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A division-wide framework to scaffold the development of English language and intercultural learning

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This paper reports on a case study that was undertaken to inform the creation of a Division-wide English Language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching (ELILT) Framework in the university where the authors work. Participants' insights on their current experience with English Language Proficiency (ELP), Intercultural Learning (IL) and Knowledge Exchange (KE) development were to be employed to create the ELILT Framework so that the future development of these capabilities in programs and courses can be undertaken systematically. Data was collected through a mixed-method approach. Ninety-five undergraduate and postgraduate students participated in an online survey administered through Survey Monkey and seven students took part in semi-structured interviews. It was found that more could be done by the University to meet students' learning needs, impacted by their linguistic and cultural diversity. Some students from multilingual backgrounds could benefit from support in the development of their ELP for academic studies. The study highlighted that while Learning Advisers located in the Central Learning and Teaching Unit played a significant role in generic language and literacies development, some students were unable to access learning support for various reasons and would rather have this development occur in their courses and study program, directed by their course coordinators. The investigation also suggested that more needs to be done to scaffold the development of intercultural orientation and awareness for all students and staff in the University to foster relationships between language, culture, and learning so that meaningful engagement with diversity can unfold within and outside the University.

Key Words: English Language Proficiency, Academic literacies, Intercultural Learning, Knowledge Exchange.

1. Introduction

Globalisation and internationalisation of Higher Education (HE) has resulted in students from different linguistic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds travelling around the world for studies. In Australia for example, there has been significant growth in international student enrolments in higher education with numbers increasing from 13,700 in 1983 to 350,879 in 2021 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, n.d.). Similarly, domestic students too are coming to university from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, demonstrating diverse learning needs (Arkoudis & Doughney, 2015). Ability to communicate proficiently in the English language is a requirement for all students studying in Anglophone universities (Harper & Vered, 2017;

Wingate, 2016). It is also a graduate attribute and a requirement of a globalized employment market (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013).

Globalisation and internationalisation have also resulted in students and academics from different cultures coming into close contact. In institutions of higher education where the English language is the medium of instruction, there is an increased focus on intercultural communication. Intercultural communication involves "interactions between speakers who have different first languages, [who] communicate in a common language, and … [who are from] different cultures" (Kescskes, 2015, as cited in Lwanga-Lumu, 2020). In universities, intercultural communication would be impacted by students' linguistic and cultural knowledge. As language and culture are interlinked, the ability to communicate in the English language competently and appropriately with others who are linguistically and culturally different, needs to be systematically taught and consciously fostered (Li-Jung, 2021), especially in contexts where English is used as the medium of instruction.

This paper reports on a study that was undertaken in an Australian University, to inform the creation of an English Language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching (ELILT) Framework. The need for an ELILT Framework was emphasised by two small scale, internally funded case studies that were undertaken in the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures in the university, in 2014 – 2015. The findings from the case studies, among others, highlighted that students face linguistics, epistemic and intercultural challenges as they navigate through their programs of study (see Li, Heugh, O'Neill, Song, Scarino, & Crichton, 2016; O'Neill, Scarino, Crichton, Heugh, & Li, 2016). Following this, in 2017, English Language Proficiency and Intercultural Learning development was made one of the strategic priorities in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences and the creation of ELILT Framework was mandated to progress the findings and recommendations highlighted in the two case studies. It was deemed necessary that the Framework took a more holistic consideration of student experience of English language and Intercultural learning and teaching, and a second internally funded mixed-method research study was undertaken in the Division (comprising School of Communication, International Studies and Languages, School of Arts, Architecture and Design, School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy and School of Education) to capture the voices of a larger cohort of students.

2. Literature review

The following sections look at the literature associated with the three concepts that directed the research study, with a view to constructing an integrated conceptual framework that would direct the study, which we present under *Research Design* (Section 3.1).

2.1. English Language Proficiency (ELP) and academic studies

In English medium universities, students are required to competently communicate (listen, speak, read and write) in English to successfully engage and participate in their study program. Literature in this area identifies that students studying in English medium universities need to be proficient in English language for different purposes (Arkoudis, Baik, & Richardson, 2014; Cummins, 1999; Murray, 2015).

Table 1 below categorises the English language proficiency and purposes expected of students for academic studies as defined by scholars in this area. From the definitions identified in Table 1, it can be concluded that in English medium universities, students generally require proficiency in English language for everyday communication so that they are able to communicate with their peers, lecturers and other staff in the university for social and academic purposes. They also require proficiency in discipline specific academic literacies, which involves knowing what is required in different genres of their discipline, their structure, components, vocabulary, academic language and conventions. These will vary according to the discipline in which students enrol.

Students are also expected to perfect their professional communication while in university to meet employer expectations when they graduate.

Table 1. Types of language proficiency needed by students in higher education.

Author(s)	Identified language categorisation
Arkoudis, Baik & Richardson (2012, p. 13)	• General and social communication language ability in English language. - Required for readiness to commence in higher education. • Disciplinary academic, workplace and social communicative language ability in English language. - Required for engagement in disciplinary teaching, learning and assessment tasks. • Professional and social communicative language ability in English language. - Required for workplace readiness and further study.
Cummins (1999, pp. 3-4)	• Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) - Conversational fluency in a language. • Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) - Extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic register of the educational setting.
Murray & Hicks (2016, pp. 173-174)	• General English language proficiency - Requires students to express and understand meaning accurately, fluently and appropriately according to the context which comprises a set of generic skills and abilities including grammar, phonology, vocabulary development, general listening, reading and writing skills, communication strategies, fluency, pragmatic concerns around politeness, implicature and inference. • Academic literacy practices associated with any given discipline and which students of that discipline need to become conversant in order to develop and perform effectively - Requires the ability to meet the literacy demands of the curriculum as involving a variety of communicative practices, including genres, fields and disciplines. • Professional communication skills - Requires a range of skills and strategies that bear on communicative performance in professional settings including intercultural competence, interpersonal skills, turn-taking, conversancy in the discourses and behaviours associated with particular professional domains of use and leadership skills.

English is an Additional Language (EAL) for at least 29 percent of students in Australian universities (Universities Australia, 2020). In 2021, there were 5,056 international students studying in the university. Some of these students may face challenges in relation to meeting their instructors' ELP expectations. There has been a copious amount of debate and research relating to ELP levels of commencing and graduating EAL students (Arkoudis & Doughney, 2015; Benzie, 2010). The

language proficiency challenges of some EAL students has prompted changes to entry standards and motivated many types of post-enrolment support mechanisms in Australian Higher Education (Arkoudis, Baik, & Richardson, 2012; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009).

Post enrolment screening mechanisms such as the Post-Enrolment Language Assessment (PELA) and the Measuring Academic Standards of University Students (MASUS), are administered by some universities to identify students at risk or those who would need additional support to successfully engage in their study programs. However, students seldom take up the support that is recommended by these mechanisms due to the perception of being identified as being incompetent, losing face or not having the additional time on top of the requirements of their study load to seek English language support. It is pertinent that all students meet the threshold ELP standards when they graduate (Arkoudis & Doughney, 2015). Consequently, it is important that the development of English language skills is undertaken across the curriculum so that all students, irrespective of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, graduate with the communication skills required for the workplace. This could be best done according to Arkoudis & Doughney (2015, p. 174) if ELP is "repositioned as relevant to all students, integrated within disciplinary teaching, learning and assessment practices and incorporated into institutional quality assurance processes."

