

Intercultural Miscommunication in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Review (2013-2023)

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Abstract

This systematic review study surveys empirical research on intercultural miscommunication in higher education institutions published in Web of Science and Scopus indexing journals from 2013 to 2023 to identify thematic areas of research that are covered. Out of 96 studies initially identified using PRISMA search based on intercultural miscommunication keywords, 17 met this study's criteria. The study's findings indicate a focus on linguistic and cultural barriers, along with intercultural communication strategies. The research is predominantly concentrated in Western contexts like the UK and Australia, with only several studies conducted within Asian university settings. Furthermore, the prevailing research methodology among the empirical studies is qualitative in nature. This review study highlights a significant gap in empirical research focusing on intercultural miscommunication within Asian higher education contexts, particularly in China. As cultural and linguistic diversity among students and staff in Chinese universities frequently results in intercultural miscommunication issues, addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective intercultural communication strategies and enhancing the educational experience in these universities. This systematic review, therefore, underscores the need for more nuanced research in these areas, aiming to bridge the cultural and linguistic divides in academic environments, thus promoting a more inclusive and effective internationalization strategy in higher education.

Keywords: internationalization, intercultural miscommunication, intercultural barrier, language and culture, strategy

1. Introduction

Internationalization of higher education is a contemporary trend worldwide and an important feature of comprehensive universities. Thus, universities are actively engaging in international partnerships and collaborations, with the goal of facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise across borders (Leal Filho et al., 2023). According to Ivan et al. (2022), internationalization comprises several dimensions: the recruitment of international students; the involvement of foreign professors in teaching and research activities; the utilization of international languages in teaching and administration; the establishment of joint degrees and cooperative programs; and collaborative efforts in the field of research. "Belt and Road Initiative", as China's most significant international policy, has largely brought "Internationalization at Home" (IaH). As illustrated by Xu & Boudouaia (2023), IaH is the introduction of an international and intercultural dimension into the curriculum studied in a local setting, helping students gain intercultural skills and a global perspective. The strategy of attracting foreign experts and international students by Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is strongly linked with the concept of IaH.

However, there are many challenges faced by HEIS in implementing internationalization strategies. Communication challenges, for example, can give rise to misunderstandings, fostering frustration and prejudice, ultimately leading to low educational outcomes. According to Yassin et al. (2020), language challenges, academic challenges, and research challenges were found to have a significant negative impact on learning sustainability. Li & Xue (2023) stated that institutional international curriculum mechanism needs further construction, faculty's intercultural teaching ability is insufficient, international campus environment and culture building is lacking, etc. What is more, with more foreign experts and international students in Chinese universities, there is an increase in intercultural communication. Intercultural competence, which refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes (Deardorff, 2006), can ensure smooth communication among staff and students. Still, communicating with culturally and linguistically different people may lead to intercultural miscommunication and influence the learning and management of foreign experts and international students.

Some previous studies of intercultural miscommunication have been conducted in the context of HEIs. The findings reveal both the barriers and strategies for addressing intercultural miscommunication. Sato & Miller (2021) investigated seven American undergraduate students (three men and four women) at Midwestern University. Adopting in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the authors revealed some strategies for overcoming intercultural communication challenges. In addition, another study by Meletiadou (2023) surveyed 50 multilingual students who participated in a Lego Serious Play (LSP) intervention program, and concluded that LSP had a positive effect on overcoming the linguistic and cultural barriers of intercultural communication. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of studies on intercultural miscommunication conducted in China. Additionally, no literature review studies have been found related to intercultural miscommunication in the educational field. Therefore, this study investigates the trends of intercultural communication, and systematically examines the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs from 2013 to 2023.

2. Literature Review

Intercultural communication typically pertains to in-person interactions between individuals from diverse cultures. This form of communication can be challenging because the sender and receiver often exist in distinct cultural contexts and have limited shared symbols. Significant potential for intercultural miscommunication exists when a message from one person to a member of another cultural group is perceived negatively. According to Zhang et al. (2020), intercultural miscommunication is defined as a breakdown in communication between speakers of different cultures and languages, resulting from cultural differences and sociolinguistic transfer. Miscommunication may arise due to the misinterpretation of pragmatic behaviors and lexical items within a particular conversational context (Paxton et al., 2021). Unsuccessful communication can impede the establishment of relationships between those in need of support and those providing it (Latifovic & Händler-Schuster, 2023). Insufficient or ineffective communication can also result in discomfort in intercultural situations, hindering the trust-building process, ultimately impacting the success of internationalized education.

