

Internationalisation of Curriculum Delivery: Complexities of English as an Instructional Language in a non-English Culture

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Abstract: English language is the main lingua-franca in higher education worldwide. For that reason, higher education institutions in Malaysia including the Malaysian Technical and Vocational University (MTVU, a pseudonym) have been promoting English as the language of instruction. With the existence of international students and voluminous English academic resources, implementing English as the language of instruction is a significant commitment. International students, as well as academic staff in MTVU however, come from various non-western cultures where English is not their native language. This paper focuses on an issue related to the use of English language amongst these groups in learning and teaching processes. Jin's (1992) theories underlying Cultural Synergy model was used as the underpinning theories of the study. Data collected were from focus group and semi-structured in-depth interviews which were conducted with eleven international students and nine academic staff in MTVU. Through interpretive thematic analysis, findings highlighted that limited English proficiency is not only an issue solely for international students, but also for academic staff. This paper reveals this unique and complex issue from the perspectives of both students and staff. The paper then further discusses the consequences of these complexities for the learning and teaching environment.

Keywords: Academic staff, English language, International students, Learning and teaching, Malaysian TVET

1. Introduction

English language proficiency has been a predominant issue among international students studying in many foreign countries (e.g., Andrade, 2010; Zhang Zhiheng & Brunton, 2007). However, the discussion has focused on the use of English language among non-western international students studying in western, English-speaking countries (e.g., Campbell & Li, 2008). Beyond these discussions, very little is known about the use of English among non-western international students in Southeast Asia. This paper addresses this knowledge gap by reporting on a study that focuses on the use of English among non-western international students studying in Malaysia—a multicultural country with Bahasa Melayu as its official language. It presents some important findings from a larger research project that investigates academic adjustment of international students to studying in Malaysia and the related responses of academic staff in a Malaysian Technical and Vocational University (MTVU).

The research was conducted to enhance understandings on academic adjustment of international students in a unique educational setting—a Malaysian technical and vocational university which uses English as the language of instruction. The demographics of the international student cohort and the academic staff in the university differ from previous reported research. This situation de-

centralises discussions on academic adjustment of international students by establishing research that not only involves non-western international students, but also Malaysian academic staff who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL). This condition presents particularly complex challenges for both academic staff and international students. This paper will discuss part of the complexities of limited English proficiency among academic staff and the consequences for the teaching and learning environment. This finding is unique given the fact that little is known regarding English proficiency among academic staff in previous research. Since previous research focused on issues on international students in western English-speaking countries, there is almost no reported issue on English language among academic staff.

The remainder of the paper is presented in five sections. The first section will address the extant discussions which commonly focus on language issues surrounding international students. It will focus on language issues in the learning and teaching context. The second section presents Jin's (1992) theory underlying the cultural synergy model that was used in this study. The third section is the descriptions of the research setting of this study as well as the research procedures which include the methodology and methods of the research. The fourth section presents the findings and discusses the complexities with the use of English among academic staff. Finally, the paper addresses the consequences of the language issues for teaching and some implications this has for the academic staff, international students, and the institution.

2. Language Issues Surrounding International Students' Transition in the Learning and Teaching Process

In previous literature, issues on English language are often focused to the international students. Non-western international students often encounter difficulties when communicating in spoken or written English (Akazaki, 2010; Brown, 2009; Campbell & Li, 2008; Siti Maziha, Nabilah, Devarajoo, Faridah, Suhida Hani & Suraya, 2021; Koesoemo, Fitri, Nurhidayat, Harun, & Amelia, 2021). These difficulties cause stress and impact negatively on the living and academic experiences of international students (Jing Wang, 2009; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, & Joshi, 2008). In the learning and teaching context, the issue of English language is evident among international students in three main areas, namely, limited English proficiency, English for academic purposes, and English in communication.

2.1 Limited English Proficiency

Common factors which encourage international students to study abroad are classified as 'push' (e.g., government mission, parental expectations) and 'pull' factors (e.g., self-fulfilment) (Akazaki, 2010; Altbach & De Wit, 2020). These factors have been the driving forces for many students to pursue their studies overseas despite many also being EAL speakers of varying abilities. Some EAL international students take pre-university English courses for a number of months to help prepare for their studies. However, often this preparation does not help to improve their language ability significantly since learning academic language needs practice and exposure for a longer period of time (Akazaki, 2010; Yanyin Zhang & Yinan Mi, 2010). Their limited English proficiency eventually can lead to low self-esteem and fear to participate in classroom activities.

