar interaction with their teachers, domestic students, and the whole community thereby impeding their ability to establish rapport with these entities, which negatively impacted their study experience in the Australian universities. This phenomenon may stem from a deficiency in cultural awareness among teachers, university staff, and domestic students, hampering effective communication with IS. Several studies assessing the cultural sensitivity of university educators revealed a notable dearth of such awareness among those teaching IS.^[46] Educational institutions, university teachers, domestic students should devise strategies to effectively address this issue in order to foster a safe and supportive learning environment. It is imperative that university teachers and domestic students receive ongoing cultural awareness training. University senior management must ensure that staff undergo appropriate training to enhance their cultural competence. Engaging in collaborative projects that involve both domestic and international students to foster language skills and cross-cultural awareness is highly recommended. Such collaborative endeavours can not only help students from different countries enhance their expertise in their respective fields of study but also facilitate the development of cross-cultural awareness.^[47]

Building networks and rapport between IS and university teachers is valuable for improving students' academic performance, increasing cultural awareness, improving wellbeing, and enhancing their study experience.^[48] Opportunities provided by the Australian universities to engage IS with academic staff and domestic students would be beneficial

to foster the connections between all parties and enhance student sense of belonging to the faculty, build rapport, and decrease feelings of discrimination among IS. Examples of inclusive strategies include establishing students' groups formed around a shared topic of interest open to all academic staff and university students, organising monthly morning tea days to share knowledge, providing academic assistance, language support, and monitoring student wellbeing. This inclusive approach contributes to a more inclusive and welcoming environment for IS, fostering a sense of belonging.^[49]

Augmenting language proficiency among IS within host universities is essential for their academic advancement and holistic integration into the educational environment. Particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, characterised by a shift towards hybrid learning modalities, the adoption of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) emerges as a promising strategy to bolster IS' linguistic capabilities, thereby enriching their educational experience.^[50] TELL encompasses the integration of technological tools into language learning endeavours, leveraging online platforms, mobile applications, and language learning software to provide interactive language exercises, self-directed study materials, and opportunities for language practice tailored to the needs of IS.^[50] These methodologies, when complemented by sustained support mechanisms, cultivate an inclusive milieu conducive to language acquisition, consequently enhancing the academic proficiency and overall success of IS within host universities.

In this review, 21 studies related to IS' perspectives. Only one study explored the university teachers' perspectives. University staff may have unique perspectives on the experience of IS and the factors influencing their experience in the study in Australia. Future studies should address this gap. Furthermore, only three quantitative studies were included in this review due to limited availability. Additional quantitative studies are needed to comprehensively address this phenomenon.

In the current review, 15 studies explored the perspective of Business, Accounting, and Marketing students, whereas four studies did not mention the study program of the subjects. Only three studies explored the experience of Nursing students in Australian higher education. Nursing and healthcare students might have a different experience than other students as they are required to attend clinical practicum, including working with patients and the healthcare team in the Australian healthcare system as part of their study.^[40] This is expected to impact their whole experience in studying in Australia. It is recommended that future research investigate the experience and needs of international nursing, medical

and healthcare students.

Limitations

IS were examined as one category. However, IS are not a homogeneous group. Further, all reviewed studies were conducted in Australia. Each country has its own culture and education system policies. This will affect the generalizability of the review results to other countries or educational settings.

5. CONCLUSION

This integrative review synthesized the literature on IS experiences in Australian higher education, including factors influencing their experience. Such knowledge is essential to encourage educational institutions to implement supportive interventions to improve IS experience in Australian higher education. The implications of these findings suggest merit in implementing interventions to support IS, engaging in professional training to enhance cultural competence for university staff, and adopting new policies or improving the existing policies for IS studying in Australian universities. Given that cultural awareness is a continuous process, the necessity for cultural awareness initiatives and workshops in Australian universities remains. Future studies could include reports from university staff' and domestic students' perspectives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Not applicable.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Ethar Alsharaydeh and Prof. Sally Chan were responsible for study design and revising. Dr Ethar Alsharaydeh was responsible for searching databases and extracting the data. All authors (Dr Ethar Alsharaydeh, Prof. Sally Chan, and Associate Prof. Niusha Shafiabady) were responsible for refining the extracted data. All authors drafted the manuscript and Dr Ethar Alsharaydeh revised it. All authors read and

approved the final manuscript.

FUNDING

Not applicable.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

INFORMED CONSENT

Obtained.

ETHICS APPROVAL

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press. The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

PROVENANCE AND PEER REVIEW

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

DATA SHARING STATEMENT

No additional data are available.

