

**Investigating cultural realities of International students in UKHE**

**CW2: Written Project Proposal**



**7034HUM – Research Methods in Applied Linguistics**

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**Introduction:**

The number of international students attending UK has grown dramatically in recent years. This trend is seen in the UK. International students enrich the academic atmosphere and strengthen the UK's education leadership (Adams, 2020). They also advance British universities and help in building the environment. These individuals achieve this purpose by bringing a variety of cultural ideas and experiences to UK schools. International students are crucial to comprehending different cultures and highlighting global challenges. Their vibrant cultures can improve campus life and draw attention to previously mentioned issues.

Many factors contribute to the rise in overseas students in UK schools. Several elements contribute to the country's education success (Carroll, 2011). The country's reputation for academic excellence, dedication to providing students with a quality educational experience, and large selection of study options to suit a variety of interests are some of these factors. The UK's dynamic cities and rich cultural past provide overseas students a fascinating and diversified environment to explore new ideas and civilizations (Rote, 2021). Because of this, international students have an advantage. One effect is the opportunity of fully immersing oneself in a foreign culture.

Hazelwood and Derrington (2007) and Ward and Bochner (2006) found that international students struggle to adapt to UK culture. This often happens. This is a challenge for international students. If they must face this difficulty, it could hurt their academic and physical health. Such an impact could be severe. Language obstacles, cultural differences, social isolation, loneliness, and other issues might make communication difficult (Stevens et al., 2012). This area also includes culturally-related communication issues.

This study seeks to understand international students' acculturation, personal growth, and support networks in UK higher education institutions. To reach this goal, we must identify and assess the specific challenges overseas students have when adapting to UK culture. The research will also examine how foreign students might grow as persons by engaging with people from different cultures. How well processes and resources help students studying abroad as well as how this influences academic advancement and health will be assessed through this study.

This research will help in understanding what factors affect the success and contentment of international students. The study's findings will also help to improve environment for overseas students studying in UK, ensuring that they will receive a warm welcome.

**Aim**

The aim of this study is to get insight into the lives of foreign students in the United Kingdom by examining issues including acculturation, development, and the significance of social networks

**Objectives*:***

* Explore the challenges international students face in adapting to UK culture.
* Investigate the impact of cross-cultural experiences on their personal growth.
* Examine the role of support systems in enhancing international student well-being.

**Literature Review**

The presence of international students in UK institutions is vital because they offer a wide variety of viewpoints, cultural diversity, and international ties. Fostering their achievement and well-being requires an understanding of their experiences and difficulties. Traveling abroad or pursuing higher education has been suggested to have the potential to change cultures (Tarry, 2011). Academics contend that the goal of studying abroad should be to experience the host nation rather than to give up one's cultural background and fully integrate into the society in which overseas students are living for a little time (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008).

For international students, navigating a new cultural context poses serious hurdles. Frameworks for comprehending their process of acculturation are provided by cultural adjustment model. This model has five stages: The Excitement Stage, The Frustration Stage, The Adjustment Stage, The Acceptance Stage and The Reverse Cultural Shock Stage (Kaghan, 1990). Research indicates that international students encounter challenges while attempting to conform to the academic and cultural norms of the United Kingdom (Hazelwood, 2006). Language barriers are a major hindrance that affect social integration and academic achievement (De Wit et al., 2015). Stevens and colleagues (2012) found that rapid social change might cause social disorientation and stress, which can lower health and academic performance. This may lower academic achievement. When suddenly placed in a new context with unfamiliar habits and routines, people may experience stress and culture shock. This may upset and stress them. Possible symptoms include homesickness, grief, and concern. These feelings are also possible. If they move to the UK, students from culturally different backgrounds may struggle to adjust to culture shock. Previous researches did not address these issues properly, so more research is required to understand the issues faced by international students.

People establish unique identities and personalities via frequent interactions with people of other ethnicities. Because they can come from many origins. This allows unique personalities to evolve. Adams (2020) and De Wit et al. (2015) found that international students develop personally. The next paragraphs present both experiments' results. This effort has led to a more accepting attitude, a broader perspective, and improved cultural competency. Participating in cultural exchange events and learning about different cultures can make campus life more exciting and welcoming. This is done by gathering information. The numerous viewpoints that international students bring to the table strengthen classroom discussions and promote a wider awareness of the various cultures that exist in the world (Leung, 2011). International students bring all of these perspectives to the table (Leung, 2011). By engaging in collective introspection on preconceived notions by students from diverse backgrounds, including both local and international perspectives, and subsequent dissemination of acquired insights, the community stands to gain enhanced acceptance and awareness.

International students need programmes and services to adjust to their new environment and succeed academically. This will help international students acclimatise and succeed academically. Adams (2020) states that orientation programmes, counselling services, and activities that reflect students' cultures can boost academic performance and well-being. Incalculable aid and social networks and peers help establish a sense of belonging. Stevens et al. (2012) hypothesised that students with strong social networks, both domestic and international, may feel less lonely and isolated.