A Portland well-known pioneer in the field of intercultural communication, Barna (1997) has compiled a list of six such barriers: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of recognizing differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, misinterpretations of nonverbal cues, and language. Jandt (2007) explained that the primary barrier, heightened anxiety, occurs when people are uncertain about what is expected. It is only natural to become preoccupied with this emotion, making it challenging to be fully engaged in the communication transaction. The second barrier involves assuming similarity instead of recognizing differences, which can

result in a lack of awareness regarding important distinctions. Assuming that no differences exist may lead people to behave as they would in their home culture, potentially resulting in inappropriate behavior. The third barrier to effective intercultural communication is ethnocentrism, which involves negatively judging aspects of another culture based on the standards of one's own culture. According to Kuru Alici & Kaya (2022), ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own group as central, leading to misperceptions of others and potential social distance in intercultural interactions. The fourth barrier is stereotypes and prejudice. Stereotypes, according to Liu & Zhang (2020), are cognitive structures guiding behavior in communication. Positive feelings are associated with competent and friendly groups, while negative stereotypes can evoke negative emotions like anger, fear, or anxiety. In contrast, prejudice refers to the irrational dislike, suspicion, or hatred of a particular group, race religion, or sexual orientation (Hunter & Rothenberg, 2001). Furthermore, ethnocentrism is always associated with stereotypes and prejudice (Kuru Alici & Kaya, 2022). The fifth barrier is misinterpretations of nonverbal cues. Nonverbal symbols, such as hand signals and bodily expressions, vary from culture to culture, and it is precisely these variations that create barriers in nonverbal communication. The final barrier is language itself, where words, functioning as symbols, can become obstacles when their complete meanings are not shared. Even speakers of the same language may not necessarily share identical meanings for every word.

Anderson (2018) examined (mis)communication between Japanese students and non-Japanese instructors in English-medium Japanese university classroom settings. The analysis centers on two classroom style aspects impacted by differing teacher and student norms: 1. Turn-taking behavior, emphasizing student non-responsiveness, often characterized by extended periods of silence; and 2. Forms of address, specifically, how students address their teachers, including their use of names with or without titles. The conclusion drawn is that miscommunication can arise when there are disparities in classroom interaction and interpretation norms between teachers and students. Other scholars, Prayatni et al. (2020) in Indonesia concluded that intercultural miscommunication can result from verbal and non-verbal discursive symbols. Verbal miscommunication arises from lexical choices, paralinguistic cues, formulaic expressions, accent, and pronunciation. Non-verbal miscommunication stems from facial expressions, personal space intrusion, and eye contact. Culturally ambiguous words and expressions can also lead to miscommunication.

Overall, the results of the studies described above illustrate the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication. Nonetheless, there is currently limited comprehension regarding the mechanisms underlying miscommunication itself (Paxton et al., 2021). In addition, there is lack of empirical studies, especially within the context of Asian countries. Therefore, the aim of this study is to highlight research trends in intercultural miscommunication and systematically analyze the barriers leading to it.

3. Methods

Among the various approaches to research synthesis, the systematic literature review is widely regarded as a relevant and effective method for summarizing research evidence in higher education research (Chong et al., 2022). It enables the synthesis of evidence in a transparent, comprehensive, and systematic manner. The review procedure consists of search strategy, selection of the articles, and analysis (Minary et al., 2019). To gather pertinent studies, this systematic literature review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines in Figure 1 (Liberati et al., 2009). The procedure for this study is outlined as follows.

3.1 Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted in two prominent databases, Web of Science (WOS) and

Scopus, renowned for their extensive coverage and scope, to identify pertinent journal articles. This involved employing pertinent keywords related to: 1. “intercultural miscommunication” 2. “intercultural misunderstanding” 3. “intercultural barriers” 4. “intercultural communication barriers” 5. “intercultural challenge” 6. “intercultural communication challenge”. It is worth noting that quotation marks were employed around those keywords to ensure that they were searched as whole entities, rather than separately. Those keywords were utilized for conducting searches in those two databases. The period spans from 2013 to 2023. Following the process of duplication, the remaining articles underwent a screening and evaluation process to ensure that only eligible studies were included in the analysis.

3.2 Selection of articles

As can be seen from the PRISMA model (Figure 1), the selection of the articles includes four stages of identification, the screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification stage, a search period spanning from January 1, 2013, to August 12, 2023, was implemented to identify studies addressing the topic of intercultural miscommunication by the key words mentioned in the search strategy. As a result, 25 articles were identified from WoS, while 71 were identified from Scopus. After identifying a total of 96 articles from the two databases, the authors removed 17 articles due to duplication. In the screening stage, title and abstract of 79 articles were reviewed, and 29 articles that violated the inclusion criteria of empirical studies were excluded. During the eligibility stage, 50 complete articles were thoroughly reviewed, and 33 irrelevant articles that did not meet the criteria for education field studies were excluded. Finally, 17 English-language studies remained.