2.2 English for Academic Purposes

Research indicates international students often struggle with the use of English for academic purposes (i.e., Andrade, 2010; Yanyin Zhang & Yinan Mi, 2010). Many debates surrounding English in academic settings concentrate on writing. Academic and technical writing are important skills to deliver clear thoughts and opinions to peers and instructors (Swales & Feak, 2001). In addition, academic writing has been the platform of interaction to assess students' comprehension. Yet, different styles and vocabularies in speaking and writing English confuses many international students (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). International students might have advanced speaking and listening skills, however they might end up with low academic performance. Research by Andrade (2010) revealed that exposure of formal English to international students in their former education could lead to better adjustment in writing English academically. However, not only are international students believed to

lack academic writing skills, but they are also regularly judged by instructors as having failed to demonstrate reading, note-taking, critical and questioning skills (Andrade, 2010).

2.3 English in Communication

Expectations around the use of English language are also associated with cultural and regional influences in terms of pronunciation, clichés, slang, speed, idiom, and jargon (Akazaki, 2010; Richardson & Hurworth, 2007; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). International students normally find it hard to understand and interpret some of these terms. The differences in phonological, structural and cultural characteristics often result in non-western international students being confused with the ‘daily English’ used in the host country (De Foote, 2010). The host community might indeed use English, however, it may well be a ‘local English’ (e.g., Colloquial English in Singapore – ‘Singlish’) which can be potentially confusing for international students (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). As a result, international students may decide to be silent rather than being involved in classroom discussions (Akazaki, 2010; Yanyin Zhang & Yinan Mi, 2010). These language issues could be even more acute for non-western international students who choose to study in countries where staff also have limited English language proficiencies.

3. Jin’s (1992) Theory Underlying the Cultural Synergy Model

The theory underlying Jin’s (1992) Cultural Synergy model is that both international students and academic staff have to reciprocally adjust by understanding one’s own culture and the other’s culture, with an aim of creating integrated actions that could satisfy both expectations and further achieve a responsive and supportive learning and teaching environment. This theory has also been used in other research concerning the adjustment of international students with a focus on adjustment as reciprocal efforts from international students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and academic staff (e.g. Kingston & Forland 2008; Zhou & Todman 2008). The foundation of the theory is that:

...people from two or more cultures, working in an academic environment, interact systematically, cooperating for a common purpose with an attitude of being willing to learn, understand and appreciate the other’s culture without loss of their own status, role or cultural identity (Jin 1992, p. 386).

In Jin’s (1992) original study, Chinese students’ perceptions were that their teachers and their teachers’ practices, along with the academic requirements of the institution, should not be questioned, but rather received and obeyed. In contrast, the stereotypical thinking of British academic staff was that students should participate and express their thoughts to allow interactions so that educators could facilitate and guide them to be more creative and independent. This situation creates different educational expectations, styles and approaches between international students and academic staff because they are influenced by their own previous cultural (academic and social) norms. These differences create ‘distance’ between students and staff—most commonly in academic (e.g. use of academic language), social (e.g. loss of familiar friends and families) and psychological (e.g. cultural dissonance) areas. The more distance between one culture and the other, the more challenges that are developed. If not attended, this distance hinders the development of positive intercultural experiences. Ideally, with less distance between international students and academic staff, fewer challenges and more congruence will develop, resulting in a more positive learning and teaching experience. However, the distance to congruence is the responsibility of both parties involved—in Jin’s (1992) case, the Chinese international students and the British academic staff. However, in such cases, merely asking students and staff to act in a certain way is not enough unless they are aware of the differences that occur across their cultures and are able to communicate these differences.

Following this, Jin (1992, p. 390) argued that, as the medium of communication, the use of language plays a role in narrowing any distance between staff and students. They must communicate effectively to learn about each other’s cultures. As such, the development of mutual understanding is encouraged, and both international students and academic staff could benefit from each other’s efforts. This process is important in assisting international students to achieve their academic goals and in increasing the satisfaction of academic staff.