Despite the fascinating and useful information, the previous studies done by the researchers left certain gaps. Even though the study provides intriguing and crucial information. Most studies ignore the challenges pupils from diverse cultural backgrounds face in the educational system. This is because these pupils' experiences are not fully understood (Adam, 2020). Discrimination against foreign students and its negative effects on their mental health and academic performance have received little research. Despite technology's significant impact on international students' lives, we don't know how it affects social integration, contacts with people from different cultures, and support networks. Few studies have critically assessed institutional procedures and their ability to meet international students' cultural expectations (De Wit et al., 2015). This is problematic since overseas students have diverse cultural expectations. Due to historical research gaps, this has occurred.

Studying the cultural reality of UK students is crucial. This is necessary to ensure the success and well-being of the growing number of international students enrolling in UK schools. The previous researches acknowledge acculturation, cross-cultural growth, and support networks, but it has many limitations. This can be seen in focusing on a particular cultural group, questioning the negative effects of prejudice, acknowledging that technology is becoming more important, and investigating institutional processes. Students will gain from institutional governance, technology use, classroom diversity, and technology use. Diversity in the classroom benefits pupils too (De Wit et al, 2015).

Colleges may offer multiple answers to questions about their international students due to their requirements. Based on their findings, Hazelwood and Derrington (2007) recommended that the educational institution utilise more comprehensive and consistent methods to help international students. This was their conclusion. Diversity and inclusivity are essential to welcoming and supporting international students. Therefore, these components must be implemented. Educational institutions should lead programmes that promote diverse and inclusive policies and practices that identify and value people from all backgrounds (Adam, 2022). Cultural activities, foreign student clubs, and peer mentorship initiatives can help people form strong social bonds. Sharing expertise can help attain this goal (Adam, 2022). To adopt comprehensive and consistent methods for supporting international students it is important to recognize the significance of ongoing evaluation and adaptation.

International students in UK higher education benefit the institution. These students' first-time university contributions include cultural diversity, worldwide connections, and cultural enrichment. Understanding people's struggles, experiences, and support networks is crucial to their success and well-being. Understanding this is crucial now. Higher education institutions must continue to develop and implement measures to help international students. This must be done. This technique aims to establish a welcoming classroom to help students develop as persons and think critically.

**Methodology:**

In this research, emphasis will be on the synthesis of existing literature. This research will facilitate a comprehensive investigation of the literature, scholarly articles, institutional reports, and online resources pertaining to the experiences, difficulties, and cultural adaptations of international students within United Kingdom emphasizing secondary data analysis as the primary mode of inquiry. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method will be used to ensure the validity of the research. It is an independent academic method that aims to evaluate and identify all relevant literature on a topic in order to derive conclusion about the questions under consideration. It has three stages: Planning, Search Strategy, screening and Selection.

**Planning**: Planning stage includes formulation of research questions. For example, we will explore the problems faced by overseas students.

**Search Strategy**: We will use a comprehensive search strategy that will help us to filter and study relevant studies that align with our research. This will be achieved using targeted databases and keywords.

**Screening and Selection**: The literature that is retrieved will be carefully screened, with titles and abstracts being assessed. Excluded studies will make sure that the goals of the research are met.

Secondary sources will be explored in this research. Academic journals will be explored to gather articles and academic studies focused on cultural adaptation, challenges and experiences of international students within UK higher education (UKHE). Additionally, government reports from educational and cultural departments will be sourced to acquire data concerning policies and support system designed for international students.

The following research keywords will be employed in our research in order to understand the cultural realities of international students: Cross Cultural experiences, Academic Challenges, Intercultural Communication and International Students.

In investigating cultural realities of international student many databases will be employed which offers a comprehensive array of academic, scholarly and institutional resources ensuring a robust analysis qualitative analysis of cultural realities among international students in UKHE. Databases that will be utilized to gather relevant information are ERIC (Educational resources Information Centre) that contains a vast collection of education related literature, JSTOR which provides access to scholarly articles including sociology and education which may offer insights to cultural challenges and experience of international students.

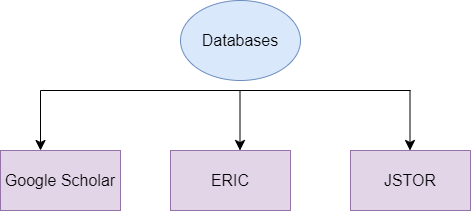


Figure 1: Databases chosen for research

In analysing the cultural realities of international students, thematic analysis will be employed. Secondary data from various sources will be collated and coded. Themes encompassing cultural adaptation, social support, academic challenges, institutional policies, cross-cultural experiences, and inclusively perception will be extracted and refined, providing comprehensive insight into the multifaceted experiences of international students (Caulfield, 2019). Thematic analysis has two approaches: Inductive Approaches and Deductive Approaches. Inductive Approaches will allow data to determine the theme. There are six steps of thematic analysis: Formalization, Coding, Generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and Writing (Jack, 2019).