2.2. Intercultural Learning (IL) and awareness

Review of literature in this area suggests that scholars employ various terminology (intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, etc.) to refer to this concept (Li-Jung, 2021). The authors of this paper have used the term 'intercultural learning' borrowed from the ELILT Framework which the study reported in this paper is based. Intercultural learning in the Framework is defined as,

> an environment that enables students to draw on their linguistic, cultural and knowledge repertoires. It provides opportunities for students to engage in experiential and personalised learning through interaction with their own and others' diverse cultural knowledge, experience and understanding as these relate to their fields of study. It facilitates reciprocal exchanges of knowledge, know-how and learning among students and teachers that add to the learning, expertise and value that students contribute to and derive from regular programs of study (English Language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching (ELILT) Framework, 2019, p. 5 in University of South Australia, 2021).

The findings reported in this paper are based on the research questions aimed to explore, from the students' point of view, whether the university supports and develops these behaviours.

There is a clear link between language and culture as "language expresses, embodies and symbolises cultural reality" (Kramsch, 1988, as cited in Watson & Wolfel, 2015, p. 58). Kramsch goes on to suggest that a language (discrete system of signs) only becomes meaningful in a cultural context. The need for intercultural education and understanding is becoming very necessary as we increasingly live and work among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This is especially relevant in HE as today's students are more culturally diverse than in the past.

Many students in HE come from having experienced different educational systems and learning styles and need to adapt to the disciplinary and academic cultures of their institution (Leask & Caroll, 2013). It is important for instructors to understand this and ensure that they facilitate students' transition into their new academic culture. Instructors who embrace a culturally sensitive and inclusive curriculum will ensure that everyone benefits and expands on their learning behaviours and is exposed to multiple perspectives and alternative views of the world (Leask & Caroll, 2013). These instructors would also ensure that their students respect and value the diverse views and knowledge of their peers by encouraging them to do so with learning and teaching activities

that enable students (and instructors) to reflect on and challenge their own belief system. Students will also be socially included when their linguistic, cultural and individual differences are embraced in the learning and teaching activities. Conversely, when students are expected to merely adapt to the academic culture stipulated by host institutions, they would not experience full social inclusion (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler & Bereded-Samuel, 2010). Inclusivity in higher education should reflect successful participation for all students within and outside the university (Nunan, George & McCausland, 2005).

As key providers of international education, Australia and other countries need to position themselves as contexts where diversity is embraced and where all students are provided the opportunities to acquire knowledge from multiple perspectives while acknowledging [linguistic and cultural] differences, thus inculcating intercultural graduate attributes that develop the ability for students to live and work in multicultural environments (Kostogriz & Ata, 2015).

2.3. Knowledge exchange (KE) in the classroom

Knowledge exchange is defined as a process where "universities interact with the world at large to ground their knowledge in reality." (Benneworth, 2011, p. 9). Although this incorporates a set of overlapping processes whereby knowledge is produced and circulated, in reviewing literature on knowledge exchange, it was found that a sizeable portion of the discussion was related to the knowledge exchanged between universities and commercial businesses. Very few publications focused on knowledge exchange that occurs within the university and classroom: between the instructor and the students and among students themselves. Knowledge exchange between students themselves and their instructors is becoming increasingly important, especially when it has been estimated that 15 million students will be studying abroad by 2025 (Albach & Teichler, 2001; Kaowiwattanakul, 2016). Growing student mobility and diversity necessitates the need for integrating knowledge exchange in the curriculum.

Universities have the obligation to educate students to be world-minded, culturally aware and socially responsible so that they can live and work in any part of the world (Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007); world-minded individuals are those who possess "a cognitive and affective understanding of the totality of humanity as [a] primary reference group rather than the nationals of particular countries or regions of the world" (pp. 181-183). The exchange of knowledge and expertise between students, their peers and instructors would encourage the development of global perspectives and trigger criticality as well as capacity to consider different points of view. Knowledge exchange between students and staff from various parts of the world would make learning more meaningful for everyone and provide opportunities for future leaders to have a more global perspective (Albach & Teichler, 2001). The need for universities to develop this capability in the curriculum becomes more pertinent, particularly because an ideal graduate is someone who has the attributes of global citizenry including intercultural awareness and global consciousness (UNESCO, 1998).

3. Methodology

The authors have used a case study methodology for this investigation (Yin & Campbell, 2018) as this approach was best suited to researching a complex and current organisational phenomenon of this nature. The aim of the investigation was to suggest improvements related to ELP and IL that would contribute to the proposed divisional Framework in this area. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What can the university do to address and support students' learning needs with respect to English language proficiency?
2. How can the university support intercultural learning among students of different backgrounds?

While we expect that students using English as an additional language (EAL) to experience challenges with ELP, obtaining detailed information about factors that act as barriers and enablers for them, will create an opportunity to provide more effective support. The interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 2000, pp.173-8) states that existing academic language proficiency in the first language helps students to make better progress in their studies using the language of instruction. Identifying what factors help students to leverage their existing academic skills in the classroom may lead to better outcomes. Additionally, the threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 2000, pp.175-8) states that if students have weak proficiency in the language of instruction they will tend to fall further behind unless the instruction they receive helps them to participate effectively. Understanding what support is valued by students for developing their language proficiency should allow the university to better tailor organisational and tutor support to avoid poorer outcomes.

Investigating students' perceptions of intercultural interactions is expected to yield insights about the extent of intercultural learning and knowledge exchange that takes place, and how this might help EAL students to better leverage their existing skills. Identifying current practices and student experience with regard to intercultural learning may lead to improved intercultural learning practices which may indirectly and positively impact on their language proficiency.

Our study was focused on students in the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences who would be impacted by the proposed framework, allowing researchers to sample a large group of students within a limited subset of study areas, which included both domestic and international undergraduate and postgraduate students. The researchers adopted a mixed-methods approach, gathering quantitative data to allow identification of common patterns among students directed by the conceptual framework (discussed in Section 3.1). This was complemented with qualitative data to allow the researchers to explore students' experiences in greater depth and identify avenues for improvement.

3.1. Research design

The research study was undertaken to explore current students' experience with English Language Proficiency (ELP), Intercultural Learning (IL) and Knowledge Exchange (KE) so that their insights could be employed to scaffold the development of these capabilities in programs and courses, in the Division first and ultimately be rolled out to the wider institution. For this study, the researchers have opted to investigate ELP in terms of using English language in the context of everyday communication and academic studies, but not professional communication as the ELILT Framework was not focussed on this aspect. IL was investigated to explore what opportunities students had to engage with diverse cultural knowledge as related to their field of study.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 was used to direct the study. The researchers were of the opinion that ELP, IL and KE are linked when students and their peers, lecturers, tutors and others interact inside and outside the classroom. The survey and interview questions were aimed at identifying students' current experiences with regards to their ELP and IL development, the resources that are available and the challenges they experience.

Data was gathered using an online survey to investigate students' experiences with ELP, IL and KE. The online survey included 12 questions exploring the themes identified in the conceptual framework (including an explanation of the term 'intercultural learning') along with a further 9 questions asking for biographical information to construct a population profile (see section 3.4 below). The themes and related questions included in the survey were:

1. how students develop their English language proficiency (3 items: Q1, Q2, Q3);
3. challenges they experience using English language to engage with their studies (2 items: Q4, Q12);
4. what intercultural learning is and how the university could strengthen it (3 items: Q5, Q6, Q7);

5. whether the university encourages the exchange of knowledge and expertise between all students; and how the university can support it (4 items: Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11); and
6. The profile of students studying in the division (9 items).

