

**International Postgraduate Students' Perceived Impacts of Their
Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency on Academic Achievement:
*Multiple Case Studies at Flinders University in South Australia***

By

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ABSTRACT

Australian universities have attracted an increasing number of international students, including postgraduate ones from all corners of the world to their campuses to study. International postgraduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds are often confronted with many obstacles in a new learning environment that could have impacts on their own academic achievement. This can be attributed, among others, to their limited Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Despite the extensive literature on the impacts of CALP on academic achievement, little is known about international postgraduate students' voices over their perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement in the context of an Australian university. Therefore, to narrow this gap, this research aims to investigate international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of their CALP on academic achievement through four student case studies, who are four participating international postgraduate students in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Flinders University in South Australia. Semi-structured interview data collected from four student case studies provides insights into their perceived CALP, perceived academic achievement, and perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement. The findings reveal that all participating students perceived the positive impacts of CALP on their academic achievement. Based on its findings, this study attempts to provide recommendations for four relevant groups of key stakeholders, namely, (i) Flinders University, (ii) the College of HASS (iii) University lecturers and topic coordinators, and (iv) international postgraduate students. The findings underscore the significance of refining academic support services, fostering students' peer collaborations, and promoting positive lecturer-student relationships.

Statement of Originality

I hereby affirm that this submission is my own original work, and it does not incorporate any materials previously published or written by another person. Along with that, it does not have large parts of content that have been submitted for the attainment of another degree or diploma at Flinders University or any other educational institution. I properly credit the sources in my thesis when it needs to be. The thesis makes clear that it acknowledges any contributions from people I worked with at Flinders University or elsewhere, except where proper credit is given in the thesis. I recognize the contributions of others whom I worked with in planning and designing the research project, revising language use, which is properly acknowledged.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Academic Achievement
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CHASS	College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CILT	Center for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT)
ELS	English Language Services
ESL	English as a Second Language
EMI	English Medium Instruction
GPA	Grade Point Average
IC	Individual Consultations
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IQ	Intelligent Quotient
ISS	International Student Services
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PTE	Pearson Language Test
SP	Student Perception
SLSS	Student Learning Support Services
TESOL	Teaching English for Students of other Languages
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of Chapter 1

The Introduction chapter provides a background for the study and is organised into six main sections. It starts with the *first* section providing an overview of the context of the study, followed by the *second* one presenting the rationale of the study, justifying its chosen focus on international postgraduate students' perceptions of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)'s influence on their academic success. The *third* section defines three main guiding concepts of (1) *Student Perception (SP)*; (2) *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*; and (3) *Academic Achievement (AA)* which are all relevant for the current study's chosen research focus. The *fourth* section describes the research problem in focus, followed by the *fifth* section, which presents the research aim and the research questions. Finally, in the *sixth* section, the chapter concludes by defining the chosen scope of the research on international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their AA.

1.2. Context of The Study

Across the world, developed countries, including Australia, have benefited economically and culturally from the expanding number of international students who choose to study in their nations (Department of Education, 2020). In 2018, over 5.3 million individuals studied abroad. Australia alone has the world's third-largest number of international students, after only the United States and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2020). Over the past two decades, the number of international students studying in Australia has increased dramatically. In 2002, there were 200,000 full-fee-paying international students. According to the Australian Trade and Investment Commission (2018), the number increased by 66% from 230,000 in 2012 to 350,000 students in 2017. From January to June 2023, as many as 622,032 international students enrolled in Australian courses (Department of Education, 2020).

International students account for 3% of Australia's population and have contributed significantly to the country's culture and economy (International students in Australia statistics, 2023). Specifically, international education added over \$29 billion to the economy in 2022, with international university students in Australia contributing \$25.5 billion and

students studying online adding a further \$3.5 billion (Universities Australia, 2023). According to the latest statistics from Universities Australia (2023), most international students in Australia come from China, with 156,217 students, followed by India, with 100,302 international students. Students from Nepal, Columbia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia, just to name a few, also appear in the list of international students studying in Australia (Australia International Student Statistics 2023, 2023). International postgraduate students alone account for 58,32%, with a total number of 361,247 out of 619,371 international students (International students in Australia statistics, 2023). These international postgraduate students have also brought about enormous economic and cultural benefits for Australia.

In return, international students in general and international postgraduate students in particular receive numerous benefits from studying in Australia. *First*, they are provided with international higher education quality, opening great opportunities for their personal and professional development (Tran & Nghia, 2020). *Second*, Australia provides extensive student support services for them, facilitating a seamless transition and assisting them in different fields of their lives (Yang et al., 2022). *Third*, international students can experience a safe and multicultural environment because Australia respects the rights of its citizens, visitors, and international students and values diversity (Tran & Nghia, 2020). In addition, the high standard of living and robust economy provides many other opportunities involving the quality of higher education, healthcare, transport, infrastructure, and government services (International students in Australia statistics, 2023). *Finally*, international postgraduate students can acquire valuable work experience through work-integrated learning programmes and internships during their courses of study, making them appealing to Australian and international employers (Tran & Nghia, 2020).

However, these international postgraduate students have been facing various challenges during their academic studies in foreign countries, such as language barriers, cultural adaptability, and social integration, despite meeting the entry IELTS requirements (e.g., Wilczewski & Alon, 2023; Yang et al., 2022). According to Kamaşak & Sahan (2023), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the most significant factor impacting students' overall university experience, academic performance, and ultimately their academic achievement. Although the preliminary literature review shows that students' CALP has had certain impacts on their academic achievement (e.g., Al-Busaidi, 2017;

Stoffelsma & Spooren, 2019), little is known about how international postgraduate students perceive the impacts of CALP on their academic achievement.

1.3. Rationale of the Study

Prior studies have primarily focused on either academic achievement - AA (e.g., Al-Busaidi, 2017; Fakeye, 2014) or cognitive academic language proficiency - CALP (e.g., Banjong, 2015). Many studies, according to Al-Busaidi (2022), have investigated the interplay between CALP and AA and the impacts of intensive language study on learners' academic achievement, but there have not been any conclusive findings about the degree of influence that language proficiency has on academic achievement. In addition, little attention has been devoted to the perceptions of international postgraduate students in Australia regarding their perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement. Therefore, to close this gap in the current literature, this study aims to investigate international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on AA in the context of South Australia, where the researcher is based, and the current research is conducted.

Notably, the reason for focusing on international postgraduate students' perceptions in this study is because the literature review in Chapter 2 reveals a lack of studies on international postgraduate students in Australia whose voices have not yet been raised and heard. Understanding the perceptions of international postgraduate students in Australia, who are the primary recipients and participants in their postgraduate learning process, is crucial. It would help Australian universities find better ways to help them achieve academic success, which in turn would help improve the reputation of these Australian higher education providers and Australian education systems themselves.

1.4. Definition of Three Key Guiding Concepts

To conduct a study on the international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on AA, it is important to define the three relevant guiding concepts of (1) *Student Perceptions*

(SP), (2) *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)*, and (3) *Academic Achievement (AA)* in the current study, first starting with the concept of *Student Perceptions (SP)*.

1.4.1. The Concept of Student Perceptions (SP)

Different scholars have attempted to define the concept of student perception (SP) differently. According to Wijayanti (2019), student perception is shaped by their sensory observations, interactions with professors, and their overall engagement within the learning environment. A year later, Zidney et al. (2020) defined student perceptions as their understanding, interpretation of prior knowledge, and awareness of various aspects of the classroom context and their educational experiences. Both definitions highlight the complex and diverse aspects of student perception. Following Guo et al. (2023), this study conceptualized student perceptions as their understanding, beliefs, and thoughts about relevant aspects under investigation, particularly their perceived CALP, perceived AA, and their perceived impacts of CALP on their AA.

1.4.2. The Concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

According to Cummins (1979), language proficiency is split into two distinct categories: surface and deep. The most basic surface level of language proficiency is Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), showing the formal parts of language that can be seen and measured, like grammar, vocabulary, and speech. This language is used in discourse to convey concepts such as knowledge, fundamental comprehension, and application in everyday life. Cummins (1979) argues that anyone, no matter their IQ or academic level, can learn basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in their original language with little mental effort. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), however, according to Cummins (1986, p. 137), is the second and deeper level of language proficiency that deals with the less obvious parts of language or "the manipulation of language in de-contextualized academic situations." On this ground, Cummins (1986) concludes that CALP is more important for academic achievement than BICS.

Given its importance, various studies have attempted to define CALP in different ways. For example, Romaine (1995, cited in Nelson et al., 2013) focused on cognitive-linguistic capacity and aligned CALP with more general cognitive skills, with an emphasis on reading

and writing skills. MacFarlane et al. (2022) recently defined CALP as the language used for discussing complex topics through written communication without relying on the physical context to convey meaning. Both definitions of CALP were narrower and limited to certain aspects of reading and/or writing skills.

This study takes a broader view and employs the definition of CALP proposed earlier by Cummins (1979) and more recently by Al-Busaidi (2022), who both provided a more comprehensive definition of CALP and referred to it as three main components of (i) language proficiency, (ii) subject-area knowledge, and (iii) study/academic skills. The reason for employing this definition was because it helpfully offers a specific understanding of CALP that includes those three essential components. Considering these three specific components of CALP, a study on international postgraduate students' perceived CALP in the context of an English-speaking country like Australia needs to put under spotlight their perceived English language proficiency, their perceived knowledge of the subject areas that they choose to major in, and their perceived academic skills.

1.4.3. The Concept of Academic Achievement (AA)

Students' academic achievement is important, and many scholars have attempted to define the concept of Academic Achievement (AA) in higher education literature. Academic Achievement (AA), according to Bolt (2011), is "the progress made towards the goal of acquiring educational skills, materials, and knowledge, usually spanning a variety of disciplines." Bolt seemed to take a broad view when providing this general definition of AA. In subsequent research on AA conducted by other scholars, student achievement data, including course outcomes, students' grades, and grade point average (GPA) scores, were examined (e.g., Bo et al., 2023). Among those AA data sources, GPA scores are mostly mentioned as an indicator of academic achievement or academic performance (e.g., Simpson, 2001; Zua et al., 2016). It was well argued that students' grade point average (GPA) is a valid measure of their academic achievement (Oliver et al., 2012). In this study, the concept of academic achievement is conceptualised as participating international postgraduate students' grades of their individual assignments, their overall GPA and any non-GPA factors (Zua et al., 2016).

1.5. Research Problem

International postgraduate students from diverse cultural backgrounds worldwide are often confronted with several obstacles that could have negative impacts on their own academic achievement in Australia. This research focuses on the problem in relation to international postgraduate students studying in a new foreign country, particularly in Australia, where they struggle to achieve good grades on early assignments and high overall GPAs even though they have met IELTS requirements (Hassel and Ridout, 2018). This can primarily be attributed to, among others, their limited Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Australian universities have made enormous efforts to provide students with learning support services but do not know about their international students' perceptions of the impacts of CALP on their AA. Despite the extensive literature on the impacts of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on academic achievement, little is known about international postgraduate students' perceptions of their CALP, their AA, and their perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement (e.g., Al-Busaidi, 2017; Stoffelsma & Spooren, 2019); therefore, further investigation is needed.

1.6. Research Aim and Research Questions

1.6.1. Research Aim

The research aims to investigate international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement at an Australian university. According to the existing research, the cognitive academic language proficiency of learners is strongly related to their academic success in school contexts (e.g., Al-Busaidi, 2017; Stoffelsma & Spooren, 2019). However, little is known about how international postgraduate students perceive the impacts of CALP on their own academic achievement. Thus, this research was conducted to make a significant contribution to the scholarship on how international postgraduate students perceive the CALP's impacts on their academic achievement in Australian university contexts.

1.6.2. Research Questions

Towards achieving this aim, this research seeks answers to the following main research question (RQ):

How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?

To find answers to this main research question, the three following sub-questions are formulated:

*RQ 1a. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)**?*

*RQ 1b. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive their academic achievement (AA)**?*

*RQ 1c. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA**?*

1.7. The Scope of the Study

Due to the researcher's limited time and resources, the scope of this study is limited to the geographical context of one College within one Australian university, with a focus on its international postgraduate students' perceptions of CALP's impacts on their AA at the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) of Flinders University in South Australia.

Methodologically, it is limited to four case studies involving four international postgraduate students' perceptions of their CALP, their AA, and their perceived impacts of CALP on their AA at CHASS of Flinders University in South Australia. See **Section 3.4** for multiple case studies justification.

1.8. Structural Overview of the Study

This research report is structured into five chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introductory and foundational chapter that presents the background, rationale, definitions of key concepts, research problem, research aim, research questions, scope of the study, and a summary of the chapter. Based on Chapter 1's foundation, *Chapter 2* provides a review of the relevant literature on CALP and its impacts on academic achievement. *Chapter 3* explains the research methodology used in this study, including the research design, data collection, and data analysis methods. *Chapter 4* presents and

discusses the findings of the study considering the relevant literature and supporting data. *Chapter 5* provides practical recommendations for key stakeholders, highlights the significance and limitations of the study, provides implications for future research and practice, and concludes the study.

1.9. Summary of Chapter 1:

To sum up, this chapter provides the rationale for the current study by providing a brief description of the context of the study as well as the definitions of the three relevant key guiding concepts of Student Perception (SP), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Academic Achievement (AA), providing the direction for the study.

This introductory chapter highlights a need for an investigation into postgraduate international students' perceptions of the impacts of CALP on AA in an Australian university context. The following Chapter 2 will review the relevant literature related to the global, national Australian and local South Australian contexts of international higher education, CALP, academic achievement, and the impacts of CALP on AA worldwide and in Australia.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview of Chapter 2

This chapter reviews previously conducted studies on the contextual background of international higher education, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), Academic Achievement (AA), and the impacts of CALP on AA. To review the literature, this chapter selects, summarizes and synthesizes the key findings from the relevant studies published **from the 1990s up to the year 2023**, when this current research was conducted. The reasons for choosing this time frame were that it allows for a comprehensive review of the relevant studies on the global, national and local contextual background of international higher education, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), academic achievement (AA), and the impacts of CALP on AA, which is the main chosen research focus of the current study.

To search for the relevant literature for the review in this chapter, the researcher used the relevant keywords of "*academic achievements*," "*international postgraduate students' perceptions*," "*CALP*," and "*impacts of CALP on AA*." Using these keywords in the advanced search (i.e., Google Scholar and the Flinders University Library website), the researcher found nearly 30 studies published during the time frame of 1990 - 2023 and chose the most significant and relevant ones for the literature review in this chapter. The selected studies are those reported in peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and book chapters written by seminal researchers in the field of international higher education and international postgraduate students' perceptions of the impacts of CALP on AA.

The selected studies for the literature review in this chapter are summarized in **Appendix 1**, revealing the literature gap, which helps justify this current research's chosen focus. Selected studies are reviewed in the following sections according to **four (04) main themes** of (1) the contexts of international higher education; (2) factors affecting international university students' academic achievement; (3) CALP; and (4) the impacts of CALP on academic achievement in different contexts. All these four themes are relevant to the current research aim and questions (*See Sections 1.6.1 and 1.6.2*).

2.2. Reviewed Studies on the Contexts of International Higher Education

This section reviews relevant studies on the contexts of international higher education, providing the *global, national, and local* higher education contextual background for the proposed research in relation to international postgraduate students in Australia, starting with a review of studies on the *global* context of international higher education, followed by studies on the *national Australian* context of international higher education and finally studies on the *local* context of international higher education in South Australia, the chosen context of the current research.

2.2.1. The Global Context

The global context of international higher education is experiencing a noticeable increase in the number of international students from various cultural backgrounds moving to developed countries with advanced higher education systems for their academic studies. In this global context for higher education, English is the main and most important language (Nelson et al., 2013). To enter those universities, international students must meet English language requirements as English is the primary medium of instruction and academic communication in the global context of international higher education (Phan, 2021).

Before studying overseas, international students must choose a country's destination and there are many reasons why global students want to study in developed countries. Climate, way of life, cost of living, transportation, racial discrimination, immigration safety, and visas are just a few variables that frequently affect their destination choices (Phan, 2021). In fact, the choice of a host location also depends on the reputation of their preferred university. According to Cohen's (2017) study, international postgraduate students' preferences for lifestyles and cultural immersion, as well as the prestige and ranking of that higher education institution on a global scale, all had a significant impact on their decisions.

An increasing number of international students brings about opportunities and great challenges for host countries' universities (Phan, 2021). Positively, having international students on campus allows for cultural interchange and promotes a vibrant, diversified learning environment (Phan, 2021). Additionally, the host nation's economy might gain a great deal from the financial contributions that overseas students make in the form of living expenses and their tuition fees. However, the challenges facing host countries' universities are resolving language barriers, fostering social integration, managing cultural diversity,

offering academic help, and negotiating budgetary restrictions. To overcome these obstacles, extensive efforts in fostering an inclusive atmosphere, providing academic and linguistic support, and attending to the financial and cultural needs of international students are required (Cohen, 2017).

For international students, in return, top universities in developed nations offer diverse learning environments and cutting-edge research facilities to international students (Tran, 2019). International higher education enrolment increases opportunities for scholarly collaboration, global networking, economic contributions, and cultural exchange. They must overcome cultural and linguistic barriers, social integration issues, complicated visa procedures, and mental health issues (Cohen, 2017; Phan, 2021). International higher education must maximise benefits and minimise challenges for host countries' universities and international students. One option is helping international students succeed academically (Tran & Nghia, 2020).

2.2.2. The National Australian Context

As mentioned in **Section 1.2**, over the last 20 years, there has been a significant rise in the number of foreign students studying in Australia. At the time the research report was written in late 2023, Australia had been home to more than 600,000 international students of higher education, vocational education and training, and English language courses were all expected to see an increased demand in the coming years (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015).

Notably, to meet the entry requirements of Australian universities' postgraduate programs and to be eligible for student visas to Australia, international postgraduate students must demonstrate their English language proficiency with their minimum 6.5 IELTS scores (Department of Home Affairs, 2020). They are also expected to read, listen, speak, and write academic English with adequate academic vocabulary and structural accuracy to participate in both academic and casual conversations; however, these expectations are not always met (e.g., Daller & Phelan, 2013; Daller & Yixin, 2017). And they often face academic challenges hampering their academic achievement. These academic challenges should thus be addressed to help them with their academic achievement at their chosen Australian universities.

2.2.3. The Local South Australian Context

South Australia (SA) is one of Australia's six states and two territories. It is distinguished by its own blend of vibrant culture, stunning natural surroundings, and strong economic growth (Study Adelaide, 2020). With a landmass of over 983,482 square kilometres, South Australia is well known for its varied geography, which includes desert areas, lush plains, and stunning beaches (Study Adelaide, 2020). According to the report on *How to Study in Australia* (2023), South Australia has a population of about 1.7 million people, which adds to the diverse influences that make up its rich fabric. An assortment of South Australia's growing industries, such as manufacturing, mining, and agriculture, as well as a growing focus on technology and innovation, define the South Australian economy (Study Adelaide, 2020). With its unique geographic features, diverse economy, and outstanding higher education reputation, South Australia is a fascinating and complex part of Australia and one of the most popular destinations for living and studying for international students (Study Adelaide, 2020).

2.2.3.1. South Australia's Universities

South Australia is home to many universities known for their exceptional higher education and research quality (Study Adelaide, 2020). The University of Adelaide, Flinders University, and the University of South Australia (UniSA) are the **three (03)** most prestigious higher education institutions in South Australia. These three outstanding multi-disciplinary universities offer a wide range of study programmes in various fields of study for both local and international undergraduate and postgraduate students. These three universities are also reputable for providing outstanding higher education quality (Australia's best universities 2023, 2023). They have been working closely with South Australia's growing industries and other research institutions to provide their local and international students with hands-on experience and exposure to real-world applications of their studies (Australia's best universities 2023, 2023). These three reputable universities are also highly regarded both nationally and internationally for their contributions to research and academic achievements (Study Adelaide, 2020).

Over the last few years, these three universities in South Australia have attracted an increasing number of overseas students, including postgraduate ones (Study Adelaide, 2020). With a mix of bustling cities, gorgeous landscapes, and a welcoming society, the South Australian State provides a pleasant atmosphere for international students to reside,

study, and work (Australia's best universities 2023, 2023). South Australia currently has over 35,000 international students, including approximately 13,000 international postgraduate students coming from more than 120 countries around the world (Study Adelaide, 2020).

2.2.3.2. Flinders University

As one of the three most prestigious public universities located in South Australia, Flinders University is a multi-disciplinary university with **six (06)** Colleges, namely, the College of Business, the College of Government, and Law; the College of Education, Psychology, and Social Work; the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences; the College of Medicine and Public Health; the College of Nursing and Health Sciences; and the College of Science and Engineering (Flinders Universities, 2023). These six colleges have attracted an increasing number of international students to undergraduate and postgraduate courses, which are famous for their excellence (Flinders University, 2023). Flinders University ranks in the top 2% of universities worldwide and the top 23 in Australia (Flinders University, 2023). 90% of Flinders University's research was ranked at or above the world level in the 2015 Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) assessment (Study Adelaide, 2022). Flinders University is one of Australia's fastest-growing young higher education institutions, with a strong dual emphasis on both quality teaching and quality research; 90% of Flinders University's research was rated at or above world level (Flinders University, 2023).

In terms of teaching and learning, Flinders University has received a five-star rating from the Good Universities Guide for student-to-faculty ratios, teaching excellence, and students' satisfaction (Flinders University, 2023). Furthermore, it offers on-campus accommodation and has become more accessible with the completion of a rail link in 2020 and the new AUD\$1.5 billion Flinders Village initiative (Flinders University, 2023). Notably, according to Flinders University (2023), Flinders University's New Venture Institute incubator was selected to be the best one in the Asia-Pacific area and runs a comprehensive entrepreneurial business programme.

As far as social sciences are concerned, Flinders University's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) offers a diverse array of cutting-edge social sciences programs and research opportunities that delve into the complexities of human societies, cultures, and behaviours and attracts a global cohort of international students, including postgraduate international ones (Flinders University, 2023). CHASS is proud of its capacity

to provide postgraduate international students throughout the world with a welcoming and intellectually challenging environment.

The two reputable social sciences programs in CHASS that have attracted most international postgraduate students are the Master of TESOL and Master of Women and Gender Studies programs (Flinders University, 2023). The Master of TESOL programme aims to provide postgraduate students with the theoretical understanding and pragmatic abilities required for successful language instruction in a variety of international contexts. The Master of Gender and Women Studies Program explores critical viewpoints about gender, sexuality, and social justice. In addition to drawing international students who are passionate about TESOL studies and gender and women issues, these two Master programmes have successfully created a welcoming learning environment for international students from all over the world (Flinders University, 2023).

Given all the opportunities these postgraduate programmes offer to international students at Flinders University, there are studies researching on international students' language proficiency or academic achievement or both. However, few studies have been conducted on international postgraduate students' perceptions into the impacts of CALP on their own academic achievement at Flinders University. Therefore, this chosen research is relevant and significant.

2.3. Reviewed Studies on Factors Affecting International Students' Academic Achievement

Living and studying in a new environment in Australia, many international students have been struggling with their studies (e.g., Alsahafi & Shin, 2019; Birrell, 2006). Literature on Australia's higher education acknowledges many causing factors for their academic struggle. This section first reviews relevant studies (e.g., Alrasheed et al., 2021; Stoyhoff, 1997; Zua et al., 2016), acknowledging both linguistic and non-linguistic factors as key factors influencing international students' academic achievement in Australia. It then reviews studies that highlight cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as the primary factor affecting international students' academic achievement (e.g., Martirosyan et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2013).

2.3.1. Linguistic and Non-linguistic Factors

Many scholars have conducted studies on international students and delved into the complicated factors that have affected their academic achievement (e.g., Abel, 2002; Alyahyab, 2020; Stoyhoff, 1997). For example, Stoyhoff (1997, as cited in Zua et al., 2016) was among the first seminal scholars who investigated the factors affecting international students' academic achievements and highlighted such common influencing factors as time management and social connections. Expanding on this, Abel (2002) later identified additional factors, such as international students' classroom dynamics and higher educational support, as contributing to their academic achievement. More recently, Alyahyab (2020) revealed the most reported influencing factors, which are international students' prior-academic achievement, student demographics, e-learning activity, psychological attributes, and learning environments. These factors in the reviewed studies (e.g., Alrasheed et al., 2021; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Oliver et al., 2012; Ugwu & Adamuti-Trache, 2017) can be categorized into *linguistic and non-linguistic* factors.

For *linguistic* factors, studies by Ren & Hagedorn (2012) and Ugwu & Adamuti-Trache (2017) comprehensively explored the impacts of international students' linguistic competence, their motivation, social integration, stress, and anxiety on their academic achievement. More recently, studies by Alrasheed et al. (2021) further highlighted the substantial positive influence of such linguistic factors as multilingualism, language competency, and international students' challenges in speaking, writing, reading, and listening on their academic achievement. Among these linguistic factors, cognitive academic language proficiency is considered a critical one (Alrasheed et al., 2021).

As far as *non-linguistic factors* are concerned, Oliver et al. (2012) expanded the focus on such factors as international students' cultural and educational backgrounds, cultural adaptation, their countries of origin, and individual traits. More recently, Madigan & Curran (2021) suggested that international students' cognitive ability, social support, effort, intentional practice, intelligence, motivation, conscientiousness, teacher clarity, feedback, and homework have *positive* impacts on their academic achievement. Whereas other non-linguistic factors such as international students' procrastination, anxiety, stress, insomnia,

stereotype threat, television, summer vacations, and moving schools were found to have *negative* impacts on their academic achievement (Schneider & Preckel, 2017).

Comparing the importance of linguistic and non-linguistic factors, the literature on international higher education acknowledges that linguistic factors are more common and impactful on international postgraduate students' academic achievement (i.e., Madigan & Curran, 2021). This might be because linguistic factors are more under international students' control and could improve with adequate time and effort from both international students and the supporting services provided by host universities.

2.3.2 Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as the Main Influencing Factor

As mentioned above, cognitive academic language proficiency is acknowledged in the literature as one of the linguistic factors. Research on what influences overseas students' academic performance in the classroom consistently shows CALP as the primary influencing factor (e.g., Cummins, 1984; Madigan & Curran, 2021; Zhou, 2016). These studies investigate whether students with advanced CALP possess higher abilities to understand the linguistic complexities in their academic contexts (Martirosyan et al., 2015). These students are specifically found to be able to understand the complex material presented in class, academic books, and assessments. High CALP allows international students to participate actively in class discussions, comprehend course content, and successfully navigate academic challenges (Nelson et al., 2013; Zhou, 2016). All these factors support CALP as the main influencing factor in these studies.

CALP, according to Cummins (2000), is an important aspect of the language development of second language (L2) learners. It takes significantly longer to learn CALP, typically five to seven years (Upadhyay, 2020), compared to learning Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which takes only six months to two years (Kim-Rich & Curwood, 2023). Highlighting the importance of CALP, Krashen (2007) emphasised its role in developing academic language, subject-specific information acquisition, language development, and effective learning strategies. Understanding CALP's particular role allows educators to personalise techniques for addressing academic language issues, resulting in improved teaching methods among teachers and enhanced learning opportunities among students (Racca & Lasaten, 2016; Al-Busaidi, 2017). In addition, university students should give

priority to developing CALP and work diligently to improve their cognitive academic language abilities (Khatib, 2016).

To measure CALPs, three international English language tests, namely IELTS (*International English Language Testing System*) tests, TOEFL (*Tests of English as a Foreign Language*) tests and PTE (*Pearson Tests of English*) tests are commonly used. These international English language test results are often used as the entry requirements for international universities. In Australia, IELTS scores are an essential prerequisite (e.g., Yasaman, 2022). However, the validity and reliability of IELTS scores in determining international students' CALP, however, remain controversial, even though overall IELTS scores between 6.0 and 7.0 are globally recognised as evidence of adequate English proficiency (Yasaman, 2022).

2.4. Reviewed Studies on International Students' Academic Achievement

Research on international students' academic achievement has explored the relationship between grade point average (GPA) and academic achievement, providing insights into the diverse grading schemes used in higher education in different countries worldwide (Cancarevic et al., 2021). While the USA, Canada, and Australia's higher education systems frequently employ the GPA system as an indicator of students' academic achievement, the UK's higher education system typically uses a percentage-based system (Cancarevic et al., 2021). These different grading schemes are essential for the proper evaluation and interpretation of academic performance in a variety of learning environments. For example, research on international students' academic achievement in the US shows that international students' overall academic achievement and their GPA are positively correlated (Cancarevic et al., 2021). This strong correlation indicates that the GPA system accurately captures and reflects their performance within the American higher education grading scheme, enabling a meaningful evaluation of their academic achievement (Cancarevic et al., 2021).

In a study conducted in an Australian graduate medical admission programme, Puddey and Mercer (2014) discovered that the grade point average (GPA) at the study program's beginning was a highly accurate predictor of future academic success. This finding is

consistent with Oliver et al.'s (2012) finding highlighting that international students' first-semester GPA is a good predictor of their academic achievement. This is because during this time, students become engaged, develop an understanding of academic expectations, and establish study habits, all of which have a significant impact on their subsequent academic performance (Puddey and Mercer, 2014).

2.5. Reviewed Studies on the Impacts of International Students' CALP on AA Outside and Inside Australia

2.5.1. Reviewed Studies Outside Australia

Different reviewed studies conducted outside Australia show different findings in relation to the impacts of international students' CALP on their AA in various contexts. Few studies revealed the *positive* impacts of CALP on AA in the contexts of Singapore, Turkey, Iraq, and Japan (e.g., Bahar, 2015; Bo et al., 2023; Grain et al., 2022; Rose et al., 2019), whereas other studies revealed the *negative* impacts in the contexts of China and the United States (e.g., Farley et al., 2019; Zua, 2019).

This section first reviews four selected studies conducted in four different countries outside Australia, namely Singapore and Japan, where the **positive** impacts of CALP on AA were revealed (e.g., Bo et al., 2023; Rose et al., 2019). It is then followed by a review of two additional studies conducted in China and the United States where the **negative** impacts of CALP on AA were found (e.g., Farley et al., 2019; Zua, 2019).

2.5.1.1 Reviewed Studies on the Positive Impacts of CALP on AA

Singapore

A notable study investigating the relationship between language skills and academic success in the Singaporean context was Bo et al.'s (2023) quantitative study among Singaporean university students. This study specifically investigated the correlation among participating Singaporean students' prior academic experience, their English language proficiency, and their current academic performance. The study aims to address the question of the degree to which English language proficiency impacts students' academic

achievement. Methodologically, the study involves a diverse sample of 514 students. Bo et al. (2023) uses strong statistical methods like correlation studies, ANOVA, and hierarchical regression models with data drawn from the university's student management system. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between participating students' proficiency scores on a university-designed test and their GPA and emphasised the specific *positive* impact of English language proficiency on different academic fields, especially in the college of humanities and social sciences.

Japan

Rose et al. (2019) conducted a study in Japan aimed at investigating how international students' language skills and academic language proficiency influenced academic achievement among 146 students in an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) business program. Data was gathered using a test, questionnaire on language learning motivation, test scores from an 'International Business' course, a TOEIC, end-of-term scores from an 'English for Specific Purposes' academic skills development course as well as interviews. In the EMI context, second language proficiency and academic English skills such as reading, note-taking, academic presentations, and a written report, etc. were revealed to have a *positive* impact on academic achievement. In contrast, motivation did not correlate with higher grades, which contradicts previous research in language learning contexts.

2.5.1.1 Reviewed Studies on the Negative Impacts of CALP on AA

China

Farley and colleagues (2019) conducted a study to investigate the impact of academic language proficiency, as measured by three English language tests, on academic success among 759 international business students in China. The study used data from 2006 to 2014 through a well-designed research approach with three language exams examined, such as a standardised English test, a test from a Western university, and one from a Chinese programme. Farley et al. (2019) discovered that language proficiency had a limited and negative impact on their academic performance. This means that, surprisingly, better language proficiency did not always translate into higher grades for international students enrolled in international business programmes.

The United States of America

Likewise, in the United States, Zua (2019) conducted a study at a historically Black College and university (HBCU) to investigate the potential relationship between international graduate students' language proficiency and their academic achievements. Standardised tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, or English Language Services (ELS) Level 112 Certificate of Completion were used to assess students' language proficiency; students' GPAs were also used to assess their academic performance. The study used a non-experimental ex post facto research design to investigate the correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement. The findings revealed that there were *no* significantly *positive* correlations between international graduate students' academic performance and their academic language proficiency, gender, nationality, or level of study.

To sum up, outside Australia, a review of these international studies provides a mixed picture of how CALP influences academic achievement in various parts of the world outside Australia. In the contexts of Singapore and Japan, research shows the positive influence of CALP on AA whereas in the contexts of China and the United States, the negative influence was reported. These mixed findings shed light on the complex nature of the impacts of international students' cognitive academic language proficiency and their academic achievement.

2.5.2. Reviewed Studies Inside Australia

Australia is an English as a Second Language (ESL) context where English is available both inside and outside classrooms. Australia has a diverse population, drawing a significant number of international students and immigrants (Study Adelaide, 2020). To support them, Australian Government initiatives and English language education programmes in many higher education institutions are necessary (Lee & Kim, 2020). Very few research has been done inside Australia about the impact of CALP on AA to this date (e.g., Montes, 2014; Ping, 2020); however, these studies only focused on undergraduate students in several states

across Australia, such as New South Wales and Queensland. No research on postgraduate students in Australia has been found at the time this research was conducted.

In **Brisbane**, a capital city of Queensland which is one of six States of Australia, Montes (2014) carried out a study at Queensland University, focusing on investigating the correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement in a group of eight Chinese undergraduate students. The study employed a qualitative approach, specifically using case study methodology. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, blog entries, emails, and samples of academic writing. The results revealed a distinct correlation between the participants' prior English language training and their academic achievement. Most importantly, the lack of the ability to effectively communicate in writing had an impact on academic achievement.

Regarding **Sydney**, the capital city of the State of New South Wales, Australia, Ping (2020) conducted the study to investigate the language challenges faced by pre-university international students, particularly those enrolled in intensive English programmes. The study aims to assess the impact of the flipped writing approach on academic writing performance among low-proficiency second language learners by randomly assigning 74 participants in Swinburne University to either a flipped or traditional classroom setting. Students in the flipped group watched pre-class video lectures and participated in interactive in-class activities, whereas students in the control group received traditional writing lessons. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study found that the flipped group performed significantly better on writing tasks than the control group and highlight the flipped classroom's effectiveness in improving academic writing performance, particularly for students with limited language proficiency.

To sum up, these studies demonstrate the importance of language proficiency in undergraduate international students' academic success in Australia. However, there is a clear gap in the research on the perceived impacts of CALP on AA among international postgraduate students in South Australia, in particular. Therefore, to address this gap, more studies are needed to understand this connection better.

2.6. A Gap Revealed from the Literature Review

A review of the relevant studies (See **Appendix 1**) reveals a geographical, substantive, and methodological gap that needs further research. As can be seen from **Section 2.5.** above, *geographically*, there are more studies conducted outside Australia than those conducted inside Australia to investigate the impacts of CALP on international students' AA.

Literature review also shows a **substantive** lack of research on how international postgraduate students perceive the impact of CALP on their academic achievement in the **geographical** context of South Australia.

Methodologically, earlier research seemed to focus more on the use of quantitative research approaches (e.g., Bo et al., 2023; Farley et al., 2019; Grain et al., 2022; Izatullah et al., 2022;) than on qualitative ones. These gaps serve as an important starting point for considering qualitative method research focusing on international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALPs on AA.

2.7. Summary of Chapter 2

In summary, in this chapter, the relevant literature was critically reviewed, beginning with a review of studies on the global, national and local contexts of international higher education, followed by studies on linguistics and non-linguistic factors affecting international university students' academic achievement, highlighting CALP as the main influencing factors of students' AA. It then reviews relevant studies on the impacts of CALP on academic achievement (AA) both outside and inside Australia and reveals a substantive, geographical, and methodological gap in the literature, justifying a need for investigating the perceptions of international postgraduate students on their perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement in South Australia.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of Chapter 3

This research methodology chapter consists of **six** sections, each of which has a distinct goal. Its *first* section starts with research methodological considerations, followed by the *second* section on qualitative design justification for investigating the perceived impacts of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on the academic achievement (AA) of second-year international postgraduate students. The *third* section justifies the use of multiple case studies as an appropriate research design for the current research, while the *fourth* section describes the research participants chosen for multiple case studies. The *fifth* section presents the interview data collection instruments developed for gathering data in relation to four participating students' perceptions of the CALP impacts on their academic achievement; this section also includes the ethics approval consideration and notice, which is important for this research related to human participants. A presentation of the current study's interview data, analytical methods, and methodological limitations is examined in the *sixth and final* section.

3.2 Methodological Considerations

There are **three** common research methods of qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed methods research. To choose the appropriate research method for this current study, the researcher considered the benefits and drawbacks of each of these three research methods regarding the current research aim and the research questions presented in Section 1.6. Appendix 2 on *Methodological Considerations of three Main research types* presents the goals, strengths, and weaknesses of each of the three common research methods, each of which is briefly presented below.

First, quantitative research has its advantages and disadvantages. According to Creswell (2019), statistical accuracy and generalizability are two main benefits of quantitative research. However, as Creswell (2019) pointed out, quantitative research dealing with numerical data could oversimplify the complexity of case studies. Therefore, quantitative research may not be suitable for the chosen research aim and questions of this current proposed research. The relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that recent studies

on the impacts of CALP on AA mostly use quantitative research approaches (e.g., Izatullah et al., 2022; Van der Merwe, 2018).

*Second, **qualitative research*** has its pros and cons. Qualitative research allows for a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and viewpoints (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In addition, qualitative research permits a consistent collection of fundamental information from all research participants, ensuring a comprehensive investigation of the research issue (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It enables a thorough investigation of personal experiences, highlighting the variety and complexity of viewpoints (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Furthermore, Merriam and Grenier (2019) also emphasise that the flexibility of qualitative methodologies enables researchers to adjust their approach in response to diverse situations, promoting a thorough comprehension of participants' perceptions.

Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise the drawbacks of qualitative research, which requires a substantial amount of preparation time for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, posing a potential challenge for qualitative researchers (e.g., Alamri, 2019; Bolderston & Palmer, 2006). Furthermore, Palmer and Bolderston (2006) claimed there is the possibility of qualitative research bias, which occurs when the researcher's personal beliefs and inclinations influence the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. In response to these concerns, it is recommended that the establishment of a safe environment for participants foster an atmosphere conducive to the open sharing of perspectives, free from judgement, which eventually helps reduce prejudice (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

*Third, **mixed methods research*** has its strengths and weaknesses. The advantages of mixed methods research include its ability to gather and synthesise large amounts of mixed data, which can improve both the breadth and depth of knowledge regarding complicated issues (Clark et al., 2008). However, as Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) point out, integrating qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research is complex, which might affect the validity and reliability of mixed methods research's findings.

To sum up, to determine the appropriate research method for any research project, including this current one, on the one hand, the researcher evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of all three possible research methods of the qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed research methods. On the other hand, it is important to

choose the research method that fits the research aim and research questions formulated at the beginning (See Section 1.6.1 and 1.6.2).

3.3 Qualitative Design Justification

This current research chose the qualitative research design after carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages of each research method type, as illustrated in **Appendix 2**.

The use of qualitative research design is justified in this proposed research because of its strengths mentioned above. Particularly in this current research, qualitative design enables the researcher to examine and comprehend the participating students' insights, particularly the perspectives of international postgraduate students on the impacts of CALP on their AA, as well as the variances and complexity in the milieu in which they are situated.

In addition, the use of qualitative research design in this current research is also justified as it is in line with the research aim, the chosen focus, and the qualitative nature of the current study, which is to investigate international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement in an Australian university. Through the collection of qualitative data, this current research can seek answers from participating students in response to the main research question of *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?*

3.4. Multiple Case Studies Justification

3.4.1. Consideration of Single Case Studies vs. Multiple Case Studies

A case study is a comprehensive research approach that is often used in qualitative research to get comprehensive, multifaceted knowledge of a complicated research subject in its actual environment (Yin, 2019). Case studies have a long history, particularly in social sciences research, initially developed by early pioneers such as Freud and Durkheim (Crowe et al., 2011). According to Yin (2009), the main goal of using case studies is to explain, characterise, or study events or phenomena in their natural environments. In this proposed research, the use of case studies can help explain the international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their AA.

The strengths of case studies include producing comprehensive data, examining cases, and offering insights into complex social issues (Yin, 2018). However, the time-consuming nature of data collection and processing, potential bias, and restricted generalizability are some of the limits of case studies. Despite these shortcomings, the case study remains an effective research design for obtaining comprehensive and contextualised understandings (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2018).

There are **two (02)** types of case studies: single case studies and multiple case studies (Yin, 2018). **Single case studies** concentrate on a single incident and provide a thorough analysis of a particular topic (Yin, 2018). **Multiple case studies**, however, examine several cases to make comparisons and contrasts among cases, which strengthens the findings' generalizability and reliability. Multiple case studies could reveal the common patterns across cases in various situations, enhancing the validity and reliability of research findings, whereas a single case study can only offer in-depth insights into one specific setting (Yin, 2018). Multiple case studies are stronger than a single case study as they can reveal similarities and differences among cases, which helps researchers develop a more thorough grasp of the issues or phenomena under investigation (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2018). Recognising the strengths of multiple case studies, this current research chose multiple case studies rather than one for investigation.

3.4.2. Four Case Studies Justification

To fully understand the postgraduate international students' perceived impacts of CALP on their academic achievement and accomplishment, which has been the emphasis of this study and research questions, this current research conducted four case studies related to four participating international postgraduate students. The reason for choosing multiple case studies rather than a single case study in this current research is because a single case design is less persuasive than multiple case designs, which provide more comparable evidence and more robust conclusions (e.g., De Vaus, 2001; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, by examining four distinct student cases, the researcher can identify commonalities and differences among the four student cases based on the four individual stories of the four participating students. These four case studies would be more insightful about the four international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on AA than merely one perception from a single student case study.

In this current research, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) at Flinders University in South Australia serves as the primary setting where four student case studies are conducted. Data from all these **four (04) student case studies** from **two (02)** postgraduate programs (*i.e., Master of TESOL and Master of Gender and Women's Studies Programs*) in CHASS that are reputable for attracting international students could enable the researcher to respond to the main research question as to "*How do international postgraduate students in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS) at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?*". By selecting four participating international postgraduate students from the same College of HASS, the study aims to comprehend their common and distinctive viewpoints on their perceived impacts of CALP on AA within this same academic setting of CHASS.

3.5 Research Participants

To select the four participating students, the researcher sets the participant selection criteria as follows: (1) a participating student is a second-year postgraduate international student from any non-English speaking country background; (2) he/she has lived in South Australia for at least one year but no more than two years; (3) he or she is a continuing student who has studied for at least one semester in any of the two postgraduate programmes (*i.e., Master of TESOL or Master of Women and Gender Studies*) in CHASS that have attracted many international postgraduate students; and (4) he or she must consent to voluntarily participate in the interviews conducted in English. Those four above-mentioned selection criteria are suitable for selecting participating international postgraduate students who have enough learning experience in CHASS and are proficient in English to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Therefore, only those participants who strictly meet all four predetermined selection criteria will be contacted to be invited to participate in the research.

Although there are **927** international postgraduate students studying at Flinders University in 2023 (Flinders University, 2023), only **330** international postgraduate students are studying in CHASS alone. Out of 330 international postgraduate students, there are only **20** continuing Master students in their second year studying in CHASS who strictly met all the four predetermined selection criteria mentioned above and are potential participants for this current study. After getting the Ethics Approval from Flinders University's Human Research

Ethics Committee (**HREC**) (see **Appendix 3**), the researcher emailed to invite these 20 potential students to participate in this study, and only **four (04)** of them consented to participate voluntarily in the semi-structured one-on-one interviews. **Table 3.1** below briefly describes these four participating international postgraduate students who are labelled anonymously as NEP student, LAO student, IND student and VIE student to protect their private information shared in the interviews.

Table 3.1. A Brief Description of Four (04) Participating International Postgraduate Students in CHASS

Participating Student's Background Information	Case study 1 (NEP Student)	Case Study 2 (LAO Student)	Case Study 3 (IND Student)	Case Study 4 (VIE Student)
Nationality	Nepalese	Laotian	Indonesian	Vietnamese
Age	40 years old	40 years old	28 years old	32 years old
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Study Program	Master of Women and Gender studies	Master of TESOL		Master of Women and Gender studies
Current Semester	3rd	3rd	4th	2nd
Studying in an English-Speaking Country before coming to Australia	No			

According to **Table 3.1**, the *first* case study is a female Nepalese student (*NEP Student*), aged 40, who is currently enrolled in the third semester of a Master's programme in Women and Gender Studies. The *second* case study is a Laotian student (*LAO Student*) of the same age of 40 and is currently studying in the third semester of a Master's programme in TESOL. The *third* case study is about a 28-year-old Indonesian student (*IND Student*) in her fourth (last) semester of her Master in TESOL program. The *fourth* and the last case study is a 32-year-old Vietnamese student (*VIE Student*) in her second semester of her Master in Women

and Gender Studies program. It is worth mentioning that each student case comes from a non- English-speaking country at different stages of their studies in CHASS, thereby contributing a diverse range of perspectives and experiences in relation to their perceived impacts of CALP on their perceived AA.

Studying at the same College (CHASS), they all share the same academic background in the field of social sciences, linguistic demands for English language proficiency, and disciplinary culture. Also, concentrating on the same academic context can make the four multiple case studies more practically feasible within the constraints of the researcher's time and budget.

3.6 Ethics Approval Considerations

Given that this research involves human participants who are international postgraduate students studying in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia, research ethics consideration is important. With the supervisor's guidance and support, the researcher submitted an ethical application to the Human Research Ethics Committee (**HREC**) at Flinders University, where the research was conducted. The Ethics Approval Notice was issued on June 26, 2023 (See **Appendix 4. Human Ethics Low Risk Panel Approval Notice**).

After obtaining the Ethics Approval Notice, the researcher contacted to invite all the 20 potential participants who strictly met the four predetermined selection criteria (See **Section 3.5. Research Participants**) and provided them with comprehensive information regarding the research project's objectives and interview questions to obtain their informed consent. Potential participants had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. The confidentiality of each participating student's personal information was kept confidential and their answers to interview questions were analyzed for research purposes only. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for the purpose of data analyses. The Interview Protocol (See **Appendix 5**) was designed to elicit each participant's perspective systematically regarding the CALP's impact on academic achievement.

3.7. Interview Data Collection

3.7.1 Consideration of Different Interview Data Types

For conducting four case studies, this current research chose to use interview techniques for collecting interview data for each student case study. The use of various interview techniques, according to Miner-Romanoff (2012), can effectively improve participants' comfort and openness while also facilitating ongoing clarification. To collect interview data, there are three options for the researcher to consider: *structured* interviews, *semi-structured* interviews, and *unstructured* interviews (Yin, 2018). Each option has its strengths and weaknesses, which are discussed hereinafter.

Structured interviews use a set list of structured questions that allow for standard answers and easy comparison (Creswell, 2019). The strengths of using structured interviews are consistency and simplicity, however, their limitations are a potential lack of flexibility and depth (Creswell, 2019). However, *unstructured* interviews use open-ended questions without a set format, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of participant experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The strengths of using structured interviews are depth and flexibility; however, their limitations include potential inconsistency and difficulty in comparing responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). *Semi-structured* interviews have their pros and cons. The strengths of using semi-structured interviews are flexibility and depth; however, their limitations are the potential for variability and the need for skilled interviewers to maintain focus (Yin, 2018).

3.7.2 Semi-structured Interview Justification

To maximise the strengths and minimise the limitations of structured and unstructured interviews, this current research chose semi-structured interviews which provide a balance between the ability to delve deeper into emerging themes and a set of questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The strengths of using semi-structured interviews are flexibility, allowing in-depth investigation and rich data collection, while maintaining adaptability and participant engagement (Yin, 2018).

In addition, the choice of in-depth, semi-structured interviews in this current research is justified as it is in line with Busetto et al.'s (2020) assertion that it enables an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon, in this case, the perceived impacts of CALP on the academic achievement of four international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University. The knowledge gained through in-depth semi-structured interviews also surpasses initial expectations and can be documented in the form of written, visual, or auditory materials (Jansen, 2007). All four interviews were conducted with each participant at a time mutually agreed upon by both the interviewer/researcher and the interviewees/participating students. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participating students' consent. All the interview transcripts were then emailed to participating students for their verification and approval.

3.7.3 Development of the Interview Protocol with Semi-Structured Interview Questions

To facilitate semi-structured interview data collection for all four student case studies, the researcher developed the Interview Protocol in Appendix 5. According to the interview protocol, each semi-structured interview lasts for an average of 60 minutes (i.e., the longest interview with the NEP student was 65 minutes and the shortest one with the VIE student was 50 minutes). All interviews were conducted in English, which is the shared language of both the interviewer and interviewees.

As can be seen from the Interview Protocol in **Appendix 5**, semi-structured interviews consist of both open-ended and closed-ended interview questions, each of which is followed by clarifying sub-interview questions of how and why. Each participating student was invited to participate in a 60-minute one-on-one interview. One-on-one interviews for each participant enable a manageable examination of sufficient depth in each participant's perception, revealing their perceptions on various aspects of the phenomenon under investigation.

According to the Interview Protocol, there are three main parts. In the *first* part of *Introduction*, the participant's background is covered, consisting of fifteen personal information and study experience questions. The *second* part is the *Main* part which includes

three open-ended questions, followed by sub-questions on participating students' perceived CALP, perceived AA, and their perceived impacts of CALP on AA. The *third* part is the Conclusion part, which involves concluding interview questions asking for participants' recommendations and any other relevant topics that they wish to add in the interview.

3.7.4 Recording and Transcribing of Interviews

As clearly mentioned in the Interview Protocol, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in preparation for subsequent data analyses. Following Cohen's (2007) advice, during each interview, the researcher took note of nonverbal signals, such as each participant's gestures, tone, volume, and pitch. All participating students were later emailed with a copy of their interview transcripts to cross-check and confirm the transcribed information. Audio files, participant transcripts, and any other related documents, including the researcher's notes, were documented, and stored electronically in a secure manner, as stated in the earlier ethics application.

3.8 Analysis of Semi-structured Interview Data

The collected and transcribed semi-structured interview data was analysed in two stages. The first stage of data analysis was the initial stage of data analysis of each of the four sets of data collected from four participating international postgraduate students, followed by the second stage, which is a more comprehensive subsequent one of interview data analysis.

3.8.1 Initial Analysis of Interview Data

The raw interview data collected from four participating students, consisting of recorded interview transcripts and the researcher's corroborating written notes, was initially reviewed, and analysed by the researcher. The data collected from the four semi-structured interviews with four participating students was then organised into four distinct data sets labelled as NEP Student, LAO Student, IND Student and VIE Student.

It is important to note that for interview data analyses, the researcher approached the data analysis with objectivity and neutrality, setting aside the researcher's personal experiences

with CALP and its impact on academic progress. During the initial exploration and analysis phase, the researcher read the transcripts and additional notes to acquire a broad understanding of each data set and to identify both common and unique themes. In subsequent phases, these findings will serve as the basis for more comprehensive and in-depth data analyses.

In the first stage, for initial analyses, the researcher tabulated the initial analyses of data collected from each student case study in **Table 3.2** below.

Table 3.2. Initial Analyses of Interview Data from Four Case Studies

Initial Analyses of Participating Students' Perceptions	Case study 1 (NEP Student)	Case Study 2 (LAO Student)	Case Study 3 (INDO Student)	Case Study 4 (VIE Student)
Participating Student's Perceived English Language Proficiency (Strong/Moderate/Weak)	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Participating Student's Perceived Subject Area Knowledge (Strong/Moderate/Weak)	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak
Participating Student's Academic Skills (Strong/Moderate/Weak)	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak
Overall Participating Student's Perceived CALP	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Participating Student's Perceived Academic Achievement	non-GPAs	GPAs	GPAs	GPAs
Participating Student's Perceived Impact of CALP on Academic Achievement (AA) (Positive/Negative)	Positive			
Perceived Challenges	Cultural and contextual differences	Time management Online studying	Time management Oral communication	Academic writing Subject-related terms

Table 3.2 above provides an initial analysis of the perceptions of each of the **four (04)** participating students, with the factors considered for categorising the students being perceived English language proficiency, subject area knowledge, academic skills, academic achievement, perceived impact of CALP on academic achievement, and their identified challenges. According to **Table 3.2**, all four participating students perceived their English language proficiency levels differently: The NEP student perceived it to be high, the LAO student perceived it to be low, while both the IND student and the VIE student perceived it to be moderate. In terms of their subject area knowledge and academic skills, while NEP Student and IND Student both perceived strong subject area knowledge and academic writing skills, VIE Student and IND Student both perceived their moderate subject area knowledge and weak academic writing skills. Furthermore, time management was perceived as a challenge by LAO Student and IND Student, while contextual differences and academic writing were perceived as challenges by NEP Student and VIE Student.

3.8.2 More Comprehensive Subsequent Analyses of Data

After the initial data analysis phase was completed, each data set was subsequently analysed in greater detail and in a more comprehensive manner. To do so, the researcher conducted a meticulous analysis of each data set for each student case study and annotated the relevant information collected from each participating student's responses to the interview questions. The annotated information was then compiled, examined, and analysed thematically in line with the research questions. Based on the annotated information, the researcher wrote a report for each individual case study according to the same set of four predetermined themes of (1) *perceived English Language Proficiency*; (2) *Perceived Subject Area Knowledge and Academic Skill*; (3) *Perceived Academic Achievement (AA)* (4) *Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA*. See *Section 4.2* in Chapter 4 for each Student Case study report. Based on those four individual case reports, the researcher followed Cohen et al. (2007) and searched for the common patterns and connections among the four student case studies, based on which answers to research questions were revealed.

3.8.3 Interpretation of Analytical Data

To interpret the analytical data, the researcher thematically categorised and coded the data and paid close attention to the perceptions shared by each participating student in each

semi-structured interview before thematically interpreting them according to the three pre-determined key themes of (1) perceived CALP; (2) perceived academic AA; and (3) the perceived impact of CALP on AA. Throughout the process of data interpretation, the researcher acknowledged and considered each participating student's background information, including the duration of their studies, their language proficiency at the program's commencement and previous experiences. This contextual awareness was crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions and intentions, elucidating the underlying reasons for their comments during the interviews. By incorporating this contextual background information, the researcher puts each participating student's insights and perceptions in their own context. Data interpretation supported by empirical interview data and their insights, helped reveal answers to the main research questions developed in Section 1.6.2.

3.9. Methodological Limitations of the Study

The use of multiple case studies, though carefully designed under the guidance of the researcher's supervisor, still has a few methodological limitations. *First*, the use of a qualitative research approach may restrict the generalizability of the results since it concentrates on in-depth insights from a limited number of examples rather than statistical representation. Notably, it is not the researcher's intention to generalize the findings of the research. *Second*, the small sample size of only four participating students may make it difficult to offer general implications relevant to a larger population of international postgraduate students studying at Flinders University, which is, however, not the aim of the research. *Third*, relying entirely on semi-structured interview data may add bias and subjectivity since the interpretations of the analytical data may impact the research findings (Creswell, 2018). *Fourth*, inconsistencies among 4 participants during interviews might not ensure the data validation owing to students' prejudice and bias, thus can influence the data interpretation and analysis (Duff & Block, 2000). While the data gathered from participants might be affected by the interview situation or teacher-student relationship rather than being strictly factual, this raises concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the data. (Duff & Block, 2000).

Recognising all these four methodological limitations mentioned above, the researcher made conscious efforts to minimise them by carefully selecting participants who strictly met

the predetermined selection criteria, using themes consistently for guiding the interview data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and taking precaution when reporting the findings.

3.10. Summary of Chapter 3

To sum up, Chapter 3 justifies the suitability of the chosen qualitative research design, the use of multiple (04) case studies, and in-depth one-on-one semi-structured interviews to investigate the international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on their academic achievement at CHASS at Flinders University.

The chapter also presents the **four (04)** predetermined criteria for selecting **four (04)** participating international postgraduate students studying in **two (02)** postgraduate programs in CHASS who are in the best possible position to provide their insights in relation to their perceived impacts of CALP on AA. In this chapter, ethical considerations, including the acquisition of informed consent, the maintenance of confidentiality of participants and the Ethics Approval Notice, are also highlighted. The *Interview Protocol* (in **Appendix 5**) was also developed and presented in this Chapter.

The chapter concludes with a presentation of both initial and more comprehensive subsequent analyses of interview data from four case studies. This chapter also acknowledges certain methodological limitations, such as the possibility of bias and the limited size of the small sample, while highlighting the researcher's efforts to minimise those limitations. Each of the four participating student cases will be individually analysed and reported before synthesizing and discussing the findings in the following *Chapter 4*.

CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of Chapter 4

This chapter reports the comprehensive analyses of interview data and discusses the findings with the supporting interview data from **four (04)** postgraduate international student case studies conducted within CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia.

The chapter is organized into six main sections, commencing with the *first* section presenting an overview of the chapter, followed by the *second* section presenting four single case study reports for each of the four participating students of *NEP Student*, *LAO Student*, *IND Student*, and *VIE Student*. The *third* section analyses and interprets interview data merged and synthesized from all four case study reports considering the research aim and questions. Then the *fourth* section analyses other relevant emerging interview data from multiple case studies. In the *fifth* section, a summary of findings from the data analyses was provided before discussing the findings of the data analyses in the last *sixth* section.

4.2 Four Single Case Study Reports

Four separate case study reports regarding (1) students' backgrounds, (2) perceived English language proficiency, (3) perceived subject-area knowledge, (4) perceived academic skills, (5) perceived academic achievements, and (6) perceived impact of CALP on academic achievement are presented in **Appendix 7**. These reports facilitate the integration and analysis of interview data from all four case studies to identify common themes and experiences. The richness of four single case study reports not only gives the analysis more depth, but it also makes it easier to synthesize and interpret; thus helping answer sub-research questions and the main research question.

4.3 Analyses and Interpretation of Multiple Case Studies in Response to Research Questions

Based on the four (04) single case study reports (see **Appendix 7**), the aim of this section is to synthesize and interpret interview data from all these four multiple case studies in

response to each of the three sub-research questions (*Research Questions 1a, 1b, and 1c*) presented in *Section 1.6.2*, which together could provide answers to the main research question, first starting with responses to Research Question 1a.

4.3.1. Responses to Research Question 1a

As presented in *Section 1.6.2*, *Research Question 1a (RQ 1a)* is as follows:

1a. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)?

This **RQ1a** aims to explore the perceived CALP of international postgraduate students in CHASS, particularly four participating students from Nepal, Indonesia, Laos, and Vietnam who are currently studying Master of TESOL and Master of Gender and Women's Studies programs in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia.

This **RQ1a** particularly asks for (i) their perceived *academic English language proficiency*; (ii) their perceived *subject knowledge area*; and (iii) their perceived *academic skills*, each of which was chosen as three corresponding themes of analyses and already reported in each of the four single case study reports in the previous *Section 4.2* above.

To seek answers to this **RQ 1a**, interview data was thematically synthesized and interpreted from all those four single case studies reports according to those three corresponding themes, first starting with four participants' perceived academic English language proficiency.

4.3.1.1 Four Participants' Perceived Academic English Language Proficiency (ELP)

The following **Table 4.1** synthesizes and interprets interview data about four participants' perceived academic English language proficiency, which covered (i) their ability to understand and solve learning tasks using academic English language; (ii) their language ability to understand the course contents delivered by the lecturers; (iii) their oral ability to engage in group discussion and debate; and (iv) their academic writing skills.

Table 4.1. A Synthesis of Interview Data About Four Participants' Perceived Academic English Language Proficiency (ELP)

Perceived Academic English Language Proficiency (ELP)	NEP Student	IND Student	LAO Student	VIE Student
Perceived ability to understand and solve academic tasks using academic English language (Listening, Reading & Thinking)	Strong		Weak	
Perceived language ability to understand the course contents delivered by the lecturers (Listening & Reading & Thinking)	Strong		Weak	
Perceived oral ability to engage in group discussion and debate (Speaking & Thinking)	Strong	Weak	Weak	
Perceived academic writing skills (Writing & Thinking)	Strong		Weak	
Overall perceived ELP	Strong	Strong	Weak	Weak

First, as can be seen from **Table 4.1**, both NEP Student and IND Student perceived their ability to understand and solve academic tasks to be strong. For example, NEP Student perceived that her strong ELP was never a barrier for her during her study in CHASS; rather it helped her actively participate in the course. She told the interviewer that she felt comfortable discussing her thoughts and concerns with lecturers and peers. In her own words, she noted:

"Right from the first class I attended and the initial tutorial, it was never a barrier for me in understanding what the instructors were teaching. Also, in terms of understanding the actual course content delivered by the instructors, I never faced any significant difficulties." (NEP Student)

With this shared perception, NEP Student highlighted that language comprehension was not a significant obstacle for her and her academic English proficiency was reflected in her ability to understand the key concepts and to ask questions, thus strongly facilitating her studies. Conversely, the LAO Student and VIE Student both considered their abilities to be weak.

Second, in terms of their perceived language ability to understand course contents delivered by lecturers, both NEP Student and IND Student expressed a strong perception in this area, whereas LAO Student and VIE Student perceived their abilities to be weak, especially in an online learning environment.

Third, regarding her oral ability to engage in group discussion and debate, NEP Student perceived her ability to be strong, highlighting her confidence in oral communication and critical thinking. In contrast, IND Student, LAO Student and VIE Student explicitly noted their perceived weakness in this aspect. For example, IND Student noted:

“As for language skills, I find it difficult to participate fully in group projects, express my ideas, and build strong relationships with my peers because, occasionally, my classmates are confused by my Indonesian accent when speaking in English, which further puzzles them.” (IND Student)

This comment highlighted her struggles with oral communication, especially her Indonesian accent in English.

Fourth, both NEP and IND students perceived their academic writing skills to be strong, reflecting a shared confidence in their ability to express ideas in writing.

“Back in Nepal, we have very few assignments or group projects. However, here at CHASS, the workload is much heavier, and the level of reading required, the demand for critical thinking, has helped me enhance my writing skills considerably. I believe I've made substantial progress in expressing ideas more clearly.” (NEP Student)

Conversely, LAO Student and VIE Student perceived their skills to be weak, underscoring their challenges in academic writing. For example, VIE Student reported uncertainty and weaknesses in her writing skill and she thus had to ask for help with editing tools and online editing services such as Studiosity to complete her assignments.

Overall, Table 4.1 reveals that while NEP Student and IND Student both perceived their academic English language proficiency to be strong, LAO Student and VIE Student perceived theirs to be weak.

4.3.1.2 Four Participants' Perceived Subject Knowledge Area

The following *Table 4.2* synthesizes and interprets interview data about four participants' perceived subject knowledge area, which are reflected in (1) their perceived *background knowledge* and (ii) their perceived *knowledge of topic-related terminologies*.

Table 4.2. A Synthesis of Interview Data About Four Participants' Perceived Subject Knowledge Area

Perceived Subject Knowledge Area	NEP Student	IND Student	LAO Student	VIE Student
Perceived background knowledge	Strong			Weak
Perceived knowledge of topic-related terminologies	Strong	Weak		
Overall Perceived Subject Knowledge Area	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak

First, as can be seen from **Table 4.2**, IND Student, NEP Student and LAO Student all perceived their background knowledge to be strong. For example, *NEP Student* revealed in the interview that she had a strong subject knowledge in the gender-related field of study. According to her, she had a significant advantage because she already knew most of the required subject area knowledge and noted:

"I came to CHASS with a strong background because I had already studied gender before, especially when it came to issues related to gender in Nepal. I didn't need to make that much effort from the beginning [to understand it]." (NEP Student)

Similarly, LAO Student perceived that her previous TESOL teaching experiences in her home country could help her complete the complicated coursework assignments well because, in her view, teaching was not only about methodological knowledge gained from books and planning English language lessons; it also required applying practical English language teaching tips and experiences. In this regard, *LAO Student* noted:

"When I started my study here, I already learned various teaching methods as I was a [English language] teacher back in my hometown. However, before this course, I did not [have] much idea of the concept of curriculum design." (LAO Student)

Conversely, VIE Student perceived her background knowledge to be weak as she faced challenges at first with specialised terms and basic understanding while studying Women and Gender Studies. She started off by translating each word by itself in reading topic materials, using translation techniques in doing her assignments, as she stated:

"At first, I would use a dictionary to translate word by word, which took a long time because I liked to be perfect. I'd pay close attention to every word. I'm now focusing on getting the whole sentence first, though." (VIE Student)

Second, when it comes to participating students' perceived knowledge of topic-related terminologies, among all four participating students, NEP Student perceived her knowledge to be strong, whereas the other three students (LAO Student, IND Student and VIE Student) perceived their weakness in this field. For example, NEP Student was quite confident with her subject area terminologies that helped her in her major course. IND Student, however, perceived to have trouble understanding some option topics, like organisational development because, in her view, the subject-related terms were not familiar to her.

Overall, **Table 4.2** shows that while NEP Student perceived her overall subject knowledge area to be strong, VIE Student perceived hers to be weak. Notably, IND Student and LAO Student had the same perception of their subject knowledge area to be moderate, mostly due to their weak knowledge of topic-related terminologies.

4.3.1.3. Four Participants' Perceived Academic Skills

The following *Table 4.3* synthesizes and interprets interview data about four participants' perceived academic skills, which specifically cover (1) *note-taking and note-making skills* (IND Student), (2) *academic reading skills* (IND Student), (3) *academic writing skills* (NEP Student & LAO Student), (4) *time management skills* (LAO Student & VIE Student), and (5) *academic oral and written communication skills* (IND Student & VIE Student).

Table 4.3 A Synthesis of Interview Data About Four Participants' Perceived Academic Skills

Perceived Academic Skills	NEP Student	IND Student	LAO Student	VIE Student
<i>Note taking and note making skills</i>	No	Yes	No	No
<i>Academic Reading Skills</i>	No	Yes	No	No
<i>Academic Writing Skills (including referencing and citations)</i>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Time Management Skills</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<i>Academic oral and written communication Skills</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes
Overall Perceived Academic Skills	Academic Writing	Note-taking, note-making, academic reading, and communication skills	Academic writing and time management skills	Academic writing, time management skills and academic oral and written communication skills

According to **Table 4.3**, *IND Student* associated her academic skills with *note-taking and note-making skills* and *academic reading skills*, which, according to her, was an important academic skill for understanding and remembering things. It is worth noting that IND student was the only one who mentioned note-taking and note-making as essential skills and stated:

"I usually highlight PDFs when I take notes. I realise how important it is to improve my ability to take and make notes. I'm also working on a good way to summarise key ideas, write down relevant thoughts, and make connections. (IND Student)"

This showed that *IND Student* acknowledged the importance of the academic skills of taking notes and making notes, which helped her understand the reading materials better and do her assignments.

With reference to her academic reading skill, student IND shared with the researcher about a way to preview reading materials before writing her assignments, as follows:

"When people ask me about my reading skills, I agree that being able to read well and strategically is very important for my schoolwork. For example, taking thoughtful notes on texts and writing reflective summaries are active reading techniques that have helped me understand and write better." (IND student)

Unlike IND Student, VIE Student referred to academic writing skills as a challenge when asked about her perceived academic skills and noted:

"I would rate my level of writing skill as five out of ten right now.... My writing and English language skills, which I'm not very confident in, cause problems." (VIE student)

This comment highlighted that VIE Student's academic writing skill was still one of her weaknesses and she still had to ask for peer support in doing her assignments. Whereas NEP student highlighted her improvement in academic writing with reference to academic referencing and citations.

With reference to the academic skill of time-management, LAO Student highlighted that she knew how to manage her time well and incorporate it well, thanks to her previous experience in teaching English in her home country for planning lessons and teaching in real classes. According to LAO Student, time management skills was an academic skill that helped her get the most out of learning opportunities in workshops, as well as in consultations and in-person classes, improving her overall learning experience. In her words, LAO Student said:

"I feel like I've improved my time management. Previously, my time management wasn't that great. But when I found myself in situations where I had multiple assignments due at the same time, I learned to manage them better." (LAO Student)

This comment highlighted how LAO Student could manage her time to do different assignments and other academic tasks.

Finally, as far as communication skills are concerned, both IND Student and VIE Student agreed on how important it was to be able to communicate clearly during group discussions and how that could lead to better academic achievement.

Overall, Table 4.3 shows that all participating students associated their perceived academic skills with different academic skills. For example, IND Student perceived her academic skills as note taking, note making skills and academic. While academic writing skills were perceived by both NEP Student and LAO Student, time management skills were shared

between LAO Student and VIE Student. IND Student and VIE Student, both perceived academic oral and written communication skills as their essential academic skills.

4.3.2 Response to Research Question 1b

As presented in Section 1.6.2, Research Question 1b (RQ 1b) is as follows:

1b. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive their academic achievement (AA)?

This **RQ 1b** aims to explore the perceived academic achievement of international postgraduate students in CHASS and it particularly asks for (1) their perceived AA as reflected in GPAs and (2) their perceived AA as reflected in non-GPA factors, which were both chosen as two corresponding themes of analyses and reported in each of the four single case study reports in *Section 4.2 above*.

To seek answers to this **RQ 1b**, interview data was thematically synthesized from all those four single case studies reports according to those two corresponding themes, first starting with four participants' perceived AA as reflected in their GPAs.

The following Table 4.4 synthesizes and interprets interview data about four participants' perceived academic skills, which specifically involves (1) their perceived GPAs and (2) their perceived non-GPA factors.

Table 4.4. A Synthesis of Interview Data About Four Participants' Perceived GPAs and non-GPAs factors

Perceived AA	NEP Student	IND Student	LAO Student	VIE Student
Grades and GPA factors reflecting AA	No	Yes		
non-GPA factors reflecting AA	Experience and knowledge acquisition	No		
Overall perceived AA	AA only reflected in Experience and knowledge acquisition	AA only reflected in GPAs		

4.3.2.1 Participants' Perceptions of AA Reflected in GPAs

As can be seen from Table 4.4, while NEP student was the only student in this research project who placed significant emphasis on valuable knowledge and experience acquisition as her perceived academic achievement rather than on GPAs, the three interviewed students (IND Student, VIE Student, and LAO Student) perceived their AA with reference to their GPAs. For example, LAO Student and VIE Student also perceived their academic achievement as GPAs, as they noted:

"Normally, every student is concerned about their GPA for their academic achievement because when they finish their studying, they will have the final grades in the transcript for how well that they did in the topic which would be based on that as well... So, GPA is a little bit more important than anything else... That [GPA] can be helpful in my future career when I complete the study." (LAO Student)

In a similar vein, highlighting the central importance of GPA, VIE Student noted:

"I think that the idea of good GPAs has been central to my whole experience, I always hope to get good GPA scores, so that I will be able to find a good job after graduation, hopefully". (VIE Student)

Both comments by LAO Student and VIE Student highlighted that their GPAs were more important than other factors for their academic achievement because the final GPAs will appear on their grading certificates, which support their future careers.

4.3.2.2. Participants' Perceptions on non-GPA Factors

According to **Table 4.4**, NEP Student perceived her academic achievement as *experience and knowledge acquisition*. Specifically, she even valued knowledge of gender equality over GPAs. In her words, NEP Student shared:

"I don't care about grades; what matters to me is that my teachers and my coordinators have helped me understand gender equality better, which [in my view] is a real success...." (Student NEP)

This comment highlighted that NEP Student did not consider GPAs to be as important as her knowledge of gender equality. Rather, according to her, active participation, and eagerness to talk with both lecturers and peers are the acquired experiences, which were non-GPA factors being even more important for her academic achievement than her GPA.

Overall, **Table 4.4** shows that three participating students (*i.e. IND Student, LAO Student and VIE Student*) associated their academic achievement with grades and GPAs while the NEP Student associated it with experience and knowledge acquisition.

4.3.3 Analyses of Interview Data in Response to Research Question 1c

As presented in Section 1.6.2, Research Question 1c (RQ 1c) is as follows:

*1c. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?***

This **RQ 1c** aims to explore international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their AA. This RQ 1c particularly asks for students' perceptions of (1) their perceived impacts of English Language Proficiency (ELP) on AA, (2) their perceived impacts of subject area knowledge on AA and (3) their perceived impact of academic skills on AA, each of which was chosen as three corresponding themes of analyses and reported in each of the four single case study reports in *Section 4.2 above*.

To seek answers to this **RQ 1c**, interview data was thematically synthesized from all four single case study reports. Accordingly, all these three themes together represent their

perceived impact of CALP on AA, each of the three themes will be presented hereinafter with supporting interview data evidence, starting with four participants' perceived impacts of their English language proficiency on AA.

The following **Table 4.5** synthesizes interview data about four participants' perceived academic skills, which specifically covers (1) their perceived impacts of ELP on AA, (2) their perceived impacts of subject area knowledge on AA and (3) their perceived impacts of academic skills on AA.

Table 4.5. A Synthesis of Interview Data About Four Participants' Perceived Impacts of CALP on Academic Achievement

	NEP Student	IND Student	LAO Student	VIE Student
Perceived ELP’s impacts on Academic Achievement	Positive		Negative	
Perceived Subject Knowledge Area’s impacts on Academic Achievement	Positive			
Perceived Academic Skills’ impacts on Academic achievement	Positive			
Overall Perceived impacts of CALP on Academic Achievement	Positive			

First, as can be seen from **Table 4.5**, IND student, NEP Student perceived their perceived ELP's impacts on AA to be *positive*. For example, NEP Student shared that her academic achievement had improved when compared to the first semester, as she expressed:

"...My writing is also more concentrated. Due to subject requirements, regular reading, and instructor help, I can focus better on my writing and get better results than in the first semester. I often lost the key problems and answered indirectly. But I've improved. I can plan my essay, concentrate on specifics that meet grading requirements, and keep on course when given an essay topic...." (NEP student).

This comment highlighted how she improved herself in organising her ideas and structure in writing to meet her assignments' tasks.

On the other hand, both LAO Student and VIE Student perceived their ELP's impacts on AA to be negative. For example, LAO student did not hesitate to share how her low English language proficiency had negative impacts on her presentation assignments, as she noted:

"I coped with my low English [proficiency] a lot. My weak ability to listen and speak in online learning activities made me feel less confident, which ends up making it harder for me to fully understand important things and convey ideas clearly. Therefore, I usually do not score well on presentation assignments." (LAO Student)

This comment showed how poor English proficiency led to her low score on assignments.

Second, all participating students perceived their subject knowledge area's impacts on AA to be positive. For example, VIE Student shared with the researcher:

"My method to learn new words has changed a lot. I'm now focusing on getting the gist of the whole paragraph first, though, not word by word translation anymore. This method works better and takes less time [to comprehend]." (VIE Student)

Lastly, in a similar vein, all interviewed students perceived their academic skills' impacts on academic achievement to be all positive. For instance, VIE Student shared with the researcher about her grade improvement through well-organised plans and schedules, as she noted:

"Time control and the quality of my work are both things that stressed me out at the beginning of the course. Now I always set a schedule and plan things in advance; that helps me a lot in getting better grades for recent topics." (VIE Student)

This comment highlighted the considerable improvement in her final grades, which showed the positive impacts of academic skills on her academic achievement. Similarly, IND Student highlighted effective presentation skills and how problem-solving improved her assignments, as she noted:

"I am sure that after studying a few semesters at Flinders [university], my presentation skills, problem-solving skills have improved a lot and somehow helped an international student, who is still learning the language like me, improve each of my assignment results." (IND Student)

Overall, **Table 4.5** shows that all students shared a positive perception of the impacts of CALP on their AA. While both students (NEP Student and IND Student) associated their perceived ELP's impacts on AA to be positive, the other two students (LAO Student and VIE

Student) perceived theirs to be negative. All students associated both their perceived subject area knowledge and their perceived academic skills with having a positive impact on AA.

4.4 Analyses of other Relevant Emerging Interview Data

Apart from the thematic data analyses presented in the previous section, interviews with four participating students also revealed some emerging data, which are related to (i) the University level's academic support services; (2) the College level's support; (3) the lecturers level's support.

First, the interview data shows how the students perceived the values of the University level's academic support services and how these resources were perceived to affect their language skills, subject knowledge, and academic skills. For example, acknowledging the value of Student Learning Support Services (SLSS) that help improve her writing skills, VIE Student noted,

"SLSS help has improved my writing, particularly. They explain writing better in depth, which is useful. They help us particularly when they listen and make sure we receive what we need." (VIE Student)

With more reference to language skills support, IND Student stated:

"Working with each student individually throughout the first semester would help us write about certain topics. We all need the right assistance, and SLSS can provide that. Better still, if they could develop our language abilities instead of merely teaching us academic vocabulary and grammar." (IND Student)

Second, the interviews showed how the students perceived the College level's proactive support, such as regular emails notifying students that the College's services are available to help. Participating students acknowledged the College's support but stressed that the focus should have been on supporting their language skills rather than simply notifying them of events, mental health consultations, etc. Participating students also came up with the suggested idea of the College's peer-to-peer assistance mechanism that should pair students to help each other with specific topics, and participating students perceived that this would be much more efficient with peer support. In this regard, VIE Student noted:

"My college probably sends Flinders Ping! emails about services, activities, weekly events, etc. to be supportive. While we enjoy the updates on events and mental health, we would want to see more attention on language skills and peer study sessions." (VIE Student)

Third, the interviews also showed that participating students highlight the importance of lecturer level's support. For example, in her view, LAO Student shared:

"I suppose as for us—international students with English as a second or third language, sometimes we really need our lecturers to provide us with more support, for example, like giving more details in task requirements or checking our drafts before we submit, only some of my lecturers did that." (LAO Student)

To sum up, the interviews with four participating students show three key emerging themes associated with three levels of support (1) the University level's academic support services, with a focus on how these resources help improve their language skills and subject knowledge; (2) the College level's proactive support, with students acknowledging the support from their College but emphasising the need for a better focus on academic language skills; and (3) the lecturers level's support.

4.5. A Summary of Key Findings

The analysis of interview data provides valuable information about how four international postgraduate students at CHASS (Flinders University) perceived their CALP, their AA and the impacts of CALP on their AA.

First, four postgraduate participants from four various cultural backgrounds of Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos perceived CALP to be covered by ELP, which involves (i) their ability to understand and solve learning tasks using academic English language; (ii) their language ability to understand the course contents delivered by the lecturers; (iii) their oral ability to engage in group discussion and debate; and (iv) their academic writing skills.

Second, they also perceived CALP to be covered by (i) background knowledge and (ii) subject-specific terminologies in understanding complex academic terms in their fields of study.

Third, data from four students' interviews also revealed shared perceptions on essential academic skills such as (i) reading skills, (ii) note-taking and note-making skills, (iii) time management, and (iv) effective communication.

Fourth, these four international postgraduate students perceived their academic achievement to be reflected in (i) GPAs and (ii) non-GPA factors. Three students (IND Student, VIE Student, and LAO Student) associated their academic performance with GPAs,

whereas NEP Student associated their academic achievement with knowledge and experience acquisition as non-GPA factors rather than grades.

All four participating students perceived the impacts of CALP on their AA to be associated with three aspects, namely (1) the perceived effects of English Language Proficiency (ELP) on AA, (2) the perceived effects of subject area knowledge on AA, and (3) the perceived effects of academic skills on AA. Overall, interview data revealed that all four international postgraduate students perceived the **positive** impacts of CALP on their AA.

4.6 Discussion of the Key Findings

4.6.1. Discussion of Key Findings in Relation to the Research Aims and Questions

Earlier in Section 1.6.2, this current research asked the main research question, *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?*

In order to find answers to this main research question, the three following sub-questions are formulated:

*1a. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)**?*

*1b. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive their academic achievement (AA)**?*

*1c. How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA**?*

First, the interpretation of interview data presented in Table 3.2, Table 4.1, and Table 4.3 reveals the answer to **Research Question 1a** - *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia **perceive their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)**?* The answer is that three international postgraduate students (i.e., NEP Student, IND Student) in CHASS at Flinders University perceive their CALP to be strong, as reflected in their strong language skills of listening, reading, thinking,

and writing skills. As for oral ability alone, as can be seen from Table 4.3, while NEP Student perceived hers to be strong, IND Student, LAO Student and VIE Student perceived theirs to be weak. On the contrary, VIE Student was the only participating student who perceived her CALP to be weak, as reflected in her weak language skills of listening, reading, thinking, writing, and speaking skills.

Second, the interpretation of interview data presented in Table 4.4, reveals the answer to **Research Question 1b** - *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive their academic achievement (AA)?* The answer is that three participating students (i.e. IND Student, LAO Student and VIE Student) associated their academic achievement with GPAs while the NEP Student associated it with non-GPA factors such as her experience and knowledge acquisition.

Third, the interpretation of interview data presented in Table 3.2 and Table 4.5 reveals the answer to Research Question 1c - *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of CALP on their AA?* The answer is that all four students (i.e., NEP Student, IND Student and LAO Student, and VIE student) perceived the positive impacts of their CALP on AA as shown in their strong perceived CALP. Notably, VIE Student was the only student who perceived her weak CALP, the perceived impacts of her CALP on AA were positive though.

In summary, answers to all three research sub-questions of 1a, 1b and 1c reveal that all students perceived the positive impacts of CALP on AA, thus achieving the aim of the study. In response to this main research question, NEP Student noted in the interview that she believed her CALP had a good impact on her AA regarding both grades and knowledge acquisition, as she noted:

"I think it has a good impact on my AA. I believe I was able to comprehend and answer to all questions or task requirements assignments, and that not only helped me a lot with my grades but also my ability to gain more gender knowledge" (NEP Student)

Similarly, the three remaining participating students (i.e., LAO, VIE and IND Student) reinforced their perceived impacts of CALP on AA by respectively noting:

"Initially, I don't think my English skills are good enough to help me achieve my goals as I struggle with my English skills in online classes, feeling less confident in listening and speaking, which makes it harder to understand things and express myself clearly. However, over the past semesters I have improved my English, academic skills with the support of my friends and my lectures. As a result, my grades have improved a lot and I think it's a good thing for my academic achievement, if you ask." (LAO Student)

"My English proficiency, I think, had a good impact on my academic achievement. I have one topic that is about practicing theory and exercise with people where we need to practice with people by speaking the whole time. In some moments I had problems with native speakers regarding understanding what they said because of their accents and phrases, or maybe slang. But most of the time when I practice with my peers, my classmates, they are not a native speaker here and I think it's fine, I can handle it well with my English." (VIE Student)

"I think it [my AA] 's good, because I have effectively used my subject knowledge area, my skills and addressed all the language challenges and problems. Now my AA has been good, I am so proud of my results now." (IND Student)

4.6.2 Discussion of the Key Findings in Light of the Literature Review

The following sub-sections discusses the key findings in light of the literature review. first starting with the review of the literature on students' perceptions of CALP.

4.6.2.1 Students' Perceptions of CALP

As reported above, one of the main findings of the current study revealed that three international postgraduate students (*i.e., NEP Student, IND Student and LAO Student*) in CHASS at Flinders University perceived their CALP to be strong whereas VIE Student was the only student who perceived her CALP to be weak. Interestingly, the interview data also shows that VIE Student perceived her academic English language proficiency, knowledge area and academic skills to be weak. This suggested a need for VIE Student to strengthen her CALP by the University helping her with academic English language proficiency, subject knowledge area and academic skill. In this regard, it was well suggested in the literature that students' perceived CALP as determining factors of academic achievements (e.g., Alrasheed et al., 2021; Martirosyan et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2013). Exploring the relationship between course performance, English language proficiency, motivation, and academic language skills, Rose et al.'s (2019) study conducted interviews and questionnaires among 146 students in an English-Medium Instruction (EMI) business program and found that English Language Proficiency is the strongest and the most determining factor of academic achievement. Rose et al. (2019) also revealed the positive impacts of knowledge of English language and academic English skills on academic achievement, which is consistent with what was revealed from four student case studies in this current research.

Another significant finding in this current study is that participating students' strong perceived background knowledge does not necessarily translate into their strong perceived knowledge of topic-related terminologies (*i.e.*, *LAO Student and IND Student*) while VIE Student's background knowledge and topic-related terminologies knowledge were both perceived to be weak. These findings were well supported by the relevant recent research conducted by Chou's (2011) study, in which 159 students from a college in Southern Taiwan were investigated to explore the relationship of vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge and their impacts on an EFL reading comprehension test. Through ANOVA analyses, Chou (2011) showed that the participants who had more knowledge of vocabulary performed significantly better on the reading comprehension test than the participants who solely relied on background knowledge, which helps students make successful inferences. Similarly, highlighting the importance of ***subject-specific terminologies***, Rose et al.'s (2019) study found that participating students perceived their good background knowledge but still perceived the need for improving their subject-specific terminologies. In this regard, Rose et al. (2019) noted that students "felt behind when they had to learn their academic subjects and cope with so many technical and business-related words". This finding was consistent with the current research's findings regarding VIE Student's perceptions of her weak subject knowledge area and weak knowledge of topic-related terminologies.

In addition, academic skills were **perceived differently** by different participating students, as evidenced in Table 4.3. While IND Student and VIE Student perceived academic skills as both *oral and written communication*, NEP students and LAO Student referred to *academic writing and time management skills respectively*. Notably, all four participating students associated academic skills with *note taking, note making, and academic reading*. This list of academic skills is consistent with findings by Rose et al. (2019) and Bo et al. (2023), who both highlighted the necessity of "developing the language skills needed to meet the cognitive demands of increasingly difficult academic content."

4.6.2.2. Students' Perceptions of Academic Achievement (AA)

As reported above, first, unlike the other three participating students (VIE, IND and LAO Students) who appeared to share a more exam-focused background and thus highly valued

GPA as their perceived AA (see Table 4.4), NEP Student prioritized *experiential learning and knowledge acquisition*. These different perceptions of academic achievement among four participating students from different contextual backgrounds are consistent with the relevant literature review on higher education in different contexts. For example, with a reference to the Vietnamese EFL context, in an outstanding study, Hien & Loan (2018) revealed a problematic issue in Vietnamese EFL education, which is “learning is characterized as an exam-focused activity” and “the primary purpose of learning English is simply getting a language certificate but not improving English competence”.

Second, the findings of the study revealing those three out of four participating students (i.e., LAO Student, IND Student and VIE Student) perceived academic achievement to be GPA is well supported in the literature (e.g., Alrasheed et al., 2021; Puddey and Mercer, 2014). However, the findings from this study revealed that the only one remaining student (i.e. NEP Student) associated academic achievement with non-GPA factor (i.e. experience and knowledge acquisition), which is consistent with the empirical studies (e.g., Cho & Bridgeman, 2012; Rose et al, 2019; Zua et al., 2016). For example, in Rose et al.'s (2019) study, their participating students in general saw language proficiency development as a subsidiary success measure of participating in English taught courses, perceiving knowledge acquisition for future employment goals. Rose et al. 's (2019, p. 6) conclusion was that “students see success as a combination of final grades, lecture comprehension, English language proficiency gains, and long-term career advancement.”.

4.6.2.3. *Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA*

The main findings of this current study revealed that all four participating students perceived **positive** impacts of CALP on AA regardless of VIE Student and LAO Student' perceptions of their weak ELP and their perceived negative impacts of ELP on AA. This suggested that the overall perceived impact of CALP on AA was not perceived to be solely determined by ELP; rather by a combination of ELP, background knowledge, subject-related terminologies, and academic skills. These findings were well supported by other studies conducted in Singapore and Japan (see *Section 2.5.1*), highlighting a positive correlation between CALP and AA (Bo et al., 2023; Rose et al., 2019). For example, Rose et al.'s (2019) emphasized that CALP was the most contributing factor to AA. More recently, Bo et al. (2023) revealed a significant positive correlation between their participating students' proficiency scores on

a university-designed test and their GPA and also emphasised the specific *positive* impacts of English language proficiency on different academic fields, especially in the field of *Humanities and Social Sciences*, which confirmed the perceptions of four participating students (*NEP, IND, VIE and LAO Students*) studying in the College of Humanities, Art and Social Sciences at Flinders.

However, the negative impacts of CALP on AA were observed in a study by Farley et al. (2019), whose findings showed that language proficiency had an unexpectedly negative impact on academic achievement among international business students in China. The current research thus adds to the ongoing discussion by stressing the importance of recognising the diversity and complexity of CALP and its impact on international students' academic achievement in different academic and geographical contexts (Farley et al., 2019; Rose et al., 2019; Bo et al., 2023).

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4: Major Findings

This chapter presented the analyses and interpretation of the interview data collected from four postgraduate international student case studies conducted within CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia, focusing on their perceived impacts of CALP on their AA. The data analysis result reveals the **perceived positive impacts** of CALP on AA which is consistent with some of the existing literature's findings. These findings were also discussed in light of the research aim, research questions, and the literature review in this Chapter.

The new and interesting findings from this research reveal three key themes from participating student interviews' data: (1) **university-level** academic support services significantly enhance language proficiency; (2) **college level's** shift of focus from general support to academic language skill development; (3) **lecturers' feedback and peers' support**, which will be further discussed in the following concluding Chapter (Chapter 5), which makes recommendations and concludes the study.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview of Chapter 5

The main aim of this research was to investigate postgraduate international students' perceptions of CALP's impacts on their AA in the context of a College (*i.e. College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*) at an Australian University (*i.e. Flinders University*). This chapter starts with recommendations for four relevant key stakeholders. It also presents the limitations and significance of the research, followed by implications for future research and practice. The Chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter and concluding remarks.

5.2 Recommendations for Four Key Stakeholders

Based on its findings presented in the previous *Chapter 4*, this study attempts to provide recommendations for four relevant groups of key stakeholders, namely, (i) *Flinders University*, (ii) *the College of HASS and beyond* (iii) *lecturers and topic coordinators*, and (iv) *international postgraduate students themselves*. These recommendations are supported by both the relevant empirical interview data and relevant studies from the existing literature.

5.2.1 Recommendations for Flinders University and beyond

In terms of university-level recommendations, this study offers several to consider. *First*, it is highly recommended that Flinders University and other similar Australian universities further improve their current *academic support services and pathway courses* with a more strategic focus on not only academic English language proficiency and academic skills but also ***subject-specific knowledge***, which in turn would have even more positive impacts on postgraduate international students' academic achievements, as perceived by participating students in this research. This can be done by involving subject-specific topic coordinators and lecturers working collaboratively with academic support services such as Student Learning Support Services (SLSS) and International Student Services (ISS) and any other

relevant services. More particularly, it is important for the University to focus on helping students with their academic writing proficiency with more personalised attention through individual one-on-one consultations, especially during their first semester. In this regard, the findings from Walkinshaw et al.'s (2015) study highlighted the *positive impacts* of individual consultations (ICs) on academic writing skills and English lexico-grammatical competence improvements among international students.

Second, Flinders University should develop more proactive plans with promotion strategies to attract not only more international postgraduate students but also more local postgraduate students to certain major programs, especially those that are currently more popular among international postgraduate students, such as the Master of TESOL and Gender and Women's Studies programs. By encouraging a mix of local and international students in their classes, Flinders University can ensure a better learning environment and more diverse learning opportunities for both local and international students, as VIE Student suggested in this research:

"The percentage of local or English native students in my class is not very high, I think I need to discuss the subject more with these students to improve my English as they have standard language. I'm studying with mostly international students." (VIE Student)

Third, to address issues related to ELP challenges faced by postgraduate international students, Flinders University should reconsider its current IELTS admission requirements, such as requiring higher IELTS sub-band scores of up to 6.5 IELTS Speaking and Writing. This modification of the higher required IELTS writing and speaking sub-band scores aims to better prepare international students with better English language output skills before studying abroad. In this regard, Dang and Dang (2023) stressed that having a good overall IELTS score does not automatically translate into good academic performance at universities, thus advising that universities should offer more subject-specific courses or academic pathway programs alongside the main degree programmes to help students succeed in their universities. These courses and programs are also meant to help students bridge the gap between IELTS scores and university assignment grades.

In addition, Yuan (2018) further underlined that students should be equipped with good learning strategies that focus on subject-specific knowledge by reviewing regularly and

actively applying what they have learned to their assignments, online discussions, face-to-face workshops, pair works, and group works. To do this, the University's Center for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) or any relevant Centers/Services should organise workshops and conferences more regularly prior to, during, and near the end of each semester to help international students improve their learning strategies and academic skills. This suggestion echoed Fakunle et al.'s (2019) findings showing that going to academic support workshops is a great way for postgraduate students to meet academics and make connections that could lead to future collaborations. Apart from the structured academic programme, these events would also provide students with a dynamic learning environment where they can get helpful feedback and improve their own academic development. International postgraduate students would also benefit from professional connections, which prepare them for success at school and beyond (Fakunle, 2019).

5.2.2 Recommendations for the College of HASS and beyond

With regard to college-level recommendations, the interviews with four participating students highlighted the need for more focused support for students' language skills or more study sessions with their peers rather than simply notifying them of weekly general events, as VIE Student stated:

"I think my college tries to be supportive [by] sending out those regular emails like Flinders Ping! about available services, events, what's happening weekly, etc. Well, we ...appreciate that, but besides letting us know about events and mental health stuff, it would be better if they could focus on improving our language skills and organising more study sessions with peers." (VIE Student)

This suggestion by VIE Student highlighted the need to focus on improving language skills and developing more student-led study sessions. Though Flinders Ping! kept students, including international postgraduate ones, informed of up-to-date university support services and mental health programmes, they would improve their academic language skills themselves more effectively through language workshops and study groups such as Flinders Mate at Oasis, Flinders University. This approach will not only address the academic issues facing international students but also make the College's support system stronger and more comprehensive. All of these recommendations for the College echoed what was suggested by Akanwa's (2015) research, emphasizing a combination of English language workshops, writing seminars, informal conversation partnerships, and the incorporation of more English-speaking and writing assignments in the College's support services.

In addition, at the College level and across colleges, it is also advisable for study program coordinators at CHASS to extend additional attention and assistance. Prioritising subject-specific academic support services will help effectively address students' academic challenges in their semesters. In addition, participating students all underlined the need to make these services more available and approachable to them through peer support, as NEP Student suggested:

"I mean, we need subject-focused language because a wide range of courses have been offered at the university. I understand that there aren't enough human resources for every academic subject to support each student. Pairing students could be a helpful approach." (NEP Student)

NEP Student's practical suggestion echoed what was recommended in earlier research (e.g., Bradley & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2021; Dennis & Ammigan, 2022; Eze & Inegbedion, 2015; Martirosyan, Hwang, & Wanjohi, 2015). For example, Bradley and Zimmer-Gembeck (2021) noted that:

"Peers are also important influences on academic outcomes and in ideal circumstances, peers act as positive role models, assist with understanding and task completion (e.g., answering each other's questions, clarifying teacher expectations and explanations), provide emotional support, and reward academic outcomes." (p. 2)

5.2.3 Recommendations for University Lecturers & Topic coordinators

Topic coordinators and university lecturers also play very important roles in providing support for international postgraduate students in various ways as they are the ones who work closely with international postgraduate students. *First*, they can create a supportive learning environment by scaffolding assessments and providing constructive feedback to students' weak areas in their ELP as they work through assignment drafts. In this regard, LAO Student noted:

"I suppose as for us international students with English as a second or third language, sometimes we really need our lecturers to provide us with more support, for example, like giving more details in task requirements or checking our drafts before we submit [our assignments]". (LAO Student)

This comment highlighted the student's need for receiving straightforward and constructive feedback on their drafted work that would help enhance their visible progress and motivation to learn. Furthermore, literature also supports the idea that university lecturers' support could foster positive teacher-student relationships, leading to better academic achievement among students (Wubbels et al., 2016). To achieve that, lecturers are encouraged to

proactively engage with students, creating an environment conducive to seeking help and building meaningful connections (Gray & Dilloreto, 2016).

Second, university lecturers can invite successful local students, alumni, and other international students from past classes or semesters to participate in their workshops. Through success-sharing conversations with peers, international students can be motivated, which in turn can increase their attempt to achieve better academic performance. In this regard, Akanwa (2015) also recommended lecturers utilise office hours, facilitate multiple drafts for their feedback, pair international students with native speakers for class projects or group work, and engage in regular informal conversations to foster a robust teacher-student relationship. To do so, Singh's (2019) findings further recommended that instructors (*i.e. University lecturers and topic coordinators*) should receive adequate training and earn sufficient experience to effectively teach international students from different cultural backgrounds. Such training should be provided by the Center for Innovation of Teaching and Learning and/or the University/ College's Teaching and Learning Academy.

5.2.4 Recommendations for International Postgraduate Students

International postgraduate students can make the most of their academic experience and academic achievement by focusing on their own strengths and weaknesses. *First*, it is important to recognise and focus on their perceived weak English language skills. Students should be provided with a self-diagnosis opportunity to self-determine where they lack confidence in any of their output skills of academic writing or speaking. Based on the self-diagnosis results, students can make their individual study plans, such as seeking out new study materials, attending language courses, attending academic support workshops, or studying in groups with the other students, which greatly assist them in improving their weak skills. In this regard, Lashari et al.'s (2023) findings suggested that students can also seek help from experienced senior students who share the same mother-tongue language.

Also, this study found that participants showed an increasing interest in talking with native speakers and seemed more relaxed in social interactions outside classrooms. It is thus advisable to encourage students to go out of their comfort zone to actively seek help from supportive conversations with native speakers (Lashari et al., 2023). In this regard, VIE Student also noted:

"I have made a lot of local friends lately and I think it is very good to talk to them as they usually help me whenever I mispronounce any English words. Also, I feel so proud as now I can understand most of what they [local friends] say after communicating with them from time to time"
(VIE Student)

Second, it is also important to foster an environment in which students feel comfortable discussing personal academic difficulties and seeking assistance when necessary. International postgraduate students should be encouraged to discuss their concerns with academic support services, lecturers, topic coordinators, and peers regarding how to improve both written and oral communication skills, for example, to ensure that problems are understood and addressed as soon as possible. Highlighting the importance of student-lecturer communication, as LAO Student noted:

"Sometimes I am afraid that if I ask any questions in classes, someone might laugh at me because it is either the knowledge that everyone knows or because I have not read the slides before class. Therefore, I usually list all the concerns and email my topic coordinators" (LAO Student)

This comment highlighted the need for university lecturers to take initiatives in contacting topic coordinators to further support international students in time. Singh's (2019) study further added that developing on-campus student-led services can effectively help international students deal with a range of issues, namely connecting them with the right social clubs, academic groups, or academic support services.

To sum up, all the recommendations suggest the need for concerted efforts and collaboration among key players, namely Flinders University administrators, academic support services, subject-specific coordinators, Student Learning Support Services, International Student Services, college-level administrators, study programme coordinators, university lecturers, topic coordinators, and international postgraduate students. It is important for them to collaborate effectively to address the academic challenges that postgraduate international students face. Furthermore, by cooperating together, these groups can make the learning environment more welcoming and supportive, improve academic support services, and contribute to improving international postgraduate students' CALP which in turn will have the positive impacts on the overall academic achievement of international students at Flinders University and any similar Australian universities.

5.3 Significance of the Study

Despite its limitations, this study has significance for the university's academic support services, the Centers for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), university lecturers, topic coordinators, and most importantly, for international postgraduate students. *First*, for language education practice, the findings of this research keep teachers, lecturers, and topic coordinators better informed of and more knowledgeable about their students' perceptions of CALP's positive impacts on their academic achievement. This study provides practical recommendations for all key stakeholders, from the university level to college and university lecturers' levels and to students' levels.

Second, the study adds to what is already known about CALP by showing how perceived CALP might affect the academic performance of international postgraduate students at a university in South Australia. This fills in a gap in the existing literature, which seems to be mostly made up of studies done in higher education settings outside Australia. The findings of the study in the context of Flinders University in South Australia also echo and support the findings of other CALP research on international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their AA while contributing to the current controversial debate over the impacts of CALP on students' AA.

Third, the study addresses one of the major remaining unanswered research questions with regard to the multidimensional relationship and the complex impact of CALP on AA, as highlighted by Al-Busaid (2017) in "*Research Questions in Language Education and Applied Linguistics*". By interviewing participating international students, this study touched on their insights into the complex impact of CALP on AA.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of the study are significant, it has a few limitations, due to the limited time, resources, research methodology, scope of the study, and geographical research context. *First*, the study has been conducted within a limited time frame of only one year, thus causing time constraints in the research process. It took a process of conducting research, including months, to be granted an ethics approval notice, collect, analyze, interpret interview data, and write this research report.

Second, the study's methodology is limited by a qualitative research design relying solely on semi-structured interview data. *Third*, there was only one researcher working on the current study, and the sample size was very small—only four female postgraduate international students volunteered to participate in four case studies. Therefore, it did not represent all South Australia's international postgraduate students. Though the researcher made conscious efforts to maintain objectivity by working with the four participating students for interview data verification, the data analysis and interpretation by one researcher may be inevitably subjective.

Fourth, the scope of the study was limited to only two postgraduate programs (i.e., Master of TESOL and Master of Gender and Women's Studies) in one college, namely the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at one university (i.e., Flinders University) in South Australia.

5.5 Implications of the Study

5.5.1 Implications for Further Practice

This study has implications for further practice of supporting international postgraduate students at University's, College's, lecturers', and students' levels. There are big effects on improving support systems for foreign postgraduate students at multiple levels within academic institutions based on the study's recommendations. *At the University level*, universities need to put a lot of effort into improving academic support services, such as academic language skills and subject-specific knowledge. It emphasises how important it is to diversify the classroom context by mixing local and international students, modifying the IELTS requirements for admission, and holding more regular workshops.

At the College level, the main suggestions are ongoing support for language skills and student-led study sessions. University lecturers and topic coordinators are very important for making learning environments more supportive by giving students helpful feedback and having success-sharing conversations with senior students. *As for each individual student*, the study suggests focusing on self-diagnosing, identifying and self-improving weak English language skills through strategic plans and support from different resources. Together, these

suggestions are meant to create an academic setting that is welcoming and supportive for international postgraduate students, which eventually helps them obtain better academic achievement. See *Section 5.2* for detailed recommendations.

5.5.2 Implications for Further Research

It is advisable to broaden the scope of the investigation beyond the confines of the current study to improve research opportunities. This could mean extending the research to other universities in the context of South Australia and within a broader context of Australia to fill the geographical gap revealed in **Section 2.6**. Furthermore, to enhance the comprehensiveness of the analysis, future studies could employ the combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques through students' GPAs and other quantitative data collection instruments, with an emphasis on postgraduate international students enrolled not only in Flinders University's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) but also across the other colleges of Flinders University. This will assist in building a more extensive dataset. Lastly, considering different participants' genders and cultural background would ensure a more inclusive sample size, allowing for a greater variety of analysis in subsequent studies.

5.6 Summary of Chapter 5 and Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, in light of the major findings of the research reported in the preceding Chapter; the practical recommendations for four key stakeholders of (i) Flinders University, (ii) the College of HASS and beyond (iii) lecturers and topic coordinators, and (iv) international postgraduate students themselves; the limitations, the significance, and the implications of the research project have been presented. The study underscores the significance of refining academic support services, fostering peer collaborations, and promoting positive lecturer-student relationships. The interview data analyses in this research show that postgraduate international students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceived positive impacts of CALP on their AA, and they associate AA with both GPAs and non-GPA factors (i.e., experiential learning and knowledge acquisition). Whether CALP will be positively influencing international postgraduate students' academic

achievement, remains to be seen, depending on how the recommendations presented in this Chapter are implemented in practice by all the four groups of key stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: A TABULATED REVIEW OF RELEVANT STUDIES

General Overarching Themes of Relevant Studies	Specific Sub Themes in Focus	Authors and Publishing date	Research Aims/ Objective/Questions	Language Teaching Theories/ Hypotheses/Methods in Focus	Findings/ Conclusion	Relevance for this Proposed Research Project
1. Definition of Three Key Guiding Concepts	1.1. The Concept of Student Perceptions (SP)	Wijayanti (2019), Zidney et al. (2020), Guo et al. (2023), Danim (2010)	Investigating student perceptions of CALP's impact on AA among international postgraduate students.	Qualitative, case study, surveys	Complex and diverse aspects of student perceptions are acknowledged, CALP's perceived impact.	Understanding the importance of student perceptions and their relevance to CALP and AA for international postgraduate students.
	1.2. The Concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)	Cummins (1974, 1984), Romaine (1995), MacFarlane et al.	Defining CALP as language proficiency, subject-area knowledge, and study/academic skills.	Theoretical, literature review	CALP is defined by three main components.	CALP components include English proficiency, subject knowledge, and academic skills.

		(2022), Al-Busaidi (2022)				
	1.3. The Concept of Academic Achievement (AA)	Bolt (2011), Oliver et al. (2012), Cho & Bridgem an (2012), Zua et al. (2016)	Conceptualizi ng AA as progress towards educational goals, measured by GPA and course outcomes.	Literature review, GPA analysis	GPA as a valid measure of academic achievemen t.	Utilizing GPA as an indicator of academic achievement for international postgraduate students.

2. Reviewed Studies on Factors Affecting Internatio nal University Students' Academic Achievem ent	2.1. Linguistic and Non- linguistic Factors	Stoynoff (1997), Abel (2002), Alyahya b (2020), Ren & Hagedor (2012), Ugwu & Adamuti -Trache (2017), Oliver et al. (2012), Madigan & Curran (2021)	Exploring linguistic and non-linguistic factors influencing academic achievement.	Surveys and analysis of influencing factors	Linguistic and non- linguistic factors impacting academic achievemen t.	Recognition of linguistic factors' prominence in affecting international postgraduate students' academic achievement.
	2.2 Cognitive Academic Language Proficienc y (CALP) as the Main Influencin g Factor	Cummin s (1984), Banjong (2015), Martiros yan et al. (2015), Nelson et al.	Identifying CALP as the primary factor affecting academic achievement.	Literature review and language proficiency tests	CALP as a critical influencing factor in academic success.	Acknowledgemen t of CALP's primary role in academic achievement for international students.

		(2013), Simpson (2001), Zhou (2015)				
3. Reviewed Studies on Internatio nal Students' Academic Achievem ent		Puddey and Mercer (2014), Oliver et al. (2012)	Examining the relationship between GPA and academic achievement.	Longitudinal studies, GPA analysis	First- semester GPA as a predictor of future academic success.	GPA's predictive role in international students' academic achievement.

4. Reviewed Studies on the Impacts of Internatio nal Students' Cognitive Academic Language Proficienc y (CALP) on Academic Achievem ent (AA) Outside and Inside Australia	Reviewed Studies Outside Australia	Various studies from Singapo re, Turkey, Iraq, Japan, China, and the United States	Investigating positive and negative impacts of CALP on AA globally.	Quantitative, qualitative methods	Mixed findings on CALP's impact on AA in various global contexts.	Global perspectives on CALP's influence on AA, with varying results.
	2.5.2. Reviewed Studies Inside Australia	Brooks and Adams (2002), Montes (2014), Ping (2020)	Examining studies conducted in Australia, focusing on CALP and AA.	Qualitative, mixed methods	CALP's impact on academic achievemen t within the Australian context	Identified gap in studies for South Australia, limited focus on CALP and AA in the country.

APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF 03 MAIN RESEARCH TYPES

Research Type	Aims and Features	Benefits	Shortcomings
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore the experiences and perspectives of research participants. Examine behaviors, feelings, and perspectives. - Often transcribed into a story or theory based on in-depth interviews with a small sample size (Bryman, 2001) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Broader open focus. - Allows for gathering data outside initial interview questions. - Permits comparative analysis. - More flexible (Maxwell, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to make systematic comparisons. - Subjective nature of responses. - Time-consuming, relies on small sample sizes. - Hard to generalize results. - Researcher bias may affect objectivity.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect numerical data information (Bryman, 2012). - Narrow focus through randomized sampling. - Requires controlled conditions for reproducibility. (Borg, 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows summarization across categories. - Provides measurable, replicable results. - Gather statistical data. - Maintains researcher distance, reducing bias, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires controlled conditions, making the data potentially superficial. - Represents only a moment in time. - May not truly reflect the situation or participants' feelings.
MIXED METHOD RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Combine quantitative and qualitative research. - Counteract limitations by investigating statistical information and exploring gained understandings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tests grounded theories. - Provides a more comprehensive understanding. - Allows investigation of statistical information alongside qualitative exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges in carrying out research by one person. - Requires significant time, money, and special skills for data collection and analysis.

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Title: International Postgraduate Students' Perceived Impacts of Their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency on Academic Achievement: Multiple Case Studies at Flinders University in South Australia

Chief Investigator

Title and full name: Dr. Mai Ngo

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My name is Dat, and I am an [international postgraduate student studying in the TESOL Program at College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences](#). I am undertaking this [postgraduate](#) research as part of my [Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages \(TESOL\) degree program](#). For further information, you are more than welcome to contact my supervisor. Her details are listed above.

A BRIEF SUMMARY

This project investigates the second-year international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on their own academic achievement. Towards achieving this aim, this study will conduct multiple case studies of second year international post-graduate students from College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) at Flinders University in South Australia. This research will employ a qualitative case study design that involves multiple case studies of postgraduate second-year students from the College of HASS at Flinders University. Within each case study, qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with multiple international postgraduate students from the College of HASS at Flinders University. This study will contribute to a better understanding of international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of CALP on their own academic achievement. The findings of this study will provide practical implications for further research and practice in relation to improving postgraduate international students' academic achievement at Flinders University and beyond. This project is supervised by Dr. Mai Ngo, Senior Lecturer of TESOL and Applied Linguistics from the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS) at Flinders University. This project does not include any other corporations that are supporting it financially.

Purpose of the study

This project aims to study the international postgraduate students' perceived impacts of their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on their own academic achievement. Existing literature has indicated that learners' cognitive and academic language abilities are closely connected with their academic accomplishments. However, little is known about whether and how international postgraduate students themselves perceive the impacts of their cognitive academic language proficiency on their own academic achievement.

Benefits of the study

Participating students' sharing of perceptions and insights into perceived impacts of their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) on their own academic achievement will help improve academic support programs from both host and home universities, helping students get ready for studying abroad and improving their academic performance. The insights gathered from this study will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between CALP and academic achievement for international postgraduate students.

Participant involvement and potential risks

The one-on-one semi-structured interviews will be conducted face to face in a pre-booked room at Flinders' library, recorded with [participants'](#) consent, and transcribed for subsequent analyses for research purposes.

To be selected for participation in the interviews, the participants must meet the following selection criteria:

- Being a second-year postgraduate international student from any EFL background
- Currently studying as a 2nd year student in any postgraduate programs at the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences College at Flinders University in South Australia
- Having completed all topics during at least 1 year of studies (equivalent to 2 semesters) in any postgraduate program in HASS at Flinders University.
- Being a non-native speaker of English
- Having lived in Australia for at least 1 year or at most 2 years.
- Voluntarily consenting to participate in this research at their most convenient time.

[Each participant will take part in one-on-one semi-structured interview per participant. The total duration for each interview is 60 minutes and consists of three parts, each part is -20 minutes long. After each interview, participants will be emailed the -interview transcription and asked for authentication and verification.](#)

Participants will receive detailed information about the study, presented in plain English to avoid confusion. They will have time to ask questions and seek clarification from the researcher at any stage. Consent forms will explicitly state these rights and outline confidentiality measures.

To ensure voluntary participation, no pressure or coercion will be applied. Participants will be invited and assured that their decision to participate or not won't impact their academic standing or privileges. The researchers will create an open and supportive environment where participants can freely express their consent or withdraw at any time.

Regular reminders will be given about the right to withdraw, reinforcing the voluntary nature of participation. Any concerns or complaints raised will be promptly addressed, emphasizing the importance of voluntary involvement and upholding participant rights throughout the study.

There are no significant risks associated with participating in this study. However, participants may experience discomfort or stress when discussing their past and current study experiences. Therefore, the researcher can minimise the possible unexpected psychological risks by first explaining the purpose, procedures, and potential benefits of the study clearly to participants during the informed consent process. Participants are also encouraged to ask questions and address any concerns they may have before giving their consent. Eventually, the researcher will emphasize the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' responses and personal information and ensuring that the research follows ethical guidelines and regulations.

The researchers do not ask any interview questions to cause you any harm or discomfort. However, if you experience feelings of distress because of your participation in this study, please let the research team know immediately. You can also contact the following services for support:

- Lifeline – 13 11 14, www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636, www.beyondblue.org.au
- List other support services, or replace with relevant services, as required

Withdrawal Rights

You may decline to take part in this research study. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time without providing an explanation. To withdraw, please contact the Chief Investigator, or you may just refuse to answer any questions at any time. Any data collected up to the point of your withdrawal will be securely destroyed.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Only researchers listed on this form have access to the individual information provided by you. Privacy and confidentiality will be [always assured](#). The research outcomes may be presented at conferences, written up for publication, or used for other research purposes as described in this information form. However, the privacy and confidentiality of individuals will be [always protected](#). You will not be named, and your individual information will not be identifiable in any research products without your explicit consent.

No data, including identifiable, non-identifiable and de-identified datasets, will be [shared](#), or used in future research projects without your explicit consent.

Data Storage

The information collected will be stored securely on a password protected computer and/or Flinders University server throughout the study. Any identifiable data ([including the raw data such as personal information and contact details](#)) will be de-identified for data storage purposes unless indicated otherwise. All data will be securely transferred to and stored at Flinders University for five years after the publication of the results. Following the required data storage period, all data will be securely destroyed according to university protocols.

How will I receive feedback?

On project completion, a short summary of the outcomes will be provided to all participants via email. Additionally, participants may contact the researcher via email phan0144@flinders.edu.au or mobile: +61 29704596

Alternatively, participants can contact the chief investigator via:

Mai Tuyet Ngo (Dr.)

Senior Lecturer in TESOL and Applied Linguistics
College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
Sturt Road, Bedford Park, South Australia, 5042 GPO Box 2100 Adelaide, SA 5001
P: +61 8 8201 3086
E: mai.ngo@flinders.edu.au

Ethics Committee Approval

The project has been approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 6247).

Queries and Concerns

Queries or concerns regarding the research can be directed to the research team. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Flinders University's Research Ethics and Compliance Office team either via telephone (08) 8201 2543 or via email at human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, which is yours to keep.

If you accept our invitation to be involved, please sign the enclosed consent form.

APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Consent Statement

- ☐ I have read and understood the information about the research, and I understand I am being asked to provide informed consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I can contact the research team if I have further questions about this research study.
- ☐ I am not aware of any condition that would prevent my participation, and I agree to participate in this project.
- ☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study.
- ☐ I understand that I can contact Flinders University's Research Ethics and Compliance Office if I have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study.
- ☐ I understand that my involvement is confidential, and that the information collected may be published. I understand that I will not be identified in any research products.
- ☐ I understand that the information collected may be published and that my identity may be revealed.

I further consent to *delete/add boxes as required*

- ☐ participating in an interview
- ☐ my data and information being used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time (no more than 5 years after publication of the data)
- ☐ being contacted about other research projects

Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX 5: THE ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE / HUMAN ETHICS LOW RISK PANEL APPROVAL NOTICE



HUMAN ETHICS LOW RISK PANEL APPROVAL NOTICE

Dear Dr Senior Lecturer Mai Ngo,

The below proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application and its attachments.

Project No: 6247

Project Title: International Postgraduate Students' Perceived Impacts of Their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency on Academic Achievement : Multiple Case Studies at Flinders University in South Australia

Chief Investigator: Dr Senior Lecturer Mai Ngo

Approval Date: 26/06/2023

Expiry Date: 30/12/2023

Approved Co-Investigator/s: Mr Van Dat Phan

Please note: Due to COVID-19, researchers should try to avoid face-to-face testing where possible and consider undertaking alternative distance/online data or interview collection means. For further information, please go to <https://staff.flinders.edu.au/coronavirus-information>.

Please note: For all research projects wishing to recruit Flinders University students as participants, approval needs to be sought from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation), Professor Michelle Picard. To seek approval, please provide a copy of the Ethics approval for the project and a copy of the project application (including Participant Information and Consent Forms, advertising materials and questionnaires etc.) to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching Innovation) via michelle.picard@flinders.edu.au.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialing codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

In order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated 2018)* an annual progress report must be submitted each year on the approval anniversary date for the duration of the ethics approval using the HREC Annual/Final Report Form available online via the ResearchNow Ethics & Biosafety system.

Please note that no data collection can be undertaken after the ethics approval expiry date listed at the top of this notice. If data is collected after expiry, it will not be covered in terms of ethics. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that annual progress reports are submitted on time; and that no data is collected after ethics has expired.

If the project is completed **before** ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please either submit (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request (using the HREC Modification Form).

For student projects, the Low Risk Panel recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, assessed and finalised. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend that additional data be collected from participants.

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, researchers and supervisors)
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes to information / documents to be given to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., survey, interview questions, focus group questions etc);
- extensions of time (i.e. to extend the period of ethics approval past current expiry date).

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please submit a Modification Request Form available online via the ResearchNow Ethics & Biosafety system. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee on at human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au immediately if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Yours sincerely,

Hendryk Flaegel

on behalf of

Human Ethics Low Risk Panel
Research Development and Support
human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Flinders University
Sturt Road, Bedford Park, South Australia, 5042
GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia, 5001

ResearchNow
Ethics & Biosafety

APPENDIX 6: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

JUSTIFICATION OF THE RELEVANCE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT

1. Self-introducing and outlining the aim of the interview and research questions.

Hello, my name is Dat, and I am a student researcher in the Master in TESOL program in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University. Thank you for being here today and agreeing to participate in this interview session for the research project on *postgraduate international students' perceived impacts of their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) on their academic achievement at CHASS, Flinders University*.

You are chosen to participate in this research project because you are an international student studying in College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) and you met the selection criteria of (1) being a second-year postgraduate international student from any EFL background; (2) being a non-native English speaker who has lived in Australia for at least one year but no more than two years; (3) being enrolled in any postgraduate programmes at the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences College of Flinders University in South Australia; and (4) having comprehensible English

In this project, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) can be understood as how well someone understands and uses academic English language in both spoken and written forms for complex academic tasks. It enables you to handle challenging subjects/topics, unfamiliar specialized terms and communicate effectively through academic reading, listening, speaking, and writing without relying too much on context. CALP thus involves language proficiency, subject-area knowledge, and study/academic skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). **This research seeks answers to the main research question (RQ1)** of *How do international postgraduate students in CHASS at Flinders University in South Australia perceive the impacts of their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) on their academic achievement (AA)? and three sub-questions as follows:*

RQ1a. How do non-English postgraduate students at Flinders University in South Australia their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)?

RQ1b. How do non-English postgraduate students at Flinders University in South Australia their academic achievement (AA)?

RQ1c. How do non-English postgraduate students at Flinders University in South Australia the impacts of their CALP on their AA?

2. Giving the participant a copy of the participant information sheet and an informed consent form to read and sign.

- Before we start, here is an informed consent form for you to read and sign if you agree to participate in this interview on a voluntary basis. Please read it carefully, and if you have any questions or issues, don't hesitate to ask me. When you're prepared, you can mark the informed consent form to indicate your agreement to take part before signing.

3. Start the interview after the participant has signed the informed consent form.

- The interview is about 60 minutes long and consists of 3 main parts, each part is approximately 20 minutes long. The first part of the interview is to get your basic participant background information, followed by the main part with open-ended questions and will finish with concluding questions.

The interview will be conducted in English, recorded, and transcribed for research purposes.

The whole interview consists of 9 main interview questions.

Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification and let me know if you need to take a break at any time. You can withdraw from the interview any time.

Now let's start with the first question of the interview.

Interview Parts	Main Interview Questions (IQ)	Sub-interview questions/prompts	Relevance of each interview questions/s sub-questions for the specific part(s) of the research project and its following research questions?	Any special notes for Dat (the researcher)

<p>PART 1 - INTRODUCTION: PARTICIPANT BACKGROUND</p> <p><i>(4 basic background questions)</i></p>	<p>IQ1.1. Can you briefly describe your study experience as an international postgraduate student at CHASS, in your College (CHASS), at Flinders University?</p>	<p>PROMPTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did you start your postgraduate studies at CHASS, at Flinders University? • Why did you choose to study at Flinders University in Adelaide for your postgraduate study? Why not other Australian universities? • What is your major of study (discipline) at CHASS? • How long have you been studying your enrolled course in CHASS as an international student? • Have you accessed/used any support services for international students offered by Flinders University? • Can you briefly share your overall impression of your study experience at CHASS and explain whether it has been positive, negative, or neutral, and why? 	<p>For a brief Description of Research Participants' basic background information</p>	<p>Chapter 3 (3.4 Description of Research Participants)</p>
	<p>IQ1.2. How would you describe and assess your own academic English language proficiency levels?</p>	<p>PROMPTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you taken any English language preparation before beginning your program in CHASS? (for example, IELTS preparation/academic language study course, pre-departure courses, the university's foundation, or pathway programs etc.) How long? What is it? How was it? How much has it helped prepare you for your study in CHASS? • How did you assess your Academic English language skills before coming to study in CHASS (high/medium/low)? Why? How do you assess it now (high/medium/low)? Why? • In your opinion, how accurately can international tests like IELTS measure your academic English proficiency level? English proficiency? • Which academic English language skills (Academic 	<p>RQ1a</p>	<p>Chapter 3 (3.4 Participants)</p>

		Speaking/Writing/Listening/Reading) do you feel most and least confident in, and which ones do you feel need improving? Why? Why not the others?		
	IQ1.3. How would you describe and assess your own subject - area knowledge ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your overall assessment of your content area vocabulary and knowledge (before you started your study in CHASS and now?) 		
	IQ1.4. How would you describe and assess your own academic study skills ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your overall assessment of your academic study skills (e.g, critical thinking skills? critical reading? note taking/note making skills? Group discussion? Time management? problem-solving? reading comprehension?) before you started your study in CHASS and now?) 		
PART 2 - MAIN OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS (3 main interview questions)	IQ 2.1. What is your perception of your own CALP which involves language proficiency, subject-area knowledge, and study/academic skills?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have you been able to effectively use your own English for academic purposes in your study (in doing assignments, in participating in class/on canvas/FLO) in CHASS? Why? Why not? How? To what extent have you been able to effectively use your subject-area knowledge in your study (in doing assignments, in participating in class/on canvas/FLO) in CHASS? How? To what extent have you been able to effectively use your own study/academic skills in your study (in doing assignments, in participating in class/on canvas/FLO) in CHASS? Why? Why not? How? 	RQ 1a	Chapter 4

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have you experienced any academic challenges in relation to your language proficiency? subject-area knowledge? and study/academic skills? What are specific examples of academic challenges you faced, if any, in relation to language proficiency? subject-area knowledge? and study/academic skills? during your postgraduate course in CHASS at Flinders University? 		
	IQ 2.2. How do you perceive your own academic achievements ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your view, what are indicators of an international student's Academic Achievement? (e.g., your assignment grades and/or your engagement in enrolled topics in class, on FLO/Canvas? others?)? Why? How? To what extent have you made academic achievements so far in your enrolled topics in CHASS? How? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RQ1b, 1c Commonalities among participants 	Chapter 4
	IQ 2.3. How do you perceive the impacts of your CALP on your Academic Achievements?	<p>PROMPTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your view, how has your own academic English language proficiency impacted your academic achievement? Examples? Why? (this one might be repetitive if the participants answer in detail that one before in previous questions) In your view, how has your own subject-area knowledge impacted your academic achievement? Examples? Why? (confusing participants because she did not remember subject area) In your view, how has your own study/academic skills impacted your academic achievement? Examples? What are examples of how your CALP have impacted your ability to understand and engage with academic materials (books, journals, slides etc.)? Have you encountered any challenges related to CALP while studying and completing assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RQ 1c 	Chapter 4 and chapter 5

		<p>or participating in class discussions?</p> <p>How? Overall, how have you perceived any impacts of CALP on your academic achievements (that involves your own language proficiency? your own subject-area knowledge? and your own study/academic skills) on your academic achievements?</p>		
<p>PART 3: CONCLUSION (2 <i>concluding questions</i>)</p>	<p>IQ 3.1 Apart from existing support services on offer at Flinders University, what are your specific additional recommendations or suggestions for your better/higher academic achievements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else should be done at the University level (e.g., by ISS, SLSS, Oasis) to help you improve your language proficiency? subject-area knowledge? and study/academic skills towards your own better/higher academic achievement? (In terms of language proficiency, subject-area knowledge, and study/academic skills)? • What else should be done at the College of HASS level (e.g., by Deans Education, / learning advisers/ Teaching Program Directors) to help you improve your language proficiency? subject-area knowledge?, and study/academic skills towards your own better/higher academic achievement (In terms of language proficiency, subject-area knowledge and study/academic skills)?? • What should be done at the Study Program level (e.g., through teaching methods, assessment, topic design by topic coordinators/lectures) to help you improve your language proficiency? subject-area knowledge?, and study/academic skills towards your own better/higher academic achievement? (In terms of 	<p>Information for summary</p> <p>Possible future direction of further research</p>	<p>Chapter 5 discussion of findings and Chapter 6 Summary.</p>

		language proficiency, subject-area knowledge, and study/academic skills)?		
	IQ 3.2 Is there anything else you would like to share or any other comments in relation to you regarding your experiences as an international postgraduate student and the perceived impacts of CALP on your academic achievement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AOT: Is there anything else you would like to share/add or any other comments you have regarding your experiences as an international postgraduate student and that is relevant for this research project on international students' perceived impact of influence of CALP on your academic achievement journey?		

4. At the end of the interview, thank the participants for their time and promise to send them the transcript for verification.

APPENDIX 7: FOUR SINGLE CASE STUDY REPORTS

1. Case Study Report 1 - for NEP Student

1.1 NEP Student's Background

Case Study 1 is related to a female Nepalese postgraduate student (*NEP Student*) in her 40s and is also one of the two oldest participants. At the time of the interview, she was studying in her third Semester of the Master Program on Gender Studies. Before coming to Flinders University, she had a strong understanding of gender issues, particularly in the context of Nepal. Her knowledge of gender issues in Nepal, according to her, coming from her work as a communication specialist for 6 years, helped her understand the new perspectives on gender issues encountered in her Master Program in Australia.

1.2 NEP Student's Perceived English Language Proficiency

In the interview, NEP shared that she had a strong command of the English language with her overall IELTS score of 8.0 when enrolling in the Master Program in CHASS for the first time studying abroad in an English-speaking country. She told the interviewer that from the very beginning of her studies at Flinders University, she had not faced any language barriers in understanding her lecturers. She also noted that her good English language proficiency helped her actively participate in tutorials and comprehend assigned readings. Furthermore, she was confident in sharing her thoughts and questions with her supervisors and peers.

When being asked an interview question about how an international English language test like IELTS can accurately reflect her language proficiency, NEP was not sure and questioned the specific goals of the IELTS test itself. However, she recognised the importance of assessing overall English language skills, with a focus on speaking skills for more effective academic communication in an English-speaking environment like Australia. She perceived that high IELTS scores might help international students get good grades for completed assignments, but she doubted whether it could help them deal with academic communication, which, according to her, involved presenting academic ideas effectively and formally within an academic environment and was often more complicated than daily casual communication in non-academic contexts.

1.3 NEP Student's Perceived Subject Area Knowledge and Academic Skills

With her strong background in Gender Studies, NEP can easily connect her prior knowledge to new concepts learned in the Master Program on Gender Studies at Flinders University. However, cultural, and contextual differences sometimes pose challenges for her understanding of specific concepts and terms that might be used differently in different contexts. But she turned these challenges into learning opportunities by completing all assigned readings, meeting topic requirements, and addressing all assignment criteria, thus leading to an improvement in her critical thinking skills and her academic writing skills needed for her assignments. In her view, her academic writing skills improved significantly after the first academic year. In addition, she was proud that her concentration span for writing assignments and her ability to organize academic essays were even better. She elaborated on the differences between her academic experiences in her hometown and her current academic environment at Flinders University. According to her, these differences came from the fact that she had focused neither on academic writing styles nor referencing and citations nor group projects or assignments in her hometown previously before coming to Flinders University. She highlighted in the interview that the workload and demand for critical thinking in her program at CHASS helped her enhance her academic writing skills which she perceived to improve from about 50% to 70–80% during her first year.

1.4 NEP Student's Perceived Academic Achievement (AA)

For NEP, engaging in discussions with her lecturers contributed significantly to her learning experience. NEP perceived that CALP had a positive impact on her AA; she did study well and received good grades because she was good at English and understood her major terms and concepts quite well. The positive effect of CALP, according to her, was not just about getting over language problems but also about understanding the subject area content and thinking deeply about it. This, in her reflection, turned her academic achievement into a real success story. As NEP reflected on her study time at CHASS, she told the interviewer that it helped her not only in a journey to earn a Master's degree in Gender Studies but also in a process of grasping better knowledge of gender equality.

1.5 NEP Student's Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA

To sum up, the Nepalese student case study showed that her academic journey in CHASS with a good academic achievement in her enrolled program - Master of Gender Studies, as reflected in her good grades, is perceived to be attributed to her good English language

proficiency levels (reflected in her high IELTS score of 8.0 overall), her strong subject area knowledge and her strong academic thinking and writing skills.

2. Case Study Report 2 - for LAO Student

2.1 LAO Student 's Background

Case Study 2 is related to a female international postgraduate student from Laos (*LAO Student*). She is doing a Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) programme in CHASS. She is also in her 40s and of the same age as Student NEP. She commenced her program in CHASS in July 2020 and was in her 3rd Semester at the time of the interview. She decided to choose Flinders University in pursuit of a Master of TESOL, following a recommendation from her friends who praised Flinders University for its supportive lecturers as well as its abundant study resources and technology. Before coming to Flinders University, she had obtained an IELTS score of 6.5, which met its minimum entry requirements, and had completed a six-month academic programme preparation course in her home country.

2.2 LAO Student's Perceived English Language Proficiency:

LAO Student faced some challenges with her English language which was quite low. LAO student's overall IELTS score was only 6.5 when enrolling in CHASS's programme. In the interview, she told the interviewer that she had concerns over her English language proficiency level. Even though she was studying the Master of TESOL program that demands a high English language proficiency, she revealed that she did not feel confident in her English language proficiency at all. She also acknowledged challenges in understanding the spoken English language during lectures and her hesitation to ask questions in class, suggesting her perceived need to improve her English listening and speaking skills.

Furthermore, she expressed doubts about the validity and reliability of international English language tests like IELTS in assessing test takers' English language proficiency level. She emphasised that understanding the IELTS format questions' context and being good at problem-solving through English language usage are determining factors for high performance in IELTS tests, particularly in the IELTS speaking test. She further clarified that

achieving a high IELTS score was not solely about memorising IELTS related vocabulary and grammar rules but also demanding the IELTS candidate's ability to grasp the specific situations presented in the IELTS questions and fluently use the English language to address them in a thoughtful and problem-solving manner.

2.3 LAO Student Perceived Subject Area Knowledge and Academic Skills

Regarding her subject area knowledge in TESOL, LAO Student highlighted the benefits of her previous English language teaching knowledge back in her home country and how it could be applied to her coursework, particularly for her assignments in CHASS. Regarding academic skills, according to her, managing her study time became a crucial skill as it would help her navigate through planning lessons and choosing what to teach in TESOL. Moreover, she added that good time management skills could make her on-campus workshops more effective. By setting priorities and doing tasks effectively, she could manage her time and give each topic her full attention, which helped her understand and finish all the online tasks before partaking in weekly workshops. She perceived that she was more prepared for in-person classes or one-on-one consultations, optimising learning opportunities and her learning experience.

While the NEP student referred to her academic writing skills as an improved academic skill, the LAO student acknowledged her improvements in language teaching skills and time management skills. To be more specific, LAO commented that she learned about TESOL curriculum design, which was beneficial for her language teaching skills and content selection for her English language students. She also improved her time management skills to handle multiple assignments effectively during the semesters. According to her, her previous teaching experiences in her home country could help her complete the coursework assignments well because teaching TESOL was not only about methodological knowledge gained from books and planning English language lessons; it also required applying practical English language teaching tips and experiences.

2.4 LAO Student 's Perceived Academic Achievement (AA)

Regarding her perceived academic achievement, LAO Student is similar to NEP Student in that her academic achievement stems from her strong grasp of her study major. Like NEP Student, LAO Student perceived academic achievement as not only getting good grades but also the knowledge and experiences gained during her studies at Flinders University. She

also underscored the grades by saying that grades were important as they appeared on graduates' academic transcripts. She valued the knowledge and experiences gained during her studies in CHASS, highlighting the significance of engagement in the learning process. For her, academic achievement was more about becoming an effective TESOL teacher with valuable practical teaching strategies acquired during her Master in TESOL course at Flinders University, rather than simply getting high grades from completed assignments.

2.5 LAO Student's Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA

To sum up, LAO Student's journey shows that her perceived CALP made a real difference to her AA. It was not just her English language proficiency level but also her good teaching and time management skills that could have impacts on her success. Her journey at Flinders University shows how her perceived CALP could help transform her overall academic achievement.

3. Case Study Report 3 - for IND Student

3.1 IND Student's Background

Case Study 3 is about a female international postgraduate student from Indonesia (*IND Student*). She is 28 years old and currently pursuing her Master's degree in TESOL in her last (fourth) semester in CHASS. With a previous background in teaching English as a foreign language, she perceived herself to have both a strong English language proficiency level and strong TESOL knowledge. According to IND Student, she also had strong oral presentation skills and was adept at active listening and problem-solving, particularly in language teaching at schools. Similar to LAO Student, this IND student was faced with the time management challenge, as she told the interviewer that she often felt rushed to complete assignments and academic tasks.

3.2 IND Student's Perceived English Language Proficiency:

IND Student was confident in her academic English writing and perceived that IELTS was a good way to measure how well a student was proficient in English language. She emphasized the importance of English language proficiency for her TESOL teaching and assignment writing in the Master of TESOL program. Knowing that speaking well was important for her TESOL teaching, she also saw speaking skills as a big foundation for

communicating and building trust and relationships with her students in her English language teaching.

3.3 IND Student's Perceived Subject Knowledge Area and Academic Skills

As a biology teacher before coming to Flinders University, this IND Student had had teaching experience and knew a lot about teaching, as she revealed in the interview. Her previous knowledge of English language teaching methods and ideas, such as planning what to teach and how to teach biology really helped her study in the Master of TESOL program at Flinders University. The combination of her previous teaching background and hard academic work helped her complete assignments with a general understanding of teaching principles. In addition, she was already familiar with many basic terms in relation to TESOL teaching, which facilitated her understanding of fundamental TESOL teaching concepts when studying core TESOL topics in her program at CHASS.

However, she found it quite challenging to study certain option topics in her Master program, such as the option topic of Organisational Development, due to its unfamiliar terminology, impacting her confidence in learning and assignment performance when studying that topic. She commented in the interview that her English language was perceived to be not as advanced because she observed some of her peers using uncommon academic words in online activities. Regarding academic skills (i.e., mostly about note-making and reading comprehension), though she assessed hers to be quite good at around 75%, she still perceived the need for improving them, especially her academic reading. However, she was proud of her improved reading method and the way she incorporated ideas from her reading into her completed assignments. She emphasised the importance of reading for understanding lectures and the usefulness of subject area knowledge in her academic journey. In addition, she admitted in the interview that her note-making skills were not very strong, typically her ability to use PDF highlights for making notes. Lastly, the IND student also expressed her hesitancy to participate in discussions due to her fear of confusing others due to her poor English language pronunciation.

3.4 IND Student's Perceived Academic Achievement

She perceived her academic achievement to be related to her assignment grades in the topics in the study program, as well as her overall GPA. In the interview, she also expressed

satisfaction with the grades she had received so far, as, according to her, they reflected her ability and hard work.

3.5 IND Student's Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA

To sum up, the IND student perceived that doing well academically was more than just getting good grades. She saw academic success as being really involved, understanding lessons, and doing well in assignments. While she knew she was good at presenting and problem-solving, she still saw some room for improvement, especially in her pronunciation and reading skills.

4. Case Study Report 4 - for VIE Student

4.1 VIE Student's Background

Case Study 4 is related to a Vietnamese female postgraduate student (*VIE Student*) who started her Master in Women and Gender Studies's journey in CHASS, tackling language challenges with determination and hard work. Her story is a clear example of how language skills take time to develop with the use of smart learning strategies. Unlike the three other international students who participated in this research, VIE Student (Student 4) honestly admitted in the interview that she was not confident in her English writing, preferring simple words over fancy academic ones when doing her assignments. She knew she needed to get better, understanding that improving language skills happens gradually. She commented that dealing with AI writing and talking with native speakers showed how her English language skills affect her studies.

4.2 VIE Student's Perceived English Language Proficiency

VIE Student perceived herself as not confident in her speaking skills, as she usually felt embarrassed when she mispronounced any words. Her mispronunciation sometimes confused her local classmates. With reference to international English language tests like IELTS, VIE student mentioned that IELTS was perceived to be a better way to measure her academic English level than other tests such as PTE, as she took both tests before. In her opinion, IELTS test relied on human evaluation, and IELTS examiners can detect when test

takers memorised model answers. She told the interviewer that unlike the PTE test, which is entirely computer-based, IELTS involved real people assessing writing and speaking. This direct human interaction in IELTS, according to VIE Student, gave a more accurate measure of test takers' English language skills. She also highlighted how IELTS effectively assesses genuine English language abilities rather than just memorising tricks.

4.3 VIE Student's perceived subject area knowledge and academic skills:

Having difficulty with topic-specific words and background knowledge posed some initial challenges for VIE Student in understanding new topics in her Master of Women and Gender Studies Program in CHASS. VIE Student saw the importance of mastering words and using good writing strategies to enhance her academic skills. Initially, she was doing her assignments by translating word by word, which showed her effort to overcome English language barriers. She acknowledged that her improvements in understanding academic English were necessary for her academic success. She also told the interviewer that she made use of peer support and Flinders Student Learning Support Services (SLSS) to enhance her academic performance, particularly in written and oral presentation assignments.

4.4 VIE Student's Perceived Academic Achievement:

VIE Student perceived that credits and grades were important for her academic achievement. She also added that she was successful when she really put reading effort into the topics and found them more and more interesting as she read. But she had trouble with AI assisted writing in the first Semester at Flinders University, because her overall mark got subtracted in one topic due to the AI writing detected by her lecturer. This, in her view, was a painful experience.

4.5 VIE Student's Perceived Impacts of CALP on AA

To sum up, VIE Student perceived how CALP positively affected her academic success. Her journey is a combination of recognising language issues, getting outside help, and changing how she learns to get better academically. Her story shows the determination needed to handle language barriers and how committed learning can make a big difference in her academic performance. To be more specific, her English language skills, subject knowledge, and academic skills were all perceived to have had a big impact on how well she academically performed at Flinders University. When it came to academic communication

with other people, she revealed that she had some trouble working with native-speaking teachers and local students because these students seemed to speak too fast and express their ideas in complicated ways.