**Evaluation of Frameworks**

**Acculturation Theory**

Culture shock and stages of culture shock are part of the acculturation process. Acculturation has four strategies:

* Assimilation
* Separation
* Integration
* Marginalization

Acculturation theory provides a lens for understanding how individuals adapt to new culture, the challenges they face and the strategies they utilize for coping and adjustment (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation Theory serves as a valuable insight to understand the cultural realities of international students as they navigate cultural adaptation and adjustment. By incorporating this theory we can get insight into various aspects of international students’ experiences, challenges and coping strategies within the UKHE contexts.

**Intercultural Communication Theory:**

This theory looks at how a culmination of individual with conflicting traits interact together and how their culture impacts said interaction. Body language, gestures and language are all used to find a common ground between two or more individuals (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Intercultural communication theory will be utilized as it helps in understanding the communication challenges faced by individuals from different cultures. By recognizing the diversity of communication patterns among students who belong to different backgrounds potential barriers to effective communication and interaction will be identified. (Ting-Toomey, 2012).

**Cultural Pedagogy**

Cultural pedagogy framework will be employed as it emphasizes the importance of incorporating diverse cultural perspectives and experiences into teaching and learning to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all the students. It will be helpful in intercultural understanding (Gay, 2010).

**Conclusion:**

Gaining a thorough grasp of the difficulties faced by overseas students adjusting to UK culture at higher education institutions is the anticipated result of this research. Through an examination of acculturation, personal development, and the function of support systems, the research seeks to illuminate the experiences, challenges, and consequences of these students' cross-cultural interactions.

In order to provide researchers with a theoretical lens through which they can analyse and comprehend the difficulties and strategies faced by international students in adjusting to a new culture, overcoming communication barriers, and promoting an inclusive educational environment, frameworks such as acculturation theory, intercultural communication theory, and cultural pedagogy framework are evaluated.

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**5. Appendices**

**Appendix 1: Reflection on feedback**

The presentation has undergone several revisions as a direct outcome of the comments and recommendations of my teachers and classmates. Coventry University organises a variety of multicultural events, such as Flamenco Week as well as Romani Week, when students participate in the celebration of many cultural aspects (Li, Z., 2022). Throughout the academic year, students engage in exhibits that explore the concept of internationalization. Notably, they have previously expressed appreciation for the East Winds Cinematic Festival, which stands as the only prominent film festival dedicated to East Asian cinema within the confines of London.

It has been enlightening to investigate the cultural reality of overseas students in the UK Higher Education (UKHE) system. I became aware of the richness and diversity of these students' cultural realities as I dug deeper into my research and interacted with many aspects of their experiences. The course of my research has been greatly influenced by the advice and insights given by educators and other scholars. Their feedback has helped me understand the complexity of international students' experiences, which has led to a more in-depth analysis of the difficulties, successes, and distinctive viewpoints they offer to the UKHE scene. This continuous investigation has brought to light the necessity of having a thorough grasp of cultural quirks, learning requirements, and support networks designed to improve international students' overall experience in UK higher education.

**Appendix 2: Action Plan**

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| STEP | ACTION | DATE |
| 1 | Done Discussion on Dissertation topic. | Oct-23 |
| 2 | Prepared the project proposal | Nov-23 |
| 3 | Build reflection and oral presentation | Nov-23 |
| 4 | Submitted project proposal in written document | Nov-23 |
| 5 | Reflect on provided feedback regarding written proposal | Dec-23 |
| 6 | Meet dissertation supervisor | Dec-23 |
| 7 | Got approval on ethical form | Dec-23 |
| 8 | Data collection and analysis | Jan-24 |
| 9 | Gathered founded data and analysis | Jan-24 |
| 10 | Meet Dissertation supervisor | Jan-24 |
| 11 | Generate literature review | Jan-24 |
| 12 | Write Methodology Chapter | Feb-24 |
| 13 | Generate results and discussion on it | Feb-24 |
| 14 | Meet dissertation Supervisor | Feb-24 |
| 15 | Generate Introduction | Mar-24 |
| 16 | Final draft dissertation preparation | Mar-24 |
| 17 | Generate reflection on basis of feedback | Mar-24 |
| 18 | Submit final dissertation | Apr-24 |

**Appendix 3: Methodological Framework**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Methodology | Focus | Description | Benefits |
| Acculturation Theory | Psychological, social, and cultural changes during adapting to a new culture | Identifies four strategies for acculturation - Integration, Assimilation, Separation, Marginalization. | Explains challenges faced by international students and their coping strategies. |
| Intercultural Communication Theory | Communication process between individuals from different cultures | Explores how cultural differences affect communication, leading to misunderstandings and conflict. | Helps understand the communication challenges faced by international students and promotes intercultural communication within the university. |
| Critical Pedagogy | Empowering individuals to challenge social and cultural inequalities | Focuses on critical thinking, questioning dominant narratives, and promoting social justice. | Analyzes existing support systems, empowers international students, and promotes intercultural understanding. |