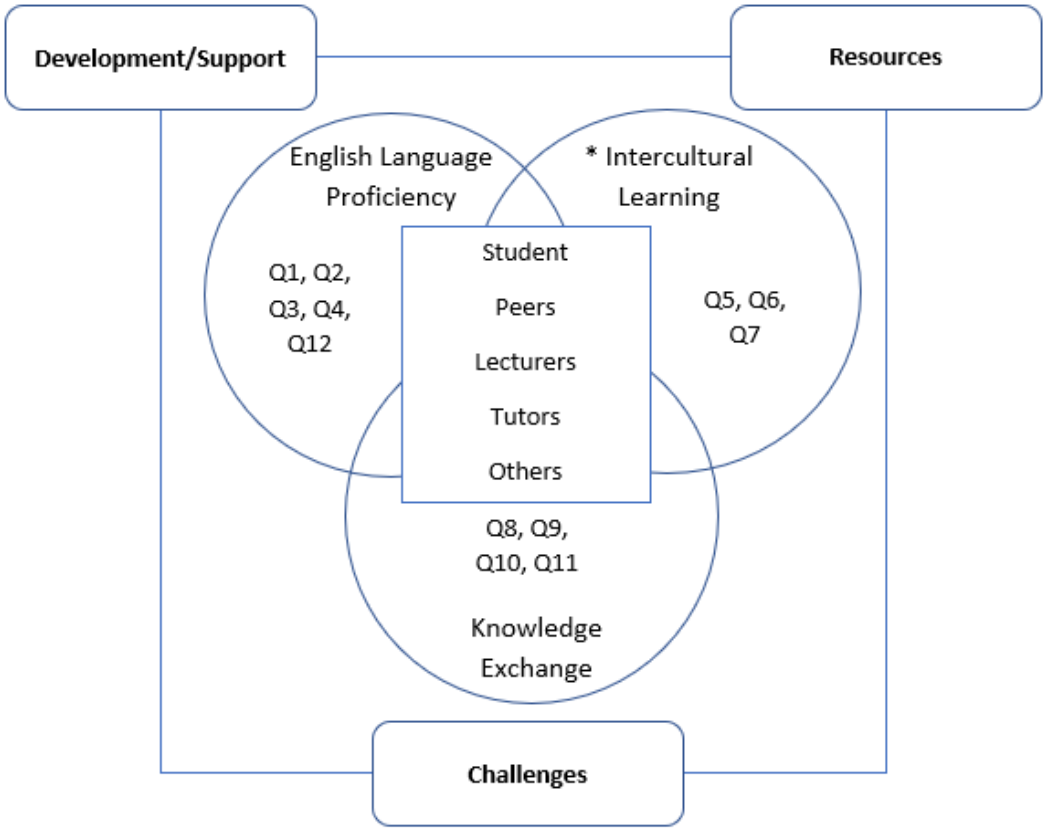

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study (* The term intercultural learning was explained in the survey).

For six items (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q7, Q8, Q9), students responded with their agreement to statements using a five-point Likert scale of: (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Not sure; (4) Disagree; and (5) Strongly Disagree. A further six items (Q4, Q5, Q6, Q10, Q11, Q12) allowed students to give open responses and make suggestions as to how the university can support their learning to inform the investment in future support mechanisms and resources.

The qualitative phase of the study was undertaken through semi-structured interviews to complement the structured data obtained from the online survey. A semi-structured format was used to allow students to express views that might not have been addressed in the survey. Participation in the interviews was voluntary, in line with the ethics requirements defined for the study, with students selected by their responses to an additional question in the survey asking for their consent to be involved in this stage.

3.2. Research context

The investigation took place at the authors' institution, with students selected from the Division of Education, Arts and Social Science as the funding came from the Academic Dean of that division. Ethics approval was granted by the human research and ethics committee on the conditions of voluntary participation and anonymity. An invitation to participate in the research study was sent by email to all the students in the Division (approximately 2,500 in total). The email included details about the investigation including an explanation of the terms used, ethics approval and a consent form. The invitation was sent in April 2018, four weeks after students had begun their

study program, allowing them time to settle into their program and experience the academic context. A link to the survey – which was created on Survey Monkey – was provided in the email. The qualitative investigation was undertaken in September 2018 to build on the findings of the quantitative study.

3.3. Data collection methods and analysis

The researchers collected data to address the research questions as outlined in Table 2 below. Note that interview questions are denoted I1, I2, etc. to distinguish from the survey items.

Table 2. Mapping of data collection to research questions.

	Method	Items
Research question 1	Survey (closed questions)	Q1, Q2, Q3
	Survey (open questions)	Q4, Q12
	Interview	I1, I2, I3, I4
Research question 2	Survey (closed questions)	Q7, Q8, Q9
	Survey (open questions)	Q5, Q6, Q 10, Q11
	Interview	I5, I6, I7, I8

A full list of the survey and interview questions is included in Appendix A. The researchers opted not to use mandatory responses in the survey to ensure maximum participation and responses; 95 students completed the survey. Responses to the closed questions with Likert responses were analysed for number and percentage of each response, and visualised as stacked bar charts, as shown in the Results section. Open-ended responses were compiled by question item and reduced to identify emerging themes within the conceptual framework.

Seven students who had completed the survey and volunteered to participate, took part in the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted one-to-one with students. Participants were asked a total of 8 questions that related to the themes identified in the survey. The interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were read for familiarity, responses for particular questions compiled, emerging themes identified, similar answers categorised, and the various categories were compared, labelled and contrasted (Ornek, 2008; Nallaya, 2018).

3.4. Population profile of students

Respondents were asked to provide information about their residency, level of study, their school within the Division, year of study, mode of study and their primary language. From the 95 students who answered the survey, 75 provided this information (see Table 3). The population profile showed a high diversity among the students in terms of language and nationality. Almost 30% of respondents identified as EAL students, with a total of 21 primary languages spoken collectively. Over 40% of respondents were not domestic Australians.

Most students were carrying out their studies internally, but a noticeable proportion were studying externally. Most students were studying at undergraduate level, with most of the remaining students undertaking post-graduate study involving either coursework or research. There were a small number of students involved who were studying for a Diploma or a University Pathway (less than 3%). With respect to year of study, the largest number of students were in their first year, with progressively smaller numbers in successive years. Students who responded to the survey were from a broad section of the different schools within the Division.

Quantitative survey responses were analysed in detail according to the residency, primary language, year of study and mode of study of respondents, to identify differences in experiences and attitudes between key groups.

Table 3. Population profile of students responding to survey.

Demographics	Response	Percentage	Count
Residency	Domestic Australian	57.3%	43
	Permanent Resident	28%	21
	International student	14.7%	11
Level of study	University Pathway	1.3%	1
	Diploma	1.3%	1
	Bachelor	76%	57
	Postgraduate (coursework)	12%	9
	Postgraduate (research)	9.3%	7
School	Creative Industries (CI)	9.3%	7
	Education	32%	24
	Arts, Architecture & Design (AAD)	25.3%	19
	Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy (PSWSP)	25.3%	19
	Other	8%	6
Year of study	First year	41.3%	31
	Second year	24%	18
	Third year	22.7%	17
	Fourth year	8%	6
	Other	4%	3
Mode of study	Internal	82.7%	62
	External	17.3%	13
Primary language	English	70.7%	53
	Other	29.3%	22

3.5. Limitations

This study was subject to some limitations regarding how data could be collected: 1) The authors are working in the research context and were subject to limitations in data collection, specifically the need to guarantee voluntary and anonymous participation; 2) Mandatory responses were not imposed in the survey to ensure maximum participation; this resulted in some survey questions not being answered by all participants. Within these limitations, the study still allowed the research questions to be addressed satisfactorily.

4. Results

4.1. English Language Proficiency development

A high-level view of the quantitative data from the survey indicates that students are very aware of the need to differentiate between everyday English and the kind of language required in academic discourse, with 92% answering 'Strongly agree' or 'Agree' (Q1, Figure 2). While over 60% of students agreed that support from tutors and the university was adequate (Q2 & Q3), just under 40% were either unsure or disagreed on these points.

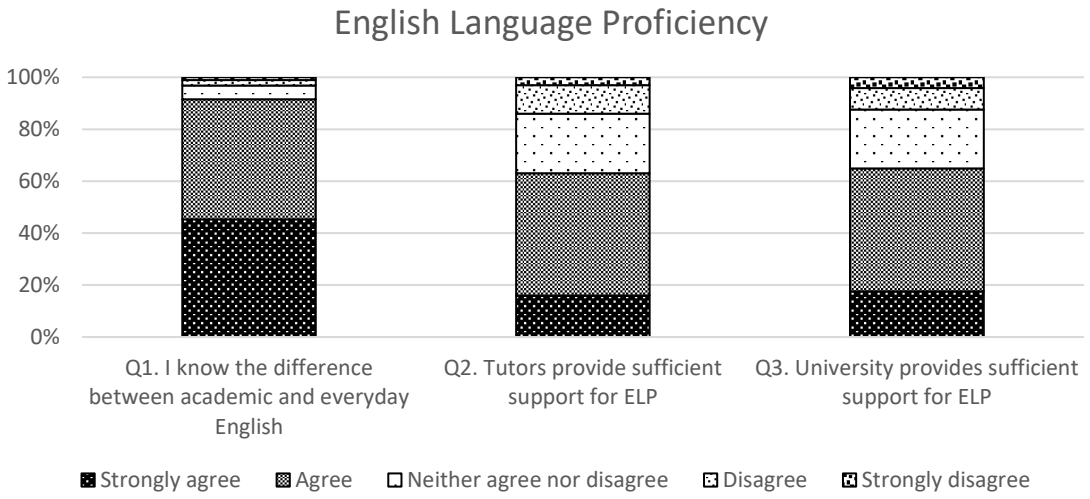

Figure 2. Respondents' opinions on issues related to ELP.

Breaking these responses down by residency and native language revealed interesting differences of opinions. Domestic students gave mainly positive responses, with permanent residents being slightly more critical of the overall support from the university. International students were significantly less confident with the distinction between academic and everyday English and were far more critical of the support available from both tutors and the university (see Figure 3).

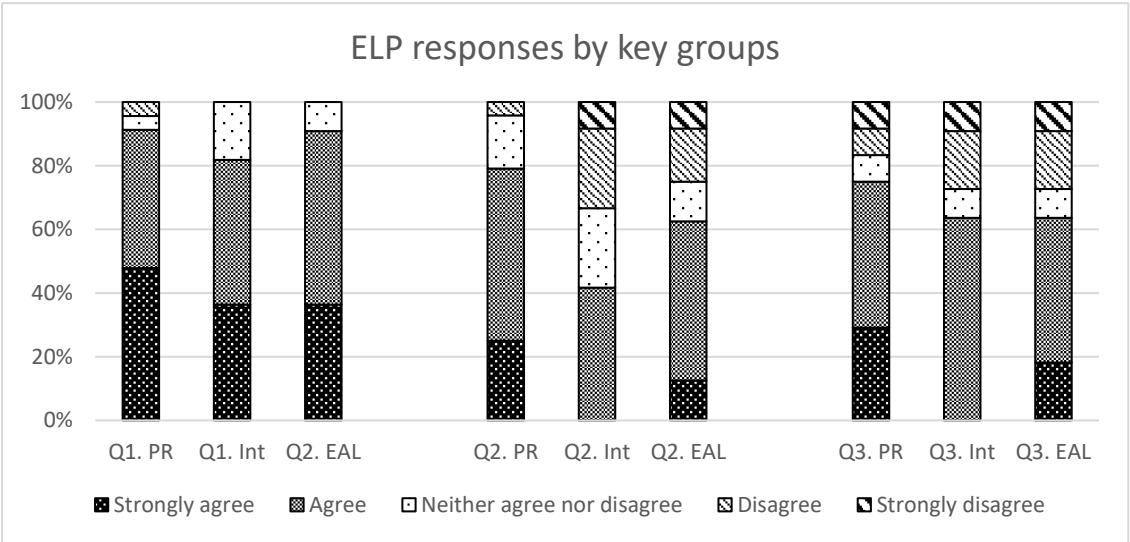

Figure 3. ELP responses by key groups; Q1–Q3 denote survey question; PR = Permanent Resident, Int = International Student, EAL = EAL student.

Regarding native language, responses from EAL students generally showed similar numbers who agreed with the statements relative to the general survey responses, but also showed a similar proportion to international students in terms of disagreement with the statements.

Looking at the results by year of study showed noticeable differences among the groups for various aspects. Confidence in academic versus everyday language remained generally high across progressive years of study. Opinions of tutor support fluctuated across years of study, with most students (50–80%) remaining positive, although up to 30% of later year students disagreed with the statements. Opinions of support from the university started as more positive among first year students but also became noticeably more negative over years of study, with fourth year students expressing few positive opinions. External students gave no negative opinions regarding language use and tutor support, and only 7% gave negative responses regarding university support; 4% of internal students expressed doubts about language use, with 14–15% having doubts about tutor and university support. Almost 80 percent of the responses to open-ended questions highlighted that more could be done to support students' ELP development, focusing specifically on English for academic studies, indicating that current approaches are still falling short of meeting the needs of diverse students.

The analysis identified that approximately 72 percent of the respondents experienced challenges in the following areas: academic writing, using discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar, general writing conventions, research writing and referencing. International students also appeared to be challenged when reading in English, understanding assignments and text types, and communicating verbally or undertaking oral presentations as can be observed by the following reflections by two respondents:

> *"I'll read for an hour and I'll come up with a sentence and I don't know if that's because I didn't grow up with the English language properly… but I find it difficult to read as opposed to my classmates."* [sic] (Participant 1, AAD)
>
> *"I didn't personally experience it."* (Referring to support for oral communication.). (Participant 3, EDS)

Domestic students highlighted similar challenges as can be identified from the following view:

> *"I think it was harder for me than for others. I had more issues in understanding the structures for academic writing, particularly genre styles …"* (Participant 5, AAD)

A consistent theme that emerged among responses is that multilingual students who did not speak English as their primary language faced difficulties learning in English, specifically when reading, researching, and writing. These multilingual respondents implied that their instructors expected them to 'deal with it' and lacked the awareness of the fundamental role that language played in learning. It was also found that assessment tasks were often unclearly described and impacted on students' ability to successfully undertake and complete the task. For example, one domestic student who spoke English as their primary language perceived that their multilingual peers would have struggled with their assessment tasks when they suggested:

> *"I did some assignments with students who had English as an additional language… they wouldn't have particularly excelled…I think there were some, at least in the first year, how it (the assessments) was structured, they would have struggled."* (Participant 7, EDS)

The analysis of data also suggested that instructors did not recognise the challenges students faced when accessing existing resources for supporting their language needs when in university and for professional communication upon graduation. The respondents of the study indicated that some students were finding it difficult to make appointments with learning advisers and in instances where they were able to do so, the advice provided by the advisers was sometimes not useful. The current investigation also suggested that it was not always possible for students to make time outside their class schedule to seek support from the learning support unit as some students had to work while undertaking their studies.

Approximately 30 percent of the respondents advocated for multilingual resources that facilitated student learning to be made available to students who choose to use them as they can foster inclusivity and create a safe learning environment for all. These respondents indicated that there should be recognition for the role that translation plays in learning and that students should be supported to use translation if required. Instructors should be aware that the purposeful use of translation between students' primary language and English positively impacts on their academic achievement and across the curriculum (Heugh et al., 2016). However, the analysis also indicated that not all students would find academic materials in other languages useful when completing their assessment tasks as the respondents implied that they would rather improve on their English language. This suggests that, although the role multilingual resources play in progressing learning and facilitating the comprehension of key concepts and ideas is significant, care should be taken when using such resources so that they do not impede the development of ELP.

4.2. Intercultural learning development

The data on intercultural learning experience highlighted incongruent findings. Quantitative data (Figure 4) suggested that approximately 68 percent of the respondents knew what intercultural learning is; International students were slightly more knowledgeable about IL than other students, while permanent residents gave more negative responses (which also carried over to their responses about KE; see Section 4.3).

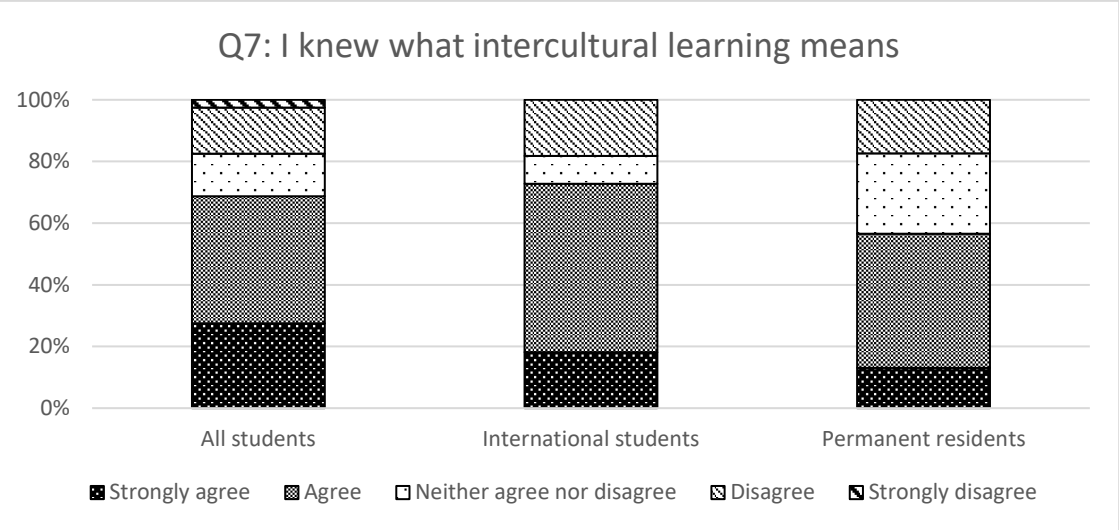

Figure 4. Respondents' knowledge of IL, with key groups shown separately.

Students in later years of study expressed higher agreement with the statement than commencing students (Figure 5). Qualitative data, however, seem to suggest significant confusion among interviewees about the concept of intercultural learning even though the term was defined in the survey, as can be observed from the following responses:

> *"... could you explain to me that word 'intercultural', I've never seen it."* (Participant 2, PSW)

> *"... I don't think I've come across it ..."* (Participant 1, AAD)

It should be noted that the respondents who opted to participate in the qualitative phase of investigation, generally showed stronger opinions in their responses – there were comparatively few who answered 'Neither agree nor disagree' to questions. Their comments identified that intercultural learning development was not always being effectively undertaken in the Division and that they had rarely experienced an explicit orientation or approach to intercultural learning. This could be observed from the following reflection:

> *"I wouldn't say they (academic staff) draw on exchange, intercultural learning, they focus on differences, but they don't really mesh that together … like something that's together … it's quite separate and it's teaching about … no, I wouldn't say there is."* (Participant 1, AAD)

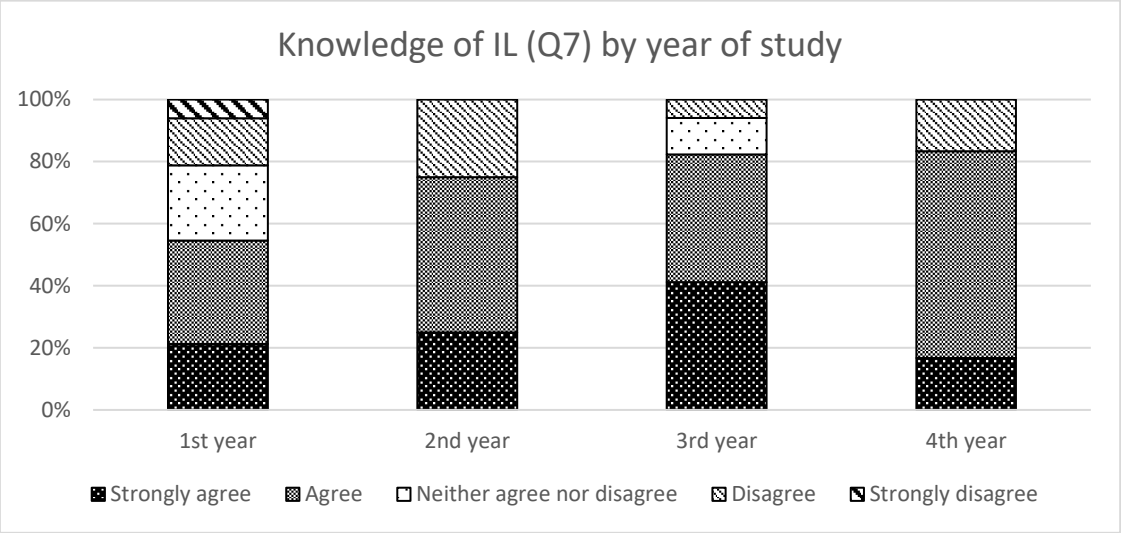

Figure 5. Respondents' knowledge of IL by year of study.

4.3. Development of knowledge exchange

As with intercultural learning, there was a noticeable difference between the quantitative and qualitative data for knowledge exchange. Students generally agreed (63%, Q8) that a significant amount of knowledge exchange was occurring in the classroom, and almost all students (92%, Q9) agreed that this practice was of benefit (Figure 6).

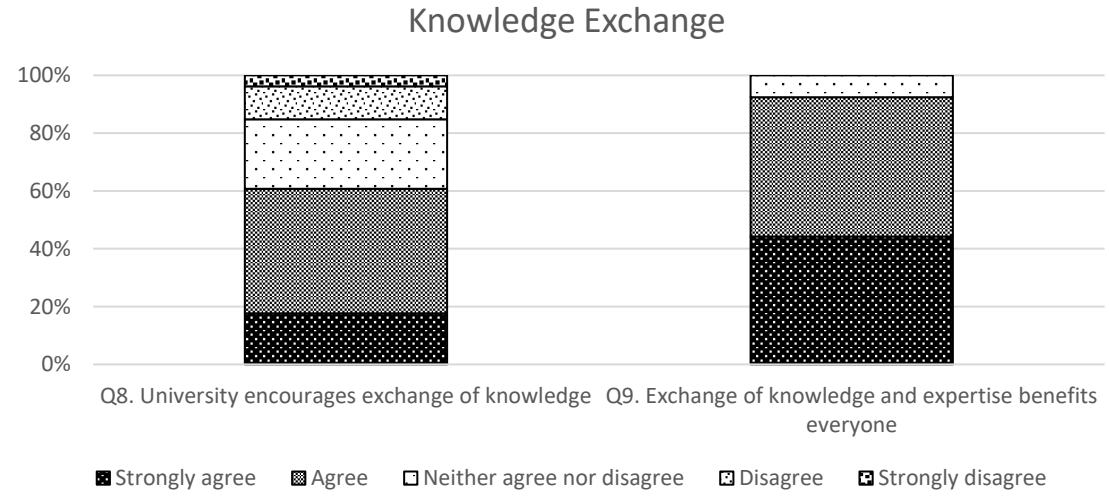

Figure 6. Respondents' opinions on issues related to KE.

International students were generally more positive about the extent to which KE was taking place, and EAL students also gave generally more positive responses overall with regards to KE. The group with the least confidence in KE was permanent residents of Australia (Figure 7). Although they agreed that it was of benefit, there was less certainty in knowledge of the term, and the extent to which it was taking place.

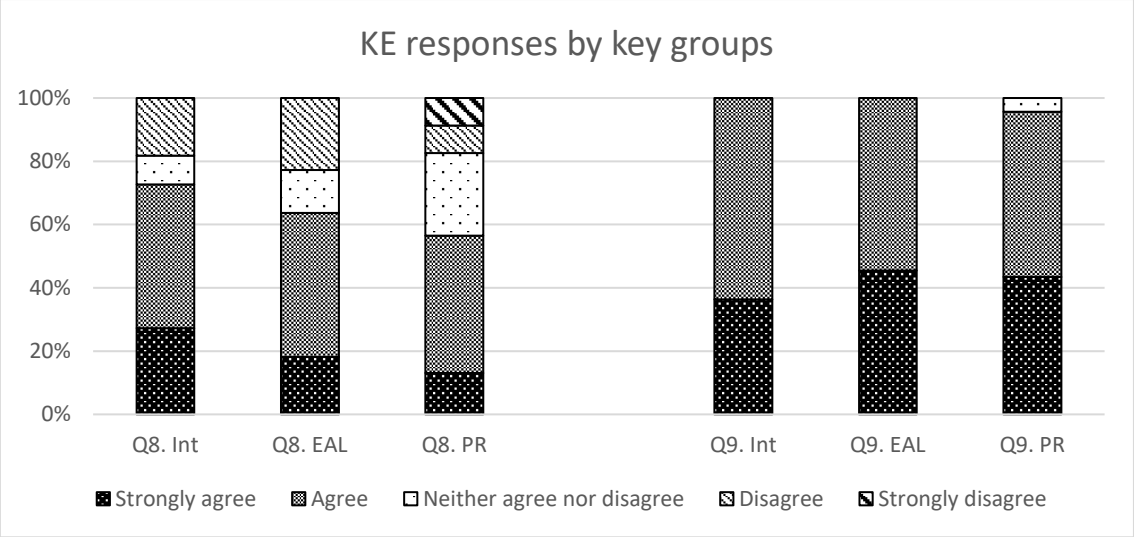

Figure 7. Respondents' opinions on issues related to KE by key groups; Q8–Q9 denote survey question; Int = International Student, EAL = EAL student, PR = Permanent Resident.

Across different years of study, students remained largely convinced of the *benefit* of knowledge exchange. However, *confidence* in the extent of knowledge exchange tended to decrease, with more negative opinions expressed in second and third year, and very few positive opinions among fourth year students (Figure 8).

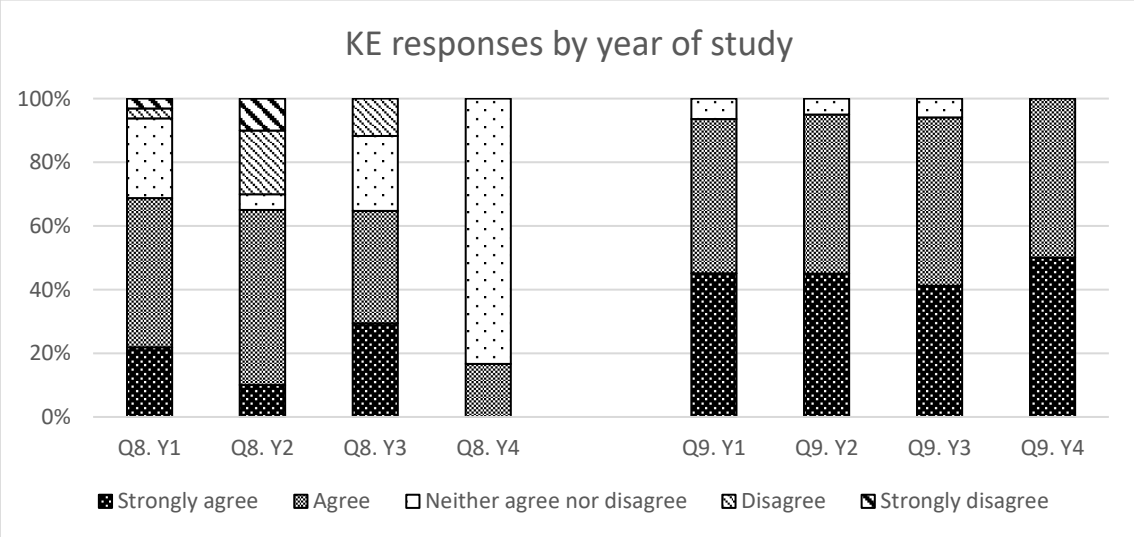

Figure 8. Respondents' opinions on issues related to KE by year of study.

Interview responses suggested that knowledge exchange in the classroom was not always observed or well understood by students despite the diversity present, as evidenced by the following statement:

> *"I'm not familiar with the experience or recognising the University as an institution that does that."* (Participant 1, AAD)

Respondents who were aware of knowledge exchange with their peers considered it to be an important means of preparing for life and work in both local and global communities. One participant highlighted the importance of knowledge exchange, when they said:

> *"... as an Australian person, in my first degree I was naïve. I had no idea about the world ... I had no idea about what it would take to do what I do in another country ..."* (Participant 6, EDS)

5. Discussion

The discussion in the following sections is structured to address the research questions presented at the start of the paper.

5.1. How students develop their English Language Proficiency, challenges they experience and support for their language development

While quantitative data shows positive overall opinions about support for ELP, breaking this down by the different groups of students shows that the support mechanisms were less effective for groups who have the greatest need for support. EAL students gave slightly less positive survey responses overall with respect to ELP, and this was far more pronounced among the international students (as compared to domestic students and permanent residents), showing that they have a much greater need for support in the language of instruction. It should be noted that almost all the international students were EAL students as well. This finding is unsurprising as it is consistent with the threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 2000, pp.175-8); we would expect EAL students to face more challenges, and the fact that international students struggle more shows that their ELP is lower than domestic EAL students, who will be far more familiar with everyday usage.

The current investigation suggests that the learning and teaching activities under investigation in this research project fail to fully appreciate and embrace the linguistic and cultural profiles of the diverse range of students and how these impact on their learning needs. Most respondents in the qualitative study (80 per cent) indicated that the university could do more to support students' ELP, especially English for academic studies, to meet student diversity and hence their learning needs. Analysis of the qualitative data on students' ELP experiences also highlights that learning and teaching activities often overlook the fact that all students bring different linguistic and cultural profiles and needs to their learning. Although ELP issues are often associated with international students or those from EAL backgrounds, previous research studies undertaken in the United Kingdom and Australia, have not found clear distinguishing evidence that differentiates between domestic and international student performance in assessments (Arkoudis & Starfield, 2007; Olsen, 2008).

Furthermore, as 72 per cent of interview participants identified challenges they experienced associated with the development of ELP in relation to their academic studies, the current research study affirms the need for more systematic mechanisms that enable this. Use of English in academic discourse is highly complex and contextualised to the discipline and all students would benefit from systematic scaffolding and development (Duff, 2010; Wingate, 2012). The findings also suggested that in some instances there was a lack of support from academic staff for developing their students' ELP, particularly during later years of study. Verbal communication was identified as a key area that needed development. The respondents of the study also indicated that there should be more scaffolding with regards to how language is used in professional contexts.

The current study found that respondents who were multilingual and who did not have English as their first language were challenged by reading, researching and writing because of their language proficiency. It was also identified that assessment instructions were not clear. These respondents perceived that their instructors lacked awareness of the role language played in all these tasks. Similar findings were confirmed in another study that was undertaken by the author on how students were inducted into their disciplinary academic literacies (Nallaya, 2018). Instructors ought to be cognisant of the complexity of language that is used in their assessment description (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Often, as experts, instructors may assume that their instructions are self-explanatory, but this may not be the case for the novice student who is commencing in a new

language and learning environment. Instructors need to be aware that students not only have to process highly complex discipline-specific language but also learn new processes that are undertaken in higher education such as referencing and critical thinking, to which they may not have been exposed in their previous learning context.

The reflections from both international and domestic students confirm that in the learning and teaching context, instructors were not doing enough to support the development of their students' ELP and academic literacies. It is possible that this, among other reasons, is because as content experts, some instructors are not confident enough to communicate to their students, the specific language features that are associated with their discipline (Arkoudis & Starfield, 2007). It is also possible that workload constraints and pressure to deliver content in an increasingly tight schedule results in instructors overlooking the development of some capabilities in their instruction such as academic language and literacies.

The findings of this study highlighted that some students were unable to access existing resources like Learning Advisers for supporting their language needs and professional communication. Although Learning Advisers and centralised learning support units play a significant role in assisting students' language and learning development in institutions of higher education, this form of generic academic language development detracts from an in-depth socialisation and induction of students into the academic discourses of their discipline (Buzzi, Grimes, & Rolls, 2012; McWilliams & Allan, 2014). The investigation also highlighted that the respondents highly endorsed the benefit and value of language development that was embedded in their programs and courses. Similar findings were observed in other related studies (Duff, 2010; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

The current study also found that the respondents valued personalised feedback for retention and learning improvement, which is instrumental for promoting student learning. In an increasingly diverse higher education environment, instructors need to clearly articulate the language and literacies that their students need to acquire to graduate with the employability skills that are relevant to their discipline (Duff, 2010; Hawkins, 2005). The findings also suggested that in the current context, some academic staff members did not totally understand or fully utilize their students' linguistic and cultural repertoire. There appears to be a need for raising all stakeholders' awareness of the significant role that language and languages play in learning.

5.2. Students' understanding of intercultural learning and how the university can support the development of intercultural learning

Quantitative data on Intercultural Learning indicated that most students were familiar with the term, although there were interesting differences observed between groups of interest. International students, despite their lower opinions with regards to ELP, are generally more positive with their responses about IL, while permanent residents gave noticeably more negative responses. It seems likely that international students are more appreciative of the cultural orientation afforded by the university, whereas permanent residents may take this diversity for granted. Students also appeared to be more familiar with the term in successive years of study.

However, qualitative data from the interviews was less positive about students' understanding of intercultural learning, suggesting multiple avenues for improvement in this area that should be explored and acted upon. Universities benefit from the systematic development of all students' intercultural knowledge and awareness in courses and programs. Promoting this development allows them to respond to steadily changing global knowledge environments, to attract students from all over the world and so remain competitive (Kostogriz & Ata, 2015).

Students who took part in the interviews pointed out that intercultural learning tended to focus on differences between cultures. Intercultural learning development approaches that tended to focus on differences rather than promote experiences that focus on fostering the relationship between language, culture and learning may contribute to the ongoing focus on cultural stereotypes

(Kostogriz & Ata, 2015). Focusing on cultural differences also does not provide students with opportunities to enhance, understand and accept the differences that result from intercultural diversity. It is possible, though, that in some instances, the nature of the subject that instructors teach require them to discuss the differences as was identified in a study undertaken by Sawir (2011) to examine how stakeholders dealt with diversity in internationalised higher education institutions. However, the findings of the current study have highlighted that although there may be a need to discuss differences between cultures, it is equally important to stress the need for students to experience their own culture in the context of other cultures (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

This study also highlighted that currently in the learning and teaching context, texts used in classroom activities were too Western or Northern-centric. This was identified from the following anonymous responses obtained from Question 10 of the survey which asked how the University could support students' development of intercultural learning:

> *"What disappointed me was that none of the texts referred to Asian, Middle Eastern, African or South American Culture and Design."*
>
> *"Allowing/encourage other world views that might challenge Western/Northern views."*

There was also advocacy for a more inclusive usage of resources from other cultures, particularly Indigenous Australian resources, in assignments. Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales (2008) argue that Indigenous Australian involvement in HE is more than just student participation and Indigenous staff employment. In an emerging globalised world, opportunities need to be created where students can "challenge stereotypes, contribute to equality, enhance understanding and appreciation of other cultures, and prepare … for the international, intercultural and global context of their future lives." (Leask & Carroll, 2013, p. 10). Students who participated in interviews noted consistently that either they appreciated exposure to knowledge from other cultures where this had occurred or wanted the opportunity to experience such knowledge in their studies. Using only Western-oriented monocultural resources in the classroom inhibits students from acquiring knowledge about other cultures and limits their ability to become global citizens. The findings suggested that opportunities to refer to texts from Asia, Middle East, Africa, South America, and other parts of the world would enable students to welcome other world views while simultaneously challenging Western-only views.

One anonymous respondent from the survey also highlighted that the University needed to foster a more systematic and structured method of intercultural learning:

> *"You don't realise you are doing it (intercultural learning) until you take intercultural communication and then you can look back on your other classes and go oh okay so I was sort of learning a little bit about that."*

Participants also suggested their instructors could undergo training to learn about other cultures and acquire strategies on how to integrate effective intercultural learning in their teaching. This is similar to the findings from a study undertaken by Clifford (2005), which highlighted that university students wanted their instructors to be familiar with their backgrounds. Increasingly, there is a pertinent need to equip teachers with the necessary competencies to engage with their students in a culturally sensitive manner (Maloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). Cultural awareness training is becoming imperative especially with growing migration and population movement which is resulting in greater cultural diversity in the classroom (Maloney & Saltmarsh, 2016). Although instructors have the responsibility to expand on their intercultural knowledge, the institution too needs to work towards establishing support to advance this as teaching across cultures can be challenging (Leask & Carroll, 2013).

The findings of this study identified that current approaches – as outlined above – undertaken to develop students' intercultural development need to be improved so that all students irrespective

of their culture, have positive experiences in the classroom. It was also found that students were interested in finding ways to navigate culture and diversity in their learning through an intercultural orientation rather than just a few standalone courses that begin and end with a view of culture and diversity as something that belongs to 'others'. A more structured effort needs to be undertaken by universities to progress intercultural learning so that students are equipped with the skills to work in a local and global world that is increasingly becoming more multicultural.

5.3. Does the University encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise between all students?

Quantitative data indicated that many students were confident that the university was encouraging the exchange of knowledge between students, and very few students disagreed that this exchange would benefit everyone involved. Students from EAL backgrounds were generally more positive about the opportunities offered, as were international students and those who were undertaking their studies remotely. Students who identified as permanent residents (but not citizens) were noticeably more cynical about knowledge exchange, and confidence in the amount of knowledge exchange taking place decreased drastically among students in later years of study.

The qualitative part of this investigation highlighted that knowledge exchange was not always a widespread practice in the learning and teaching context despite the diversity present, although respondents who were aware of knowledge exchange were appreciative of its importance and benefits. Knowledge exchange unfolded in an ad hoc way and respondents created their own opportunities to do this beyond the classroom. This is worrying because knowledge exchange should be fundamental to everything that universities do (Glasby, 2015). Universities should prepare students for employability and global citizenship in the 21st century (Altbach & Teichler, 2001; Glasby 2015). Twenty-first century universities should be aspiring to produce graduates who possess the capacity to live and work anywhere in the world (Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007). Promoting knowledge exchange in the classroom among instructors and students of different backgrounds and origins would allow the expansion of new knowledge, skills, and intercultural understanding (Kaowiwattanakul, 2016). If systematic and structured development of knowledge exchange is not undertaken in the curriculum, there is a potential for some students to graduate without an international perspective as well as the ability to live and work in a borderless world.

Another theme that arose in this study is that currently knowledge exchange, when it does occur in the learning and teaching context, happens between instructors and students and is often limited to the Western canon. This form of knowledge transfer tends to overlook the fact that there is more than one system of knowledge that can be learned and shared. One respondent indicated in the interview that they were encouraged to draw on texts from their home country as long as they were in English, suggesting that knowledge that is beyond the Western point of view is often underexplored and underutilised. As future leaders, students need to be given the opportunity to develop an international perspective and knowledge exchange between students, scholars and researchers is central to achieving that (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). A more systematic and conscious development of knowledge exchange in the curriculum that promotes a balanced and objective view of knowledge from different parts of the world is imperative as the creation, evaluation, maintenance and dissemination of knowledge should begin and grow in universities (Glasby, 2005).

One finding that emerged is that respondents suggested that knowledge exchange can occur when their instructors encourage this through group work and tutorial discussions. Knowledge exchange can transpire in groups when group members from diverse cultures are put together and are made comfortable enough to share their knowledge and experiences. This emphasises the key role that instructors play in facilitating knowledge exchange between students. The current study suggests that, now more than in the past, instructors and institutions of higher education should employ strategies to develop capabilities in graduates that would enable them to possess a high

level of global citizenry, particularly because universities are internationalising their curriculum and ignoring the space for enabling knowledge exchange would result in a significant gap.

The findings also highlighted that the respondents considered knowledge exchange to be more than the exchange of classroom information between the instructor and students or students themselves. Approximately 12 percent of the respondents in the survey advocated for opportunities to participate in student exchange programs in order to facilitate knowledge exchange. The respondents maintained that knowledge exchange should focus on processes of reflecting on how and where knowledge comes from and how this knowledge could be valuable when shared and discoursed.

5.4. How the exploration informed the creation of a division-wide English Language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching Framework

Following the investigation undertaken to explore student experiences in developing their ELP, IL and KE, a Division-wide English language and Intercultural Learning and Teaching (ELILT) Framework was created in the University. The main purpose of this Framework was to foster a learning and teaching ethos that welcomes the opportunities that diversity brings and create an environment that enables all students to systematically develop their English language expertise as required by the academic and professional context. It was also intended that the Framework would draw on and extend the intercultural learning capabilities that equip students for meaningful engagement with diversity within and outside the university. The fundamental principles upon which this framework was developed was that, learning and teaching recognises:

1. the centrality of language in learning;
2. that academic proficiency in English language is necessary for students' academic achievement and preparation for professional life;
3. cultural, faith-based, knowledge, linguistic, and socio-economic diversities as contemporary, global and pressing realities that shape learning; and
4. that students and teaching staff bring these diversities and accompanying resources to the University and draw upon them to enhance and strengthen knowledge-based and intercultural learning.

The framework recommended nine principal approaches to extend the learning and development of English language and intercultural awareness in the division, through:

1. Collaborative approach
2. Staff development
3. Systematic and structured English Language and Intercultural Learning development in programs
4. Sharing of best practice principles
5. Promotion of existing services
6. Scholarly access to academic material and resources in languages in addition to English
7. Visible and audible representations of the ELILT ethos in the university
8. Monitoring, evaluation and research
9. Policy development.

The ELILT Framework recognised that the development of English language, intercultural learning, and knowledge exchange was the responsibility of everyone in the University and should unfold in the students' discipline and be undertaken by discipline experts with the support of other central units. The Framework also recognised and acknowledged the importance of instructor training and its impact on quality teaching of English language and intercultural learning. Stakeholders' attention was drawn to the importance of systematically addressing student challenges with recognition that these aspects were important to students' learning and experience. The

Framework also signalled to senior management the need for more mechanisms and resources to enhance student experience as well as the need for a language and intercultural learning policy. Given that there were already existing resources and practices that contribute towards the development of ELP and IL, the Framework advocated a platform for sharing of these. Recognising the importance of quality assurance, the Framework also advocated for continuous monitoring and evaluation of practices as well as the incorporation of research to inform best practices.

6. Conclusion

The research study we undertook to inform the creation of the Division-wide ELILT Framework uncovered several key findings that impact on teaching and learning. Respondents highlighted that more could be done in the University to meet students' learning needs, especially in the space of ELP and intercultural learning development. Given that English language proficiency for academic discourse is highly complex and contextualised, it is pertinent that course coordinators systematically scaffold its development in their courses. This could be done through modelling and examples of texts used in their discipline and ensuring that assessment requirements and expectations are clearly communicated. Providing students with annotated examples of weak and strong samples of previous students' work will also help current students learn how to undertake a particular task, especially something that they had never completed in the past. Conscious development of discipline specific academic literacies cannot be solely tasked to Learning Advisers or staff situated in central learning and teaching units. Furthermore, ELP should not be seen as a challenge experienced only by a particular cohort of students. All students irrespective of their linguistic background need to be proficient in the academic literacies of their discipline so that they experience positive learning outcomes while in the university and graduate with qualities expected by employers.

Furthermore, given that universities today are becoming increasingly diverse both linguistically and culturally, more should be done so that all students and staff are provided with cultural orientation and awareness of diversity and the benefit it brings to learning. Intercultural learning and development should unfold consciously and systematically in courses and programs. This development should focus on fostering relationships between language, culture, and learning. Appreciation of other languages and cultures through using texts and resources from other parts of the world and cultures will facilitate this. This would also contribute towards knowledge exchange in the classroom. Language, culture and diversity should not be viewed as something that belongs to 'others' and discussed from the perspective of differences but as something that can truly enrich our own experience of the world.

The university where the authors work has recognised the importance of fostering a learning and teaching ethos that welcomes the opportunities that diversity brings and created an environment in the university, that enables all students to systematically develop their English language expertise as required by the academic and professional context, through a formal mechanism such as a Division-wide ELILT Framework. The ELILT Framework would enable the systematic development of ELP and intercultural learning capabilities that equip all students for meaningful engagement with diversity within and outside the university.

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Appendix A. Survey and interview questions

Table A1. Survey questions.

#	Question	Response type
1	I know the difference between academic English language and English for everyday communication.	Likert
2	My lecturers and tutors provide sufficient support for my English language development at UniSA.	Likert
3	UniSA provides adequate and appropriate resources to help develop my writing and speaking skills in English.	Likert
4	To what extent have you experienced any challenges while using English language for your studies? Please explain below.	Open
5	To what extent would you find it useful or desirable to use academic materials in another language when preparing assignments? Please explain below.	Open
6	If you think that it would be useful or desirable to use academic materials in another language when preparing for assignments, please list the language(s) below.	Open
7	I knew what intercultural learning means before I read the explanation above.	Likert
8	UniSA encourages the exchange of knowledge and expertise between Australian students and those from other countries.	Likert
9	The exchange of knowledge and expertise between international and domestic students would benefit everyone.	Likert
10	How could UniSA support the development it gives to intercultural learning? Please explain below.	Open
11	In what ways do you think that UniSA could support the exchange of international knowledge and expertise among students? Please explain below.	Open
12	Please make suggestions as to how UniSA can support and develop your confidence using academic English.	Open

Table A2. Interview questions.

#	Question
I1	Do you feel that you have a good understanding of the main difference(s) between academic English language, professional or workplace English, and English for everyday communication? Please explain any major challenges you may have experienced.
I2	Do you feel that your lecturers and tutors support your English language development in these contexts?
I3	Does UniSA provide adequate and appropriate resources to help develop your writing and speaking?
I4	To what extent would you find it helpful or desirable to use academic resources in another language? If so, please specify these language/s?

I5 How would you explain your understanding of intercultural learning? (do you do intercultural learning?)

I6 Can you give some specific recommendations about how we might strengthen intercultural learning at UniSA?

I7 To what extent does UniSA encourage an exchange of knowledge and expertise that students bring from other parts of Australia and the world? (i.e. Indigenous Australia, Africa, Asia, the Pacific, South America etc.)

I8 To what extent would an exchange of international knowledge and expertise benefit all students?

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