In summary, the following criteria were employed to determine their inclusion:

- (1) Only studies that were conducted between January 1, 2013, to August 12, 2023 were reviewed.
- (2) Only articles published in English-written, peer-reviewed journals within the two mentioned databases of WoS and Scopus were included.
- (3) Articles reporting results from empirical research were assessed.
- (4) The primary outcome, which focuses on intercultural miscommunication in HEIs, has been evaluated.

3.3 Analysis

To analyze the data, the authors adopted a four-step integrative review method as provided by Whitemore & Knafl (2005). This method consists of data reduction, data display, data comparison, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. During the initial step of data reduction, essential information was extracted from valid articles. The elements to be extracted from the articles were chosen with the aim of discerning the differences and similarities among the selected articles pertaining to the topic. This information encompassed details such as author, publication year, country, methodology, sample, findings, and more. Following this, the extracted information was transformed into a display that consolidates data from various primary sources concerning specific variables or subgroups. Additionally, the distribution of publication year, country, and methodology are analyzed using SPSS, and displayed in charts. In the third step, the authors engaged in an iterative process of reviewing and refining the codes to identify subthemes or themes. The authors adopted NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, in order for the trends and themes to be extracted from the articles. Ultimately, the authors discussed the emerging themes and subthemes to ensure their coherence and alignment with the research questions: (1) What are the research trends related to intercultural miscommunication in HEIs? (2) What are the barriers resulting in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs?

4. Results

In this section, the researchers present a summary of the examined studies, highlighting the key

findings. Graphs are used to visually represent general data such as the distribution of the studies by year, country, and research design. Additionally, the studies' data is categorized based on research questions, focusing on trends in research and barriers in intercultural communication, which is the one of the main themes analyzed. The rest of the themes are from the emerging data. The themes are sequentially arranged to reflect a logical progression. This organization helps in clearly understanding the various aspects of intercultural miscommunication.

4.1 Searching Outcomes and Descriptions

The search process resulted in the identification of 96 articles that were published between 2013 and 2023. Following a thorough review and selection process, a total of 17 articles were included for further analysis and reporting. A summary of reviewed studies is presented in Table 1 below. Of these articles, 4 out of the 17 studies were conducted in the year 2016, signifying the predominant focus of research during that specific period (Figure 2 below). The remaining studies are evenly distributed across each year, with an average of one or two studies per year. The bulk of the studies (10) were carried out in Western countries, including the UK and Australia. Additionally, six studies were conducted in Asian countries, with two each in China, Japan, and Malaysia, and one in the African nation of Ethiopia. (Figure 3 below). The majority of the conducted empirical studies, specifically 11 out of 17, were grounded in a qualitative research design (Figure 4 below).

4.2 The Primary Research Trends Observed in the Studies

According to Padmanandam et al. (2021), a word cloud is a visually engaging way to represent text by highlighting frequently used words, providing a quick overview of essential information from web-oriented tools. It identifies hotspots and their evolving trends by analyzing the frequency of occurrences. In this study, the authors employed NVivo software to generate the word cloud (Figure 5 below). The key research trends in intercultural miscommunication in HEIs that have surfaced from the analysis include those such as students, intercultural communication, culture, differences, English, language, international, teachers, challenges, and development, among others. As evident from the Word Cloud, the predominant focus of studies was on students' intercultural communication within HEIs (Meletiadou, 2023; Park, 2022; Sato & Miller, 2021). Under the umbrella of internationalization, English emerged as the dominant language, with challenges in intercultural communication primarily stemming from cultural and linguistic differences (Yarosh et al., 2018; Huhn et al., 2017; Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). A minority of studies concentrate on teachers' intercultural communication and professional development (Yi & Meng, 2022; Genç, 2018; Hu et al., 2016).

4.3 Main Themes Identified

Following the comparison and discussion of the individual research analyses, we synthesized and presented the findings in a narrative format, leading to the identification of five themes: (1) international mobility in HEIs; (2) the role of English as a Lingua Franca; (3) challenges associated with intercultural interaction; (4) barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication; (5) strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication.

4.3.1 International mobility in HEIs

The primary theme derived from the studies is the international mobility in HEIs. Out of the 17 studies, 5 demonstrated that HEIs actively engaged in internationalization efforts (Yassin et al., 2020; God & Zhang, 2019; Huhn et al., 2017; Park, 2022; Sato & Miller, 2021). Individuals reside within the sphere of globalization, which has blurred the lines between cultures and rendered various cultural facets comparatively familiar to others (Yassin et al., 2020).

Attracting international students stands as a paramount objective in the internationