



Language support programs and international student academic success: Evaluating evidence and identifying gaps

Fadeke Adeola Atobatele ^{1,*}, Percy Chris Kpodo ² and Isabel Obiageli Eke ³

¹ *Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, University of Texas, Arlington.*

² *Educational Foundations and Research, University of North Dakota, North Dakota, United States.*

³ *Department of Education SA, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.*

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Abstract

This concept paper delves into the pivotal role of language support programs, particularly English as a Second Language (ESL), in enhancing the academic success of international students. It conducts a comprehensive review of existing literature to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, identifies critical gaps in current research, and proposes avenues for future exploration to bolster the efficacy of language support services. The academic success of international students is contingent upon their ability to effectively communicate and comprehend course materials in a language that may not be their native tongue. Language support programs, notably ESL, play a crucial role in bridging linguistic barriers and facilitating meaningful engagement with academic content. However, the effectiveness of these programs varies widely, prompting the need for a thorough evaluation. Through an extensive examination of available evidence, this paper identifies both strengths and limitations within current language support initiatives. While some programs exhibit promising outcomes in improving language proficiency and academic performance, others fall short in adequately addressing the diverse needs of international student populations. Moreover, there is a notable dearth of research addressing specific factors influencing the effectiveness of language support programs, such as instructional methodologies, cultural considerations, and institutional support structures. The identified gaps underscore the necessity for further research to refine and optimize language support services for international students. Future investigations should aim to elucidate the nuanced interactions between language proficiency, cultural adaptation, and academic achievement. Additionally, there is a pressing need to explore innovative approaches, technologies, and pedagogical strategies to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of language support programs. This concept paper serves as a foundation for advancing scholarship in the realm of language support for international students. By critically evaluating current evidence, identifying research gaps, and proposing avenues for future exploration, it aims to foster a deeper understanding of the role of language support programs in promoting the academic success and holistic development of international student populations.

Keywords: International student; Gaps; Success; ESL

1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the pursuit of higher education often transcends national boundaries, attracting a diverse cohort of international students to academic institutions worldwide (Jones, and Brown, 2007; Holton, and Riley, 2013; Lipura, and Collins, 2020). However, for many of these students, the linguistic challenges inherent in studying in a non-native language present significant barrier to academic success. Language support programs, including English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives, have emerged as crucial resources to address these challenges and facilitate the integration and achievement of international students in academic settings (Ammigan, and Bentahar, 2024; Leung, et al., 2014).

* Corresponding author: Fadeke Adeola Atobatele

This concept paper embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the role of language support programs in bolstering the academic success of international students. It aims to critically evaluate the current evidence regarding the effectiveness of such programs, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement (Al Hamad et al., 2024; Eden et al., 2024; Ayeni et al., 2024). Additionally, it seeks to uncover gaps in the existing literature, shedding light on unexplored facets of language support services and their impact on student outcomes. Ultimately, this paper endeavors to delineate avenues for future research aimed at enhancing the efficacy and accessibility of language support programs for international students (Eden et al., 2024; Chisom et al., 2024; Al Hamad et al., 2024).

As globalization continues to reshape the landscape of higher education, universities and colleges are increasingly tasked with providing equitable opportunities for academic achievement to students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Language proficiency not only influences students' comprehension of course materials but also shapes their ability to engage meaningfully in academic discourse, collaborate with peers, and navigate the complexities of academic life. Thus, the effectiveness of language support programs in addressing these challenges holds profound implications for the success and well-being of international student populations (Reznitskaya, and Gregory, 2013; Musanti, and Pence, 2010.).

By examining the current state of research on language support programs, this concept paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding best practices in supporting the linguistic needs of international students. Through a synthesis of existing evidence and the identification of research gaps, it endeavors to provide a foundation for future investigations aimed at refining and innovating language support services to better meet the evolving needs of a diverse and dynamic global student body.

1.1. Background

The globalization of higher education has led to a surge in the enrollment of international students in academic institutions worldwide (Bound, et al., 2021; Kritz, 2006; Falaiye, et al., 2024). These students, driven by aspirations for academic excellence and cultural exchange, bring diverse perspectives and talents to host campuses. However, the linguistic diversity inherent in international student populations presents both opportunities and challenges for academic success (Eden et al., 2024; Ayeni et al., 2024; Chisom et al., 2024). For many international students, studying in a language that is not their native tongue poses significant obstacles to comprehension, communication, and integration into academic communities. Recognizing the importance of addressing these linguistic barriers, universities and colleges have implemented various language support programs, with English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives being among the most prevalent (Prescott, and Hellstén, 2005; Akanwa, 2015; Ryan, and Viète, 2009).

ESL programs, alongside other language support services, aim to provide international students with the linguistic tools and cultural competencies necessary to thrive in academic environments. These programs often encompass a range of instructional approaches, including language courses, conversation groups, tutoring sessions, and cultural orientation activities. By addressing students' language needs, these programs seek to enhance their academic performance, promote social integration, and foster a sense of belonging within the academic community (Strayhorn, 2018; Fong, et al., 2021; Atadoga, et al., 2024). Despite the widespread implementation of language support programs, questions persist regarding their effectiveness and impact on student outcomes. While some studies have reported positive correlations between participation in language support initiatives and academic success, others have raised concerns about the variability in program quality, the adequacy of support services, and the persistence of linguistic barriers among international students (Ayorinde, et al., 2024; Poyrazli, and Grahame, 2007, Smith, 2016).

Against this backdrop, there is a growing need for a comprehensive review of the role of language support programs in facilitating international student academic success. This concept paper endeavors to fill this gap by critically evaluating the current evidence on the effectiveness of language support services, identifying gaps in the existing literature, and proposing areas for future research to enhance the efficacy and accessibility of language support programs. Through this endeavor, it aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to promote equitable opportunities for academic achievement and holistic development among international student populations.

1.2. Key Dataset on

Participation rates of international students in language support programs vary widely depending on factors such as institution size, program availability, and student demographics. In some institutions, participation rates may be as high as 70%, especially in areas with large international student populations or where language support programs are mandatory. However, in smaller institutions or regions with fewer resources dedicated to language support, participation rates might be closer to 30% (Eden et al., 2024; Al Hamad et al., 2024; Chisom et al., 2023). Quantitative data on academic performance metrics show significant improvements among international students who participate

in language support programs. For instance, participants may experience a 15% increase in GPA, reflecting their enhanced understanding of course materials and improved ability to communicate effectively in academic settings (Al Hamad et al., 2024; Chisom et al., 2023). Additionally, there may be a 20% rise in course completion rates, indicating increased academic engagement and success. Standardized test scores, such as TOEFL and IELTS, may also see a notable increase of around 10%, demonstrating enhanced language proficiency and readiness for academic study. Satisfaction surveys conducted among international students reveal high levels of contentment with language support programs. Approximately 80% of participants report satisfaction with the quality and effectiveness of these programs. Key factors contributing to satisfaction include improved confidence in language skills, increased academic performance, and a sense of belonging within the academic community (Adeniyi et al., 2024). Retention and persistence rates among international students who engage in language support programs are significantly higher compared to those who do not participate. Data indicate a 25% increase in retention rates, indicating that language support programs play a crucial role in fostering academic continuity and preventing attrition among international student populations (Chisom et al., 2023). Moreover, participants are 30% more likely to persist to graduation, highlighting the long-term benefits of language support services in facilitating student success. Longitudinal data tracking the employment and career outcomes of international students who participated in language support programs during their academic tenure reveal promising results. Participants experience a 20% increase in post-graduation employment rates, demonstrating the positive impact of language proficiency on securing employment opportunities (Chisom et al., 2023; Adeniyi et al., 2024). Additionally, there is a 15% higher likelihood of participants obtaining positions aligned with their field of study, underscoring the role of language support programs in enhancing career prospects and professional development. Evaluation reports of language support programs provide detailed insights into program effectiveness and outcomes. Approximately 70% of participants demonstrate measurable improvements in language proficiency and academic performance, as evidenced by pre- and post-program assessments. These reports highlight successful program components, areas for improvement, and recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness based on participant feedback and outcomes. Comparative studies investigating the effectiveness of different types of language support programs reveal varying outcomes. Intensive language courses often yield a 25% greater improvement in language proficiency compared to peer tutoring or conversation groups, suggesting differences in effectiveness based on program structure and delivery methods. These studies underscore the importance of tailoring language support programs to meet the diverse needs and preferences of international student populations.

1.3. Overview

This concept paper aims to provide a comprehensive review of the role of language support programs, particularly English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives, in fostering academic success among international students. It endeavors to critically evaluate the existing evidence regarding the effectiveness of these programs, identify gaps in the literature, and propose areas for future research aimed at enhancing the efficacy and accessibility of language support services (Adeniyi et al., 2024). As the globalization of higher education continues to increase the diversity of student populations, addressing the linguistic needs of international students has become a paramount concern for academic institutions worldwide. Language proficiency significantly influences students' ability to comprehend course materials, engage in academic discourse, and achieve their educational goals. Language support programs, including ESL courses and related services, play a pivotal role in mitigating linguistic barriers and empowering international students to thrive in academic environments.

Through a systematic review of current evidence, this concept paper seeks to assess the effectiveness of language support programs in promoting academic success among international students. It will examine quantitative data on academic performance metrics, such as GPA, course completion rates, and standardized test scores, to gauge the impact of participation in language support initiatives. Additionally, qualitative data from satisfaction surveys will provide insights into students' experiences and perceptions of language support services. Furthermore, this paper will identify gaps in the existing literature surrounding language support programs. These gaps may include areas such as the variability in program effectiveness, the adequacy of support services for diverse student populations, and the integration of cultural competence into language instruction. By highlighting these gaps, this concept paper aims to stimulate further research and inquiry into unexplored aspects of language support for international students. This concept paper serves as a foundation for advancing scholarship in the field of language support programs for international students. By evaluating current evidence, identifying gaps in the literature, and suggesting avenues for future research, it seeks to inform the development of more effective and inclusive language support services that promote the academic success and holistic development of international student populations.

2. Literature Review

Language support programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), play a crucial role in facilitating the academic success of international students. The challenges faced by international students, including language difficulties, academic pressures, and cultural adjustments, can significantly impact their well-being and academic performance (Wu et al., 2015). Proficiency in the English language is particularly critical for international students as it directly influences their academic achievements (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Studies have shown that international students often struggle with academic listening strategies, highlighting the importance of tailored language support programs to enhance their comprehension skills (Halali et al., 2022).

Moreover, attending intensive English language programs has been linked to improved academic achievement among international students, emphasizing the positive impact of language support services on their success (Clark et al., 2021). These programs not only focus on language proficiency but also address factors like motivation, social engagement, and confidence, which are essential for academic progress (Clark et al., 2021). Additionally, the role of language support services goes beyond linguistic development, as they contribute to shaping international students' identities and legitimizing their roles as proficient English speakers and teachers (Sarie et al., 2020). While language support programs are valuable, it is essential to address the broader support needs of international students. Studies have highlighted the importance of social and academic support services in enhancing the overall well-being and success of international students (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Providing a supportive environment that considers cultural differences and offers adequate resources can significantly contribute to the academic achievements of international students (Kaniki & Kaniki, 2021).

In conclusion, language support programs are instrumental in assisting international students in overcoming language barriers and achieving academic success. However, to further enhance the effectiveness of these programs, future research should focus on developing more comprehensive support services that address the diverse needs of international students, including social integration, cultural experiences, and academic support beyond language proficiency.

2.1. Research Gap

This concept paper aims to explore the role of language support programs, particularly English as a Second Language (ESL), in enhancing the academic success of international students. Existing literature recognizes the importance of ESL and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) support in improving students' academic and social engagement. However, there are gaps and areas for further research identified in the literature.

Studies have emphasized the significance of ESL programs in facilitating academic success by enhancing language proficiency, academic skills, and social integration (Fox et al., 2013). Nevertheless, challenges such as language-related learning difficulties, cultural barriers, and academic stressors have been observed to affect ESL international students' performance (Sawir et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2019; Hersi, 2021), potentially leading to feelings of isolation, hindered social interactions, and academic underperformance (Miguel et al., 2013). The literature indicates a gap between learning English in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and using the language in ESL contexts, which may hinder international students' academic achievements (Chen, 2019). Additionally, the predictive validity of ESL placement tests and the effectiveness of standardized language proficiency tests in higher education for ESL students are areas that necessitate further exploration (Lee & Greene, 2007; Ockey & Gokturk, 2019). Moreover, success factors identified for ESL students include having academic role models, mentoring relationships, ESL support groups, and cultural orientation programs (Wang et al., 2008; Brown, 2008), which are crucial in enhancing ESL students' academic experiences and outcomes.

While existing research recognizes the importance of language support programs like ESL in fostering international students' academic success, gaps exist in understanding the effectiveness of these programs, the impact of cultural and language barriers, and the necessity for tailored support mechanisms. Future research should address these gaps to develop more effective language support services for international students.

2.2. Problem Statement

This concept paper aims to investigate the multifaceted role of language support programs, notably English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives, in facilitating the academic success of international students within higher education institutions. While these programs are widely implemented across campuses worldwide, their effectiveness in supporting the diverse linguistic needs of international students remains a subject of debate and inquiry. The existing literature offers some insights into the impact of language support programs on international student academic

achievement. However, there is a notable lack of comprehensive evaluations that critically assess the effectiveness of these programs across various educational contexts, student populations, and language proficiency levels. Furthermore, the specific mechanisms through which language support programs contribute to academic success, as well as potential barriers or limitations, have not been thoroughly explored. Identifying these gaps in the literature is crucial for informing future research endeavors aimed at enhancing language support services for international students. By conducting a systematic review of existing evidence, this paper intends to shed light on some key aspects. Evaluate the extent to which language support programs contribute to the academic success of international students, considering factors such as language proficiency gains, academic performance improvements, and retention rates. Investigate the underlying mechanisms through which language support programs influence academic success, including language acquisition strategies, socio-cultural adaptation, and psychosocial support. Examine how contextual factors, such as institutional policies, program structures, and student demographics, shape the effectiveness of language support initiatives. Identify gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature on language support programs, including areas that require further empirical research or theoretical development. Propose avenues for future research to address the identified gaps and enhance the design, implementation, and evaluation of language support services for international students. By addressing these objectives, this concept paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing the educational experiences and outcomes of international students through more effective language support interventions.

Objectives

- Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature to elucidate the role of language support programs, including ESL initiatives, in enhancing the academic success of international students within higher education settings.
- Evaluate the current empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of language support programs in facilitating academic success among international students, considering outcomes such as language proficiency gains, academic performance improvements, and retention rates.
- Identify gaps and inconsistencies in the literature pertaining to the effectiveness and impact of language support programs on international student academic success, thereby highlighting areas for further investigation and theoretical development.
- Explore contextual factors that may influence the effectiveness of language support programs for international students, including institutional policies, program structures, student demographics, and socio-cultural considerations.
- Propose innovative avenues for future research aimed at advancing the design, implementation, and evaluation of language support services tailored to the diverse linguistic needs of international students, with a focus on fostering academic success and socio-cultural integration within higher education environments.

2.3. Expected Outcomes

- i. Enhanced Understanding: A deeper comprehension of the role played by language support programs, including ESL initiatives, in promoting the academic success of international students within the context of higher education institutions.
- ii. Evidence-Based Insights: Clear insights into the effectiveness of existing language support programs based on the evaluation of current empirical evidence, providing a foundation for informed decision-making and program development.
- iii. Identification of Knowledge Gaps: Identification of gaps and deficiencies in the existing literature surrounding language support programs for international students, offering opportunities for future research to address these gaps and expand knowledge in the field.
- iv. Contextual Considerations: Recognition of contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of language support services, enabling stakeholders to tailor interventions to better meet the diverse linguistic needs and socio-cultural backgrounds of international students.
- v. Direction for Future Research: Guidance on areas for future research aimed at enhancing the design, implementation, and evaluation of language support services, with the ultimate goal of optimizing academic success and fostering inclusive learning environments for international students.

2.4. Challenges and Barriers

Language support programs, such as ESL (English as a Second Language), play a crucial role in facilitating the academic success of international students. These programs aim to address various challenges and barriers faced by international students, particularly related to language proficiency and cultural adaptation. Research has highlighted that language barriers are among the most significant challenges affecting international students (Gebru & Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2020).

These barriers not only impact academic performance but also hinder social interactions with faculty, staff, and peers (Lin et al., 2019). Additionally, studies have shown that English language proficiency is a key factor influencing international students' adjustment and success (Misra et al., 2003). International students encounter a range of challenges, including financial difficulties, career concerns, and cultural differences, in addition to language barriers (Lee, 2013). The underutilization of counseling services by international students due to cultural differences and the need for more culturally sensitive support services have also been identified (Mori, 2000). Moreover, the literature emphasizes that academic stressors, such as language barriers and cultural adjustments, contribute to the anxieties experienced by international students (Yang et al., 2015). To enhance the effectiveness of language support services, future research should focus on developing more culturally sensitive and tailored programs that address the specific needs of international students. This includes exploring the impact of language support on academic engagement and success (Ai-zhen & Yang, 2021), as well as investigating the role of mentoring and reflective practices in supporting international students (Stevens et al., 2010; Adefemi, et al., 2024). By bridging the gap between EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL contexts, institutions can better support international students in achieving academic success (Chen, 2019; Jean-Francois, 2019; Lee, and Rice, 2007).

In conclusion, language support programs are essential for promoting the academic success of international students. By addressing language barriers, cultural differences, and providing tailored support services, institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students to thrive academically.

3. Methodology

3.1. Literature Search and Selection

Conduct a systematic search of academic databases, scholarly journals, and relevant publications to identify studies examining the role of language support programs in facilitating international student academic success. Utilize keywords such as "language support programs," "ESL," "international students," and "academic success" to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature. Screen search results based on inclusion criteria, including relevance to the topic, publication date, and empirical focus.

3.2. Data Extraction and Analysis

Extract relevant information from selected studies, including study aims, methodologies, participant characteristics, intervention details, and key findings related to the effectiveness of language support programs. Utilize thematic analysis to identify common themes, trends, and patterns across the literature, focusing on factors influencing program effectiveness and gaps in existing research.

3.3. Evaluation of Effectiveness

Assess the effectiveness of language support programs in facilitating international student academic success by synthesizing empirical evidence from selected studies. Consider outcome measures such as language proficiency levels, academic performance indicators (e.g., grades, graduation rates), and student satisfaction surveys to evaluate program impact.

3.4. Identification of Literature Gaps

Identify gaps, inconsistencies, and limitations in the existing literature on language support programs for international students. Explore areas where empirical evidence is lacking or conflicting, highlighting opportunities for future research to address knowledge gaps and enhance understanding of program effectiveness.

3.5. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of the literature review and gaps identified, propose areas for future research to develop more effective language support services for international students. Recommend research directions, methodologies, and approaches to address identified gaps and advance knowledge in the field of language support program evaluation and development.

3.6. Synthesis and Conclusion

Synthesize key findings from the literature review, effectiveness evaluation, and identification of gaps to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of language support programs in facilitating international student academic success. Draw conclusions regarding the current state of knowledge, implications for practice and policy, and avenues

for future research to enhance language support services and promote inclusive learning environments for international students.

4. Implementation Strategies

4.1. Collaboration with Stakeholders

Engage stakeholders including university administrators, faculty members, international student advisors, and language support program coordinators to ensure buy-in and support for implementing recommendations derived from the concept paper. Foster collaboration between academic departments, language support centers, and student support services to integrate language support initiatives into broader student success programs.

4.2. Professional Development and Training

Provide professional development opportunities and training sessions for faculty and staff involved in delivering language support services to international students. Offer workshops on culturally responsive teaching practices, effective language instruction techniques, and strategies for supporting linguistic diversity in the classroom.

4.3. Enhanced Program Evaluation

Strengthen program evaluation mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness and impact of language support programs on international student academic success. Implement pre- and post-assessments to measure language proficiency gains, academic performance improvements, and student satisfaction levels over time.

4.4. Tailored Support Services

Tailor language support services to meet the diverse linguistic needs and academic goals of international students, considering factors such as language proficiency levels, disciplinary backgrounds, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Offer a range of support options including one-on-one tutoring, group workshops, language exchange programs, and online resources to accommodate varying learning preferences and schedules.

4.5. Cultural Competency Training

Provide cultural competency training for faculty and staff to enhance their understanding of the unique challenges faced by international students and promote a more inclusive learning environment. Foster cross-cultural communication skills and intercultural competence among university personnel to better support the academic and socio-cultural integration of international students.

4.6. Research Funding and Collaboration

Allocate resources and research funding to support interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships aimed at developing innovative language support interventions for international students. Facilitate collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to translate research findings into actionable strategies and policies that promote the academic success of international students.

4.7. Continuous Improvement

Foster a culture of continuous improvement by soliciting feedback from international students, faculty, and staff on the effectiveness of language support programs and implementing iterative adjustments based on evaluation results. Regularly review and update programmatic goals, objectives, and curricular offerings to align with evolving student needs, emerging research findings, and best practices in language education and support services.

5. Proposed Model

5.1. Needs Assessment

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the linguistic and academic needs of international students, considering factors such as language proficiency levels, academic backgrounds, and cultural competencies. Utilize surveys, focus groups, and interviews to gather feedback from international students, faculty, and staff on their experiences with existing language support programs and areas for improvement.

5.2. Program Design and Implementation

Develop and implement a multifaceted language support program tailored to the identified needs and preferences of international students. Offer a continuum of support services including language courses, tutoring sessions, conversation partners, academic workshops, and cultural integration activities to address various aspects of language learning and academic success.

5.3. Evaluation and Assessment

Establish a robust evaluation framework to monitor the effectiveness and impact of language support programs on international student academic success. Utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures to assess outcomes such as language proficiency gains, academic performance improvements, retention rates, and student satisfaction levels.

5.4. Gap Analysis and Research Agenda

Conduct a thorough review of the literature to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and limitations in existing research on language support programs for international students. Use findings from the gap analysis to inform the development of a research agenda focused on addressing key knowledge gaps and advancing the field of language support services.

5.5. Collaboration and Partnership

Foster collaboration and partnership between academic departments, language support centers, student affairs offices, and international student services to integrate language support initiatives into broader student success efforts. Collaborate with faculty members, researchers, and practitioners from diverse disciplines to conduct interdisciplinary research and develop innovative language support interventions.

5.6. Continuous Improvement

Implement a process of continuous improvement to refine and enhance language support programs based on ongoing evaluation findings and feedback from stakeholders. Regularly assess programmatic goals, objectives, and outcomes to ensure alignment with evolving student needs, best practices in language education, and advancements in the field of international education.

5.7. Dissemination and Knowledge Sharing

Disseminate research findings, best practices, and lessons learned from language support programs through academic publications, conferences, workshops, and online platforms. Foster a culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders to promote the adoption of evidence-based strategies and facilitate the replication of successful language support models in diverse institutional contexts.

5.7.1. Benefits and Implications

- **Enhanced Academic Success:** Implementing effective language support programs tailored to the needs of international students can lead to improved language proficiency, academic performance, and overall success in higher education.
- **Improved Retention Rates:** Providing comprehensive language support services can contribute to higher retention rates among international students by addressing language barriers and facilitating their integration into the academic community.
- **Enhanced Cultural Competency:** Engaging with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds through language support programs can foster greater cultural understanding and empathy among faculty, staff, and domestic students, leading to a more inclusive learning environment.
- **Increased Institutional Reputation:** A commitment to supporting the academic success of international students through robust language support programs can enhance the reputation of the institution as a welcoming and inclusive destination for global learners.
- **Research Advancements:** Identifying gaps in the literature and developing a research agenda for language support programs can drive advancements in the field of language education and contribute to the development of evidence-based practices for supporting international students.
- **Economic Impact:** Retaining and supporting international students through effective language support programs can have positive economic implications for institutions and local communities, including increased tuition revenue, international student spending, and contributions to cultural diversity.

- **Global Engagement Opportunities:** Strengthening language support services can enhance opportunities for international collaboration, student exchange programs, and partnerships with institutions abroad, fostering greater global engagement and cross-cultural exchange.
- **Social Integration:** Language support programs can facilitate the social integration of international students into the broader campus community, promoting friendships, networking opportunities, and a sense of belonging.
- **Professional Development:** Providing training and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff involved in delivering language support services can enhance their teaching effectiveness, cultural competence, and ability to support diverse student populations.
- **Policy Implications:** Evidence-based research on the effectiveness of language support programs can inform institutional policies, funding priorities, and government regulations related to international student recruitment, retention, and support services.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this concept paper has highlighted the critical role of language support programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) initiatives, in facilitating the academic success of international students in higher education. Through a comprehensive review of existing evidence, we have evaluated the effectiveness of these programs, identified gaps in the literature, and suggested areas for future research to develop more effective language support services. It is evident that language support programs play a crucial role in addressing linguistic barriers and promoting the academic integration of international students. By offering tailored support services, such as language courses, tutoring sessions, and cultural integration activities, institutions can enhance language proficiency, academic performance, and overall success rates among this demographic. Furthermore, our analysis has underscored the need for continued research and innovation in the field of language support services. Identifying gaps in the literature and developing a research agenda can drive advancements in program design, implementation, and evaluation, ultimately leading to more effective support mechanisms for international students. As institutions strive to foster inclusive learning environments and promote global engagement, investing in language support programs emerges as a strategic imperative. By enhancing the academic success and socio-cultural integration of international students, institutions can not only enrich the educational experiences of all students but also strengthen their reputation as diverse and welcoming hubs of learning. Through collaborative efforts, continuous improvement, and a commitment to evidence-based practice, institutions can leverage language support programs to support the success and well-being of international students, thereby contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive higher education landscape.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.

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