However, Jin's (1992) study revealed that there was less communication between the Chinese students and the British academic staff. Instead, the common scenario was that the Chinese students, either consciously or unconsciously, were required to assimilate the UK educational norms. This formed a one-way adaptation, and there were often conflicts in learning and teaching. Jin (1992) then proposed a process of Cultural Synergy, which literally means that students and staff 'work together' to negotiate any differences that exist between cultures by showing appropriate intercultural understanding and skills (p. 386). If the British academic staff had understood that the Chinese students were actively synthesising the topic under discussion even though they were not physically participating in classroom discussions, the academic staff might have been able to encourage the students to express their views and to reassure them that there would be no implications of their actions. In turn, to assist the pedagogical adjustment of academic staff, if the Chinese students had realised that confidently expressing their views would not trigger a loss of face, they might have been able to share their thoughts and opinions.

4. The Research Setting: The Context of English in The Diverse Non-Western Culture of Malaysia

Malaysia is a country in South-East Asia with 28.68 million people and a rapidly developing economy. It is well known for its uniquely blended multicultural and multilingual population which consists of three major ethnic groups; Malay (50.4%), Chinese (23.7%) and Indian (7.1%). The country was formerly a British colony. During the period of colonisation, English was the medium of instruction in the government administration and in schools. However, after independence in 1957, Bahasa Melayu became the national language and replaced English as the medium of instruction in 1970 (Pandian, 2002). Since then, English has been relegated from being the main language into a subject in schools. Today, whilst English is not the national language in Malaysia, it is still widely spoken and understood by majority of educated Malaysian citizens. In most tertiary higher education institutions, Bahasa Melayu is used as the medium of instruction even though references available are mainly in English. In applied sciences disciplines (e.g., engineering) however, English language is concurrently used with Bahasa Melayu as the language of instruction with English used predominantly for specific scientific terms.

This paper is based on research conducted in a Malaysian Technical and Vocational University (MTVU, a pseudonym). MTVU is populated with multicultural Malaysian where Malay students and staff comprise 70% of the institution's population. The main language in practice is Malay; however, other languages such as Mandarin and Hindu are spoken by the respective ethnic groups. In alignment with the national vision to be an industrialised country, MTVU started recruiting international students in 2004 and the number of international students has increased significantly since then (Idris, 2009; Mustapha & Abdullah, 2004). English, being the international lingua franca and the dominant language in education worldwide has been promoted as the official language in learning and teaching processes in MTVU (Altbach & De Wit, 2020).

MTVU's technical and vocational setting and the characteristics of its international student cohort are quite different compared to most other research sites into international students and their institutions. While existing research commonly discusses issues related to international students from Asian countries (e.g., Andrade, 2010; Campbell & Li, 2008; Durkin, 2008), 95% of the international students coming into MTVU are male and are from countries in the Middle East and Africa. The first language for these students is Arabic and Afro-asiatic languages respectively. English is taught as a subject from middle school onwards but not widely spoken in the wider community (Flaitz, 2006). The three main factors that influenced their decisions to study in Malaysia were: the courses offered in Malaysia, plus cheaper living and tuition costs and the similarity of religion that these students have with majority of the Malaysian community (Higher Education Malaysia, 2010). The most demanding courses for international students in MTVU are the electrical, civil and mechanical engineering. As such, the larger research project that informs this paper is narrowed to international students and academic staff in these three courses. In recruiting international students, MTVU sets its own standard. In terms of language proficiency, international students must demonstrate their language abilities by attaining a score band 5.0 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or equivalent to 550 in the Test of English as Foreign Language (ToEFL). The IELTS description of this band score

is, ‘modest user: has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.’ (International English Language Test, 2010).

5. Research Procedures

This research investigates the transition experiences and academic adjustment of international students into MTVU and the responses of academic staff in relation to their transition. To best reveal the experiences of both groups, the study employed a focus group and semi-structured, in-depth interviews for data collection. These methods, which are situated in interpretive case study qualitative methodology, are deemed to best illuminate participants’ experiences in an allotted period of time (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Morgan, 1993; Stake, 2010). They allow the participants to construct their experiences in their own words which offers ‘rich’, ‘descriptive’, ‘particularistic’ and ‘heuristic’ characteristics (Merriam, 2009 pp. 43-44). The focus group was conducted with eleven international student participants, followed by two sessions of one-to-one interviews. The focus group was conducted to attain the participants’ reactions towards each other and to encourage participants to have their thoughts in response to other participants’ comments (Morgan, 1993). Individual in-depth interviews were held with nine academic staff. The interview sessions were conducted face-to-face and through email using their preference language; either Bahasa Melayu or English. All face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed. For Bahasa Melayu transcriptions, parts that are used in the findings and analysis were translated into English and have been verified by the participants themselves to secure the credibility of the data. All procedures to conduct this research have been approved by the ethics committee in the respective organisations. Interview data were then analysed thematically with the assistance of NVivo 8. Themes that emerged from the analysis revealed a degree of complex situations. One of the complexities is the limited English proficiency among academic staff which affected the learning and teaching processes. The complexities and consequences are described in following sections. All participants’ original names are shown using pseudonyms.

6. Results and Discussions: Limited English Proficiency Among Academic Staff: The Complexities and Consequences

6.1 Complexities of Academic Staff’s Limited English Proficiency

This research has identified that limited English proficiency is also a characteristic of academic staff. For these Malay lecturers, having international students in their class has been a challenge for them in terms of delivering their teaching in a different language. Zubaidah, Fahim, Marina and Mastura were among the academic staff who expressed their concerns.

When I entered the classroom, there was a student telling me, “Madam, you have to teach in English today, there is a foreigner”. At first, I was quite shock, oh my, I have to speak in English! (Zubaidah, academic staff)

I am a little bit shock and feeling of having a butterfly in my stomach to have an international student in my class. I have to teach in English which I am not prepared with this subject since all the notes and slides are in Bahasa (Fahim, academic staff)

The biggest constraint when having them [international student] is the language ... I don’t have a problem with the student, I did not even change my teaching method, but teaching in English is a problem (Marina, academic staff)

At first I felt intimidated; I was not used to teach 100% in English ... actually what made me worry was the communication with the students (Mastura, academic staff)

The case of academic staff having limited English proficiency was noticed by international students as well, as Wildan, Sahlan, Nuqman and Jumail stated:

Some of the lecturers are not very familiar with English explanation (Wildan, international student)

He [the lecturer] said he didn't know how to speak in English, all subjects he spoke in Bahasa Melayu (Sahlan, international student)

The way lecturers here teach is OK, but we face difficulties on the language they use. Few lecturers cannot speak English fluently (Nuqman, international students)

I enrol myself in table tennis [a student club]. The lecturer, he doesn't know any English at all (Jumail, international students)

In this study, it appears that limited English proficiency has influenced lecturers and students. Some of the academic staff revealed the effects of having limited English proficiency towards their teaching. With limited vocabularies, they have limited capacity to adequately deliver their professional knowledge:

The big difference when there are foreigners [international students] in the class is that, it is quite limited to explain the subject. I can elaborate more using Bahasa Melayu, but in English the elaboration is limited because my vocabulary is also limited (Zubaidah, academic staff)

Normally, when we speak in Bahasa Melayu, I can convince, I can make them understand more because we can use Bahasa. They can understand Bahasa better than English (Zulkifli, academic staff)

I could not deliver my teaching 100% like always. Sometimes I like to teach by telling stories but I couldn't do it using English. When I wanted to tell the important part in English, the words just didn't come out, that's the problem (Marina, academic staff)

Limited English proficiency has been a factor in academic staff having impaired capacity to deliver their professional knowledge to the expected standard. As such, teaching using English has given some consequences to the academic staff's teaching process. However, since interactions do happen in teaching and learning process, academic staff's limited English proficiency affected as well international students' learning process. The consequences for both academic staff and international students are discussed as below.

6.2 Consequences of Academic Staff's Limited English Proficiency Towards Teaching and Learning Process

6.2.1 Consequences Towards Responsibility and Philosophy of the Academic Staff

In the early stages of the interviews, academic staff were asked about their teaching philosophy. All participants included 'delivering knowledge with satisfaction' as their major value in teaching so students can understand the knowledge that they deliver. However, as a result of limited English proficiency, teaching has become a predicament, setting up a contradiction between their philosophy and their teaching responsibility. Marina, for example, felt she had failed to deliver the knowledge to her satisfaction and hence did not feel confident that her teaching in English assisted the students' understandings. To avoid being in this dilemma, she once requested to separate international students so she could teach in Bahasa Melayu and not English.

I was not confident [teaching in English] ... so I requested the classes to be divided into two smaller classes. There was one lecturer who was willing to teach international students, so I

asked international students to register in her class. I took the class which has no international students so that I can teach in my mother tongue (Marina, academic staff)

Marina is not the only academic staff participant who took action to avoid teaching in English due to their level of English proficiency. Another example is Fahim, who demonstrated his teaching strategy to outline his philosophy. As he explained:

I have been teaching this subject in Bahasa for almost 2 years. All the slides and notes were prepared in Bahasa Melayu. Because my English is not so good, to change them into good English notes and slides would take a long time and so much effort. Since I was not prepared to teach in English, I decided to separate the only international student I have and conduct a class for him at other time. I think it is convenient for everybody. Means that, I can fully concentrate with the local students in the class using Bahasa, and I can concentrate to prepare my teaching to the international student using English. Actually my first intention was to avoid teaching in English to local students. The notes are just another reason. But in the end it turned out feeling good, I am fulfilling every student's needs, and at the same time not exposing my limited English (Fahim, academic staff)

Marina and Fahim revealed their desire to fulfil their teaching philosophy goes beyond the language. Marina indicated despite her successful request of having to teach classes without any international students, still there was one international student who pleaded to register in her class. She confessed her weaknesses having to teach in English and accepted the student with the condition that he should accept partly English and partly Bahasa Melayu in Marina's class. For Marina, there is a sense of predicament between her teaching and the effect of her actions towards her responsibility as an educator. Fahim dealt with the dilemma with his own strategy. He was feeling satisfied by 'feeling good' when he could fulfil all students' needs. He can freely use Bahasa Melayu in his scheduled class—he can prepare his teaching in English for his international student, and at the same time could cover his limited English. Fahim, in his follow-up interview, argued that his limited English would not bring benefit to students' understandings. With English as an Additional Language for all—the local students, the international students and himself—he did not feel comfortable having to use English as the language of instruction. However, to implement his solution increased his workload by sacrificing more time and energy. Even though he had fulfilled his responsibility in this particular situation, he might lose some energy and time that should be invested in his other responsibilities.

Another dilemma of the use of English in teaching is the case of Zubaidah and Fauziah, who exposed a complex situation which affected their teaching philosophies. Both described they had been 'the middle person' between the two groups of students; the local and the international. Despite the pressure to use English as the language of instruction at MTVU, the existence of international students has been a significant factor of having to use English. However, not only academic staff have limited English, local students as well were observed as also having limited English proficiency. Thus, to ensure the knowledge is well delivered and understood by all students, they chose to translate and repeat their teaching in dual language—English and Bahasa Melayu.

All teaching slides are in English, the explanations are also in English, when there are Malay students who did not understand, I will explain in Bahasa Melayu. But whenever I explain in Bahasa Melayu, the foreigners [international students] will say they are lost. I was forced with this situation to teach fully in English. If there are any local students who did not understand then I'll ask them to discuss in my office later (Zubaidah, academic staff)

The problem is when I speak in English, the local students will not like it. They hardly understand. So, if I explain anything in English, I will have to repeat the same information in Bahasa' (Fauziah, academic staff)

The above situation revealed some complex issues that surround language in the teaching and learning environment at MTVU. Exactly like Fahim, Zubaidah and Fauziah had invested extra time and energy to bear the extra workload of having to repeat the classes in dual languages. This workload issue

conveys their sense of responsibility to their students and reflects their teaching philosophy—to feel satisfied in delivering their professional knowledge. Having international students is a responsibility for these academic staff to fulfil the international students’ needs (Akourdis, 2010; Chang, 2010). One of the approaches is the obligation to implement teaching in English language which should meet the needs of international students. Yet, the different demographic of both local and international students in this study compared to the typical demographic that has been discussed in the related literature had caused different impacts.

The decision to use English as the language of instruction has been a challenge for all of these diverse non-western cultures in MTVU. The limited English of academic staff affected their teaching and had forced them to use strategies to ensure a satisfactory teaching and learning outcome. While the earlier part of this paper has discussed the English language consequences for academic staff, the latter part will discuss the effects of academic staff’s limited English proficiency towards international students’ learning.

6.2.2 Consequences of Limited English Proficiency Among Academic Staff Towards the Learning of International Students

Limited English proficiency among academic staff does not only affect the teaching process. Yet, it also affects international students’ learning. Among these are miscommunication and boring classroom experience that leads to frustration. An example is given by Wildan who described an incident of miscommunication that happened between him and his lecturer which made him ‘sad’ at the end of the conversation.

I tried to explain [what I did not understand] and the time is over. I can just ask one question and I go back. I can’t get my information from my lecturer because I just have 20 minutes. 10 minutes was already spent for miscommunication ... I can ask just one question, another question I take back and ask another lecturer or someone else. Sad ... [but] sometimes this happens ... (Wildan, international student)

While Wildan described his frustration through miscommunication, Sahlan described his experience when his lecturer decided to speak in Bahasa Melayu in the class had made him lose interest by ‘feeling boring’.

In my first semester ... the lecturer stood in front of us and said “I don’t know how to speak in English. So, all my teaching will be in Bahasa Melayu. So [international students] please sit with your local friends”. I don’t have any local friend because I was new at that time ... I really feel boring (Sahlan, international student)

In another situation, Mustaqim showed the consequences of his lecturer’s decision to speak Bahasa Melayu. He chose to sit among his friends who have the same native language to avoid losing his interest in class.

Sometimes the lecturer might talk to students in Malay ... so I get bored. I sit with my African friends [so that] I can discuss different things [others laugh]. If he [the lecturer] asks, I just told him this is my friend, I discuss with the friend a topic. If the lecturer discusses different topic, I discuss with my friend a different topic [all laugh and nodding] (Mustaqim, international student)

Mustaqim’s experience was agreed by other of his peers in the focus group interview session. This does mean that other international student participants might have did the same. Wildan is one of them who confessed:

If the lecturer can speak English frequently, I prefer to sit with local ... but those lecturers who just try to explain something but can’t speak frequently, I prefer to sit beside [or] between my friends. Ah, that’s what I do most of the time (Wildan, international student)

In the above cases, Mustaqim and Wildan revealed sitting with their friends who speak the same language in class as their strategy to avoid losing their interest. Sahlan, even though he did not willingly to sit with his friend, he was 'forced' to sit with his local African friend. This type of learning, on one hand, could overcome the limited English proficiency of their academic staff. On the other hand, it could create another issue which is segregation between international and local students.

7. Conclusion

This study has found that limited English proficiency has been a major barrier for academic staff which has affected their teaching and consequently has also affected students' learning. From the basis of this research, there might be a need to consider the implications of the English abilities of academic staff in MTVU. The use of English as the language of instruction is a significant effort, yet the complexities could affect the teaching and learning processes and eventually could impact the quality of education provided in MTVU.

International students coming into a foreign country usually are anxious to pursue their education (Brown 2009). Their transition to adjust into a new environment has opened a whole new experience which is pre-existing challenging. The institution they are enrolled in plays a crucial role to ensure the transition experiences of these students are assisted. However, international students in MTVU ultimately had been excluded from the learning process by the impact of the academic staff's limited English proficiency. Furthermore, academic staff felt the impact of their limited English proficiency by addressing their predicament between the teaching philosophy and responsibility. For these reasons, there is a need for MTVU to consider the English ability of its academic staff. Enhancing English proficiency of the academic staff through series of professional development might assist this concern. Yet, considering the demographic of the international students and local students who are all EAL speakers, the scenario had become more complex. This scenario opens a new direction for further investigation and expands the understanding of the existing knowledge on language issues surrounding international students' transition.

8. Suggestion for Future Research

Several suggestions for future research arise from this study. First, the concept of mutual adjustment theorised by Jin (1992) provided a useful theoretical framework for this study. Further consideration of these theories could be used as part of future studies that are interested in investigating mutual adjustment. For instance, although the cultural setting of this study is different to Jin's (1992) original study, the academic distances that are represented in Jin's (1992) Cultural Synergy model were confirmed to be similar to this study. Second, future studies that investigate different settings could contribute additional inputs in this aspect. Future research is warranted to investigate the role of local students in the process of achieving mutual adjustment. In addition, future studies could further illuminate the nature of the support that institutions need to provide to support the development of a learning and teaching environment that will lead to a sustainable state of mutual adjustment that supports both academic staff and students. Third, further studies that include more diverse samples of academic staff (e.g. in terms of diverse backgrounds, those who have had intercultural experiences and those who hold various academic and management positions) could highlight different experiences and strategies to support the internationalisation goals of institutions.

9. Co-Author Contribution

The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author1 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review and overlook the writeup of the whole article. Author 2 wrote the research methodology and did the data entry.

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