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**A Journey of Intercultural and Learning Adaptation:
International Students’ Learning Experiences at One
Australian University**

Jianli Wang (School of Education, RMIT University PO Box
71 Bundoora, VIC 3083 Australia)

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Author(s)

Jianli Wang (School of Education, RMIT University PO Box 71 Bundoora, VIC 3083 Australia)

E-mail: s3142799@student.rmit.edu.au

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Abstract

This article focuses on the pervasive impact of culture on language and learning with the acknowledgment of individual differences. It explores international students' complex cultural and learning adaptation processes with a case-study approach consisting of participant observation, a questionnaire and in-depth interviewing. My findings suggest that international students, especially those whose native languages are not English do face a broad range of difficulties with their learning, which implies a continuous demand of appropriate assistance from their host countries for their learning adaptations.

Keywords: Intercultural adaptation, Culture shock, Learning shock, Learning adaptation, Expectation mismatch, Inclusion

Introduction

The total enrolment of students in Australia increased by nearly 20% from the year 1997 to the year 2002 due to the increase of both domestic and international students. However, compared with the growth of domestic students (8%), the growth of international students was dramatic (123%). After 2002, international students studying in Australia followed a steadily increasing trend to 239,495 in 2005 (Department of Education and Science and Training, 1997-2005). International students enrolled in the Australian Higher Education sector increased steadily and reached a record high of 320,970 in 2009, a 9.1% growth on 2008 and accounting for 30% of the total student population (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011).

The existence of international students has enriched cultural diversity for the Australian student cohort. As more international students choose Australia to study, governments and educators have been trying to find ways to manage cultural pluralism, a phenomenon, which has been viewed differently in different times and in different places (Wang, 2012). They have moved along "a continuum from segregation, assimilation, towards cultural fusion or cultural pluralism as a strategy for managing ethno cultural diversity" (Coelho, 1998, p. 18). Australia "officially declared itself

multicultural and committed itself to multiculturalism in the early 1970s" (Parekh, 2006, p. 5). Afterwards, the Australian government made changes to laws that cover international students who are studying in Australia, which give students more flexibility in their study options. The National Code offers plain English guidelines on how to comply with the education services for international students established under the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000. It was revised in 2005, and thus resulted in the (re-written) new National Code, 2007. This new National Code "provides nationally consistent standards for the conduct of registered providers and the registration of their courses" (Department of Education and Science and Training, 2007, p. 1). The National Code 2007 became effective on 1st of July 2007. The Australian government's continuous emphasis on international education is based upon its realization of the benefits that international students can bring to this country. Although Australia gains many benefits from international students, "the benefits of international education and training depend on the service provided to international students, on public confidence in the integrity and quality of that service" (Department of Education and Science and Training, 2007, p. 3) as well as on institutions' awareness of the diverse cultural backgrounds of international students.

Even though there has been a large number of research studies conducted in relation to international education in Australia, most research studies tend to focus mainly on student language issues and cultural differences (Benzie, 2010; May & Bartlett, 1995; Mitsis & Foley, 2009; Strang, 2010). Emergent patterns in literature appear in the areas of cultural learning styles (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007; Marlina, 2009; Parekh, 2006; Singh & Han, 2009) and Asian students' learning experiences (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2010; L. Tran, 2010). On the other hand, little emphasis has been focused on the processes international students undergo for learning adaptation (L. T. Tran, 2011). Highlighted in these studies is the need for more adequate research into the complexities of international students' learning adaptation processes.

This study attempts to contribute to this growing area of knowledge. It argues that international students bring complex cultural learning and teaching beliefs with them into their programs in Australia. Although cultural influence needs to be acknowledged, it is not regarded as the only explanation for adaptation difficulties.

Literature review

To support international students, there has been much assistance provided to them from various agents in Australia. However, ongoing research and studies still report international students studying in Australia still face various challenges with their learning (Batorowicz, 1999; R. Burns, 1991; Furnham, 1997; Germov & Williams, 2001; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009). Among those challenges, culture and learning adaptation difficulties have been mentioned frequently.

Culture shock

International students face a variety of challenges when they take up tertiary education in Australia, and those problems experienced have been examined in wide ranging studies (Barron & Zeegers, 2006; Baty & Corbyn, 2010; Beasley & Pearson, 1999; L. T. Tran, 2011; Wilkinson, 1996). Among those issues, language difficulties, cultural adjustment, social

and psychological adjustment, finance and accommodation problems are mentioned frequently (Baker & Hawkins, 2006; Le & Gardner, 2010; Mezger, 1992). During the first few months of studying in Australia, international students generally experience 'Culture shock' to various degrees and usually find it difficult to manage (Germov & Williams, 2001). 'Culture shock' refers to "the distress or acute anxiety experienced by international visitors as a result of losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social interaction such as customs, gestures, facial expression, words" (Mezger, 1992, p. 143).

'Culture shock' raises the central concept of culture, which most researchers agree is a very complex term, and therefore, difficult to define. As Williams (1976) asserts, culture is "one of the ... most complicated words in the English language" (p. 87) and researchers have defined it in a variety of ways. Up until the 1960s, "culture was typically defined as a pattern of behaviour and customs" (Aldridge & Goldman, 2007, p. 24). Today culture might refer to a 'dynamic system' of integrated patterns of beliefs, values, and norms that are shared by a group and give them a sense of community (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Matsumoto, 2000; McIntryre, 1997).

However, according to Groeschl and Doherty (2000), the term culture has been used across a broad range of areas, and culture, therefore, has been defined differently in different disciplines. Social scientists for instance, view culture as "consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies" (J. A. Banks & Banks, 1994, p. 84); and the major elements of culture, social scientists claim, are all 'nonmaterial' (values, language, awareness, feelings and so forth). Nevertheless, ethnographers assert culture includes not only a 'nonmaterial' component, but also a 'material' component (buildings, books, art, and so on). Ethnographers thus, conceptualize culture as "a system of shared beliefs, values, practices, perspectives, folk knowledge, language, norms, rituals, and material objects and artefacts that members of a group use in understanding their world and in

relating to others” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 369).

There are many definitions of culture and there is still “no agreement among scholars about how to conceptualize culture” (S. P. Banks, 1995, p. 7). However, the most relevant definition for this research derives from Matsumoto (2000). He claims that culture is, “a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival ... shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group Relatively stable but with the potential to change across time” (p. 24). This definition is closely linked to the current study for two reasons. First, it illustrates different layers of culture, which is a useful approach to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. Hofstede(1991) uses layers of an onion as a metaphor to demonstrate culture’s different patterns. After Hofstede, Groeschl and Doherty (2000) applied the same idea, but they gave a more specific explanation: “the shallow, first layer [of culture] is behaviour and represents the explicit culture. Implicit culture includes a second and deeper layer, namely values” (p. 14); and they believed assumptions as the core of culture. These hidden assumptions about culture can “infuse communication and learning” (McNamara & Harris, 1997, p. 76). Second, Matsumoto’s (2000) definition describes that ‘those cultural values shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit’, which questioned the stereotypical tendencies of cultural influences upon learning and meanwhile acknowledged individuality. As such this suggestion implies opportunities to embrace each student as an individual, and thus their differences are valued.

Learning shock

Culture has been acknowledged to have huge influences upon personal development of learning preferences (Parekh, 2006; De Vita, 2001). Parekh (2006) explains that as human beings “are culturally embedded in the sense that they are born into, raised in and deeply shaped by their cultural communities” (Parekh, 2006, p. 120). Parekh (2006) further argues that “every culture is also a system of regulation. It approves or disapproves of certain forms of behaviour and ways of life, prescribes rules and

forms governing human relations and activities, and enforces these by means of reward or punishment” (p. 156). In relation to students’ studying in a different country, this applies particularly to teachers and to learners’ choices. To go a step further, different education cultures shape different education paradigms and various underlying assumptions about teaching and learning. These beliefs about teaching and learning thus regulate learning and teaching activities and lead to various culturally approved learning styles and teaching pedagogies in each individual culture.

International students normally “experience unpleasant feelings and difficult experiences when they are exposed to a new learning environment”, as a result, can often experience a state of disorientation also referred to as ‘learning shock’(Gu & Maley, 2008, p. 229). ‘Learning shock’ requires much attention both from the students themselves and also from their educators. International students’ cultural beliefs about teaching and learning can lead to a great degree of frustration and poor academic performances. Moreover, inadequate intercultural understanding can cause “both teachers and students to experience uncertainty and anxiety when they are unable to adequately predict each other’s behaviour, expectations, and norms for success” (Garcia & Guerra, 2006, p. 104). As a consequence, this poor intercultural understanding and communication can quite often cause frustration and stress between teachers and international students.

English language

Cammish(1997) argued that “the problems anyone has to face in pursuing studies in a country other than one’s own can at first seem to be overwhelming, and for many students, language is a core problem” (p. 143). Those students who struggle with their English can often fail to meet the requirements of completing their degree, which brings issues of English language acquisition to the fore. Language is not only a significant barrier to interaction between international students and local students; it is also an issue in the academic setting. Cammish (1997) explains this as the English language students learned in their own countries often will be localized and often therefore “reflect only the traditions and

cultural values of the learner's own country" (p. 145). Some students may be capable of speaking formal, grammatically accurate sentences, but they may not interact adequately with local speakers in an Australian cultural setting; as "successful language use in one context may not be appropriate in another" (Benzie, 2010, p. 453).

Many academics and students might under-appreciate cultural influences upon language learning despite their strong impact. This study acknowledges the pervasive impact culture has on student learning, but argues that in terms of learners from other cultures, cultural values might play a big role in explanation, but also and more importantly, based upon the multiplicity of learners, generalized conclusions about them need to be cautioned as these might cause misleading explanations; rather individual experiences and interpretations of their learning experiences also need to be regarded as important in relation to understanding international students' learning. The emphasis of this study is therefore, upon the recognition of individual complex adaptation experiences with a case-study approach consisting of participant observation, document analysis, questionnaire and in-depth interviewing.

Case study

Case studies are used to gain in-depth understanding of a particular topic or phenomena. The focus of case studies is more on what is gleaned from the process than the end result, which allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (R. B. Burns, 2000). This study was bounded by the location of one institute and by time of a one-year period. It involved the collection of qualitative data to provide detailed and holistic descriptions of international students' cultural and learning experiences. There were ten participants, all postgraduate students in Education in an Australian university. Questions this study expected to explore sat around how international students' experienced cultural and learning adaptations within the Australian cultural learning context.

A questionnaire was handed out to participants initially, as a questionnaire can "elicit information from a respondent that covers a long period of time in a few minutes, and it could also go beyond description to looking for patterns in data" (R. B. Burns, 2000, p. 567). The questionnaire in this research consisted of eight closed questions and eight open-ended ones. Among the closed questions, there were questions relating to gender, age, nationality, time since first arrival in Australia, and whether English was their native language or foreign language. These questions provided demographic data on the background information influencing the participants' communication, behaviour, values and beliefs. There were also open-ended questions around general issues in relation to their learning experiences, as "open-ended questions are flexible and therefore facilitate a richness and intensity of response" (R. B. Burns, 2000, p. 572). The questionnaire in this research was helpful in providing basic snapshot information to address the research questions raised in this inquiry, as well as providing a basis for follow-up semi-structured interviews to elicit further detailed and holistic data from the participants.

Data collected from the questionnaire was then supplemented by a number of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviewing according to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), offers "repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words" (p. 77). Participants in this study were individually face-to-face interviewed once to provide multiple viewpoints. These interviews lasted around 30 minutes located in a group study room in the library. The interviews were audio-recorded for further analysis.

Data collected was initially organized into categories on the bases of themes, concepts and similar features. Those categories were further assisted by themes from the literature and terms used by participants. During the second phase of analysing data, instead of focusing on the initial themes, the responses that the participants provided were focused, which was aimed to identify new themes or concepts by

repeated studying of the data. I then further refined the information contained within the participants' responses by streaming the data into different themes under the research questions. Literature was also reviewed to form theoretical frameworks and to facilitate the organization of data during the analytical and reporting stages. Further triangulation and confirmation was provided by prolonged observation and member checking.

Findings

Intercultural adaptation

In this study, international students, even those coming from English speaking countries stated they experienced 'Culture shock' to various degrees. Jim from Scotland in the interviewing clearly articulated that he experienced some 'Culture shock' even though the cultures between Australia and Scotland were similar. Although experiencing 'Culture shock' does not necessarily mean experiencing something unpleasant, there is "by and large agreement that exposure to new culture is stressful" (Furnham, 1997, p. 17). Especially for those international students who share different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, exposure to Australian culture is stressful. Zoe, who came from India, said that when she first got here, it was tough and May from Korea, also asserted that "everything was new and scary at first". Those students who already had a social network in their host country before arrival, it was easier to deal with 'Culture shock'. Du Wen and Zhang Fei from China did not experience 'Culture shock', as the first stated she lived with her cousin and the other with her friends. However, Zoe described her experience as rather tough, even though her family was here with her.

Those international students from English speaking countries explicitly claimed that they did not experience 'Culture shock' when they were newly arrived in Australia. However, they asserted they experienced newness and loss of social interaction, which according to some scholars, for instance Mezger(1992), are symptoms of 'Culture shock'.

When you do not know about your people and your place, and it is a bigger place and you feel more isolated. Because the place is bigger and the number of people you know gets smaller. It is kind of a double affect. I thought it was quite difficult (Jim).

Although Joseph comes from America with a different cultural background from those students coming from China, India and Korea, he also experienced unpleasantness; he did not think this derived from 'Culture shock', but from being in a new place:

If I moved from one town to another town in America, probably these kinds of feelings. Not so much 'Culture shock', but just being in a new place. So making new friends and finding your new way around and things like that. I think for me, I am not so shocked by the Australian culture, but I still have to, like I got into a new university, I got to meet new people.

Even though Jim and Joseph experienced 'Culture shock', they claimed they had no trouble making friends with both local and international students. As a result, they could quickly build a social network and adapt to Australian culture better than those students who had different linguistic backgrounds. However, all international students coming from non-English speaking countries asserted it was difficult for them to construct mutual friendships with local students. AnMou felt "it was really very hard to make Australian friends," and Du Wen thought this difficulty probably came from "personal character, another was language, and the third one was cultural differences". Although language and cultural differences are common barriers for constructing mutual friendship between international students and local students, some difficulties are also due to students' underlying beliefs and lack of self-confidence. As Chen Min and Du Wen illustrated:

I do not have lots of experiences communicating with local students. It is not because I cannot speak English, but usually I am not confident to talk to locals in English. I do not feel confident enough to speak English with them. It is true, as I am not confident, I could not speak properly, and then I feel worse,

and have more troubles talking accordingly. Therefore, I do not want to talk or I just want to talk with Chinese students or those who speak Chinese (Chen Min).

If your English is not good, you yourself do not really have motivation to talk to locals ... I could not understand what they are speaking about, then certainly I do not want to chat with them [local students], they also do not particularly want to chat with us. I think it is really difficult unless you have the motivation to learn English very well (Du Wen).

In my study, I found that international students' cultural beliefs about teaching and learning could lead to frustration and poor academic performances. Not feeling familiar with the learning community could even cause physical discomfort, for instance:

In the beginning, I was shivering, because I could not understand. India is entirely different from Australia. So I thought I have to give up the course. When I was doing one of my assignments I was not well at all. I lost my voice. I could not submit my assignment by the due date. I was shivering like I was ill. What is this, oh, everything is new, oh, my goodness, (Zoe).

Learning adaptation

Those international students who had English as their first language claimed they did not have any language difficulties. Moreover, they also claimed that the teaching and learning cultures in their home countries were similar to their host country, and as such, they did not find it hard to adapt to their program. Therefore, the following section of this study addresses issues relating to international students who had English as a foreign language and claimed that the teaching and learning cultures in their home countries was different from their host country, Australia.

In my study, the most common problem international students reported as experiencing in the beginning of their study was listening, which in turn affected their understanding. Du Wen said she could not understand lectures, especially with the technical vocabulary. Quite surprisingly, many international students

expressed the biggest problem with listening related more to group interaction, which hindered their participation. One reason why some students have language difficulties, according to Benzie(2010), who viewed this from a socio-cultural perspective, was that, "while language learning certainly involves learning a range of skills, it is the success with which those skills are applied in the context of use that affects how effectively the language learner can communicate with others"(p. 452).

Zhang Fei claimed her listening was good and she could understand what the teacher said, although she could not understand her classmates as their speaking speeds were faster than the teacher's. Her response to not being able to understand was "just look at the locals and smile".

Participants in this study, rather than claiming writing as the biggest challenge they experienced as Ballard and Clanchy's(1997)study claimed, thought listening and speaking were more challenging, as they thought listening affected their understanding, which in turn, brought about proper communication. This accordingly can affect academic performances. Even those international students whose listening skills were adequate for them to understand what was going on around them, still could not interact properly in an academic setting if they had poor speaking skills. Most international students explicitly claimed that their speaking was poor, thus they could not express themselves quickly and correctly, which in turn resulted in withdrawal from participation and feelings of isolation. Zhang Fei asserted:

My speaking is bad. I do not know how to express myself, especially in the workshop in small discussions. Sometimes I have ideas, but I cannot speak out quickly. I need some time to organize my idea. My classmates always say 'you are so quiet'. Actually I do not want to be a quiet student, but it is really hard.

"The locals' English is so fast, so I could not understand. I just took a seat there; just listened to them" (An Mou).

In China, I can certainly express myself well in Chinese, but here, it is difficult for me to

express myself well in English, therefore, I do not know what I should say. After a long period of silence, I do not even want to express my opinions even though mine is different (Chen Min).

Expectation mismatch

International students' learning difficulties not only come from poor language skills, they also come from a cultural mismatch. Most students in this study ranked differences in writing styles as their number one difficulty among their writing problems, which is not only about language, but significantly relies upon cultural influences on writing styles. Culture influences personal development of learning preferences by influencing our perceptions, organization of information, our communication, interactions, problem solving, and transformation; culture can thus, "affect learning styles (De Vita, 2001, p. 167).

Some participants in my study were consciously aware of cultural influences. Du Wen thought:

About writing, you know Chinese writing styles are different from those in Australia, so it was terrible at the beginning. The important thing is the teacher thinks I did not connect it to my experiences, but I felt I did that quite well.

It was not that such students could not write good English, but rather it was because of cultural differences in writing styles. Zoe said she could write English very well, but she thought the way she wrote was not the way her teacher expected.

Moreover, challenges international students encountered were also due to varying expectations between teachers and students themselves. Some of them, for instance An Mou expected her educators here to act similar roles to those she had in Korea. Some other students expressed concern of their lecturers' grading criteria and should also need to consider the time and effort they have invested in their homework. For instance, Zoe articulated a degree of criticism claimed that as she thought her teacher should have given her a distinction rather than a credit, because she did her second assignment just as the teacher

advised her and she also invested lots of time and effort in this assignment:

I worked a lot on that, I worked harder on that and she just gave me credit. I was not satisfied with that. So I thought that if international students are judged properly. They will feel happy and satisfied. An Australian student, though he or she is not good at the subject, I came to know that he or she got distinction. So I feel that, we come from different countries, we have to work harder in order to understand this part and everything, so we deserve good results. I sit down night after night to work on this assignment, but still get a credit.

The aforementioned examples involving Du Wen, Zoe and their teachers reflected misunderstanding and conflict between international students and teachers that resulted from inappropriate interaction among cultures. From this intercultural communication perspective, frustrations and uncertainty are likely to rise if communications between the two parties are insufficient (Garcia & Guerra, 2006). This indicated a need for explicit articulation of requirements and expectations from both lecturers and international students.

Inclusion or exclusion

Exclusion and isolation are dreadful experiences. Rich (1986), for instance articulated this feeling as, "when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing... It takes some strength ... demanding to be seen and heard" (p. 167). International students operating with insufficient cultural knowledge about their host culture can quite often experience feeling of exclusion and they tend to blame educators for this feeling of isolation. However, blaming is not the solution. Even though some lecturers are consciously aware of international students' existence and are consciously making efforts to include them in the learning community; lack of acknowledgement of international students' individual differences and their previous cultural traditions might lead to unpleasant consequences. Lee, when he did his first exercise in his class, felt stupid. He further explained:

I read in class. Students have to create one story and read it aloud each class. But, unfortunately I was the first one. So I did it. So after that week, the other students read aloud their short stories, and I thought my god, I am really ashamed about my story.

Although some of the lecturers might not be aware of international students' lack of confidence in participation in their classroom activities, Cheng Min said most lecturers knew international students' weaknesses and they tried to help international students to make academic adjustments. However, Du Wen and Zoe explicitly addressed the influence of local peers who were patient and helpful, which as a result encouraged their willingness to participate in discussions. Zhang Fei felt it was hard at first...

...But now the situation had been changed, because I am more familiar with my classmates. They know we are Chinese students, so sometimes they ask me positively, 'what do you think? Do you think this, is that right?' They give me some guidance and I can express my ideas sometimes.

However, Zoe experienced something different from Zhang Fei and as such had different evaluations on her local peers,

Once I asked for help from a student in the class, an Australian girl. I went and asked her, and she just tried to escape from me.... So I was confused and I did not know how to write. That is how I felt isolation in the beginning. Because I sought help from her, one student from my class, but she hesitantly gave the reply. She said, oh, you have to write like this and like this. I did not understand all she said.... It was very tough.

The consequences of exclusion as not being able to engage in one's learning community can often lead to isolation, total withdrawal and a desire of escape.

In the beginning I felt I was isolated, because nobody talked to me. See if I had some good friends, good Australian friends, I would not have gone to the lecturers for advice (Zoe).

I want to call my parents, my professor in Korea, I was quite a smart student there, I got scholarships and my professor always encouraged me to keep studying. But here I felt really stupid in the class, but I cannot understand it. I could not be involved in that discussion at all. So I decided to drop the class (An Mou).

A hard journey

It is apparent that quitting is not the best choice for international students trying to cope with their academic life at Australian Universities. Rather they need to be consciously aware of the reasons; therefore, they could make adjustments and move forward. When experiencing stress and frustration, which international students often do when they first arrive here, they tend to blame other people for the tough situation. However, later on, they think this is more dependent on themselves. Cheng Min stated, "some of the problems international students face relates to teachers, but it depends heavily on yourself". Although An Mou and Zoe wanted to drop their courses, they did not have to quit. As Zoe explained:

I take it as a challenge. No, no, I should not give up the course, I have to continue. See when we are on a boat in a river, if we got stuck in the centre, our ideas will be whether to go back. After seeing the huge river in front of us, we got scared, did we not? We get scared and we think should I proceed or should I go back? If you take that as a challenge, if you think that you have to pass this crossing, you will go further. Or you will go backwards.

Discussion and conclusion

Many researchers agree that the experience of 'Culture shock' is usually unpleasant (Furnham, 1997, p. 17). Most participants of this study also appeared to connect unpleasant experiences to 'Culture shock', for instance in the case of loneliness (Jim and Joseph also felt lonely even though they come from English speaking countries). Whether this derives from 'Culture shock' or from moving to a new place as Joseph asserted; international students need to build up their social network to quickly adjust to their host culture. The most beneficial

form of mental support shown in this study is friendship, therefore making new friends, especially local friends is desirable for many international students.

The interconnectedness of language, learning and culture suggests a continuous need for international students to develop networks that can help them develop language, learning and culture knowledge. This study highlighted international students' learning adaptation challenges and found most international students do face a variety of learning difficulties during their learning stages here in Australia. Especially during their early stage of study, a combination of culture, language and learning challenges can cause a radiation effect, which can contribute to unwell, frustration and isolation. Most of their challenges in relation to learning are shown from a lack of intercultural knowledge and understanding from both the students as well as their teachers, which implies a need for both of those parties to build networks that can enrich their cultural knowledge and understanding about learning. Intercultural dialogues cherished and included in classes thus, might provide support for international students to overcome learning adaptation difficulties as well as reach mutual understanding between teachers and students themselves.

International students' challenges in relation to learning also related to their Australian local peers' degree of support. For instance, different from earlier findings in literature, this study found most international students rank listening as very challenging. This difficulty is not from understanding their lectures, but more related to group discussions. Thus, their Australian local peers who are patient has articulated as very encouraging for them; whereas those who are not patient can contribute to a greater degree of frustration for those international students (for instance, the afore mentioned Zoe's case)

The findings thus, indicated an extra demand of more appropriate assistance in the area of building social networks from policy makers, educators as well as their local peers. Most international students, especially those students of non-English speaking backgrounds in the current study suggested that forming

relationships with local students could provide support for them to adjust to the Australian learning community. Therefore, conscious effort invested into this area will be beneficial for international students, which Australian local students might also benefit from these networks.

Moreover, the findings also reflected an overlook of Australian local students' experiences among current research studies and indicated an implication for future studies into the area of local students' experiences with the enlarged existence of international students in their learning communities.

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