OPEN ACCESS

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

REFERENCES

- [1] Australian Department of Education. International Higher Education Student Flows. 2019. Available from: https://internationaleducation.gov.au/International-network/Australia/InternationalStrategy/EGIPromotions/Documents/Global%20student%20mobility_Final%20report.pdf
- [2] Universities Australia. 2022 Higher Education Facts and Figures. 2022b. Available from: https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/220207-HE-Facts-and-Figures-2022_2.0.pdf
- [3] Australian Survey Research. International student spend-

ing and income in Australia 2019. 2019. Available from: <file:///C:/Users/ealsharaydeh/Downloads/16-17%20ACER%20International%20student%20spending%20and%20income%20in%20Australia.pdf>

- [4] Universities Australia. 2022 Data snapshot. 2022a. Available from: https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/220523-Data-snapshot-2022_web.pdf
- [5] Australian Department of Education. International student diversity at Australian universities. 2022. Available from: [https://www.education.gov.au/australian-strategy-international-education-2021-2030/announcements/international-education-2021-2030/announcements/international-education-2021-2030](https://www.education.gov.au/australian-strategy-international-education-2021-2030/announcements/international-education-2021-2030/announcements/international-education-2021-2030/announcements/international-education-2021-2030)

- ional-student-diversity-australian-universities
- [6] Chan HT, Rayan S. Challenging stereotypes: international accounting students in Australia. *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*. 2013; 9(2): 169-182. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1054922>
- [7] Australia Education International. 2006 International Student Questionnaire: higher education summary report. 2007. Available from: <http://aei.gov.au/AEI/Shop/Products/Publications/Publication604.htm>
- [8] Australia Education International. International Student Questionnaire 2010. 2010. Available from: https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/2010_International_Student_Report.pdf
- [9] Australia Education International. International Student Questionnaire 2012. 2013. Available from: https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/2012%20ISS%20overview%20Report_PDF_Web%20version_FINAL.pdf
- [10] Australian Education International. International student data June 2017. 2017. Available from: <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/International-Student-Data/Documents/MONTHLY%20SUMMARIES/2017/Jun%202017%20MonthlyInfographic.pdf>
- [11] Arkoudis S, Dollinger M, Baik Patinence A. International students' experience in Australian higher education: can we do better?. *Higher Education*. 2019; 77: 799-813. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-018-0302-x>
- [12] Smith J, Johnson A. Challenges faced by international students: A qualitative study. *Journal of International Students*. 2018; 8(2): 854-867
- [13] Dina U, Gwilym C, Samantha M, et al. Shifting the focus for international higher education in Australia (ISBN 978-0-7340-5667-2). 2021.
- [14] Kim HK, Ahn J, Atkinson L, et al. Effects of COVID-19 Misinformation on Information Seeking, Avoidance, and Processing: A Multicountry Comparative Study. *Science Communication*. 2020; 42(5): 586-615. PMID:38603002 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547020959670>
- [15] Newsome L, Cooper P. International Students' Cultural and Social Experiences in a British University: "Such a hard life [it] is here", *Journal of International Students*. 2016; 6(1): 195-215. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i1.488>
- [16] Le H, McKay J. Chinese and Vietnamese international students in Australia. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 2018; 32 (7): 1278-1292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-08-2016-0180>
- [17] Wearing A, Le H, Wilson R, et al. The International Student's Experience: An Exploratory Study of Students from Vietnam. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*. 2015; 14(1): 71-89
- [18] Sawir E, Marginson S, Forbes-Mewett H, et al. International Student Security and English Language Proficiency. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 2012; 16(5): 434-454. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315311435418>
- [19] Mihai M, Albert C, Mihai V, et al. Emotional and Social Engagement in the English Language Classroom for Higher Education Students in the COVID-19 Online Context. *Sustainability*. 2022; 14: 4527. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14084527>
- [20] Whittemore R, Knaf K. The integrative review: Updated methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2005; 52(5): 546-553. PMID:16268861 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03621.x>
- [21] Hopia H, Latvala E, Liimatainen L. Reviewing the methodology of an integrative review. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*. 2016; 30(4): 662-669. PMID:27074869 <https://doi.org/10.1111/scs.12327>
- [22] Australian government & Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Australia's Migration Trends 2012-13. 2014. Available from: <https://guides.library.lincoln.ac.uk/c.php?g=683973&p=4882456>
- [23] JBI. (2014). Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewers' Manual The Joanna Briggs Institute. Joanna Briggs Institute. Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewers' Manual (2014 ed.). The Joanna Briggs Institute. 2014.
- [24] Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER]. Dropout DNA, and the genetics of effective support. Research briefing, Australasian Survey of Student Engagement. 2011; 11: 1-18. Available from: <http://www.acer.edu.au>
- [25] The National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]. NSSE's Conceptual Framework (2013). 2013. Available from: <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/about-nsse/conceptual-framework/index.html>
- [26] Alsulami N. The Challenges of Studying in Australia for Saudis Male International Students, *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*. 2018; 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.30845/aijcr.v8n2a3>
- [27] Bianchi C. Satisfiers and dissatisfiers for international students of higher education: an exploratory study in Australia, *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. 2013; 35(4): 396-409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2013.812057>
- [28] Tran L, Pham L. International students in transnational mobility: intercultural connectedness with domestic and international peers, institutions and the wider community, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. 2016; 46(4): 560-581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2015.1057479>
- [29] Son JB, Park S. Academic experiences of international PhD students in Australian higher education: From an EAP program to a PhD program. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*. 2014; 9(1): 26-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18334105.2014.11082017>
- [30] Steinmetz CH, Mussi E. Settling in: Postgraduate research student experiences-an international perspective. Joint AARE APERA International Conference, Sydney 2012.
- [31] Phakiti A, Hirsh D, Woodrow L. It's not only English: Effects of other individual factors on English language learning and academic learning of ESL. *Journal of Research in International Education*. 2013; 239-258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240913513520>
- [32] Wong G, Cooper BJ, Dellaportas S. Chinese Students' Perceptions of the Teaching in an Australian Accounting Programme – An Exploratory Study, *Accounting Education*. 2015; 24(4): 318-340.
- [33] Brownlowa C, Eacersall D, Martin N, et al. The higher degree research student experience in Australian universities: a systematic literature review. *Higher Education Research & Development*. 2023; 42(7). <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2183939>
- [34] Macionis N, Walters G, Kwok E. International tertiary student experience in Australia: A Singaporean perspective, *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*. 2019; 25: 100174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2018.10.002>
- [35] Harvey T, Robinson C, Welch A. The Lived Experiences of International Students Who's Family Remains At Home. *Journal of International Students*. 2018; 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i3.297>
- [36] Thamrin Y, Pisaniello D, Guerin C, et al. Correlates of Work-Study Conflict among International Students in Australia: A Multivariate Analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research*

- and Public Health. 2019; 16(15): 2695. PMID:31357740 <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152695>
- [37] Jackson D. Exploring the challenges experienced by international students during work-integrated learning in Australia, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. 2017; 37(3): 344-359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2017.1298515>
- [38] Bista K., Gaulee U. Recurring themes across fractal issues facing international students: A thematic analysis of 2016 dissertations and theses. *Journal of International Students*. 2017; 7(4): 1135-1151. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v7i4.198>
- [39] Edgecombe K, Jennings M, Bowden M. International nursing students and what impacts their clinical learning: literature review. *Nurse Education today*. 2013; 33(2): 138-142. PMID:22939701 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2012.07.015>
- [40] Mitchell C, Del Fabbro L, Shaw J. The acculturation, language and learning experiences of international nursing students: Implications for nursing education. *Nurse Education Today*. 2017; 56 (2017): 16-22. PMID:28623678 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.05.019>
- [41] Haugh M. International students and the "English problem" in Australian universities: a discursive perspective. *International education and cultural-linguistic experiences of international students in Australia*. Edited by Abe Ata and Alex Kostogriz. Samford Valley, QLD, Australia: Australian Academic Press; 2015; 91-104.
- [42] Yates L, Wahid R. Challenges to Brand Australia: international students and the problem with speaking, *Higher Education Research & Development*. 2013; 32(6): 1037-1050. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2013.806447>
- [43] Freeman Li M. 'We are a ghost in the class': First Year International Students' Experiences in the Global Contact Zone. *Journal of International Students*. 2019; 9(1): 19-38. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i1.270>
- [44] McCrohon M, Nyland B. The perceptions of commoditisation and internationalisation of higher education in Australia: an interview study of Chinese international students and their lecturers. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 2018; 19: 17-26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-018-9515-z>
- [45] Pekerti AA, van de Vijver FJR, Moeller M, et al. Intercultural contacts and acculturation resources among international students in Australia: A mixed methods study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 2020; 75: 56-81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.12.004>
- [46] Popovich NG, Okorie-Awé C, Crawford SY, et al. Assessing Students' Impressions of the Cultural Awareness of Pharmacy Faculty and Students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*. 2018; 82(1): 6161. PMID:29491497 <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe6161>
- [47] Angelova M, Zhao Y. Using an online collaborative project between American and Chinese students to develop ESL teaching skills, cross-cultural awareness and language skills, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. 2016; 29(1): 167-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2014.907320>
- [48] Back LT, Polk E, Keys CB, et al. Classroom management, school staff relations, school climate, and academic achievement: testing a model with urban high schools. *Learning Environmental Research*. 2016; 19: 397-410. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-016-9213-x>
- [49] Joksimović S, Gasevic D, Hatala M. Enhancing International Student Engagement: An Analysis of Social Media and Student-Generated Content. *IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies*. 2018; 11(1): 96-109
- [50] Ironsi CS. Navigating learners towards technology-enhanced learning during post COVID-19 semesters. *Trends Neurosci Educ*. 2022; 29: 100189. PMID:36470617 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tine.2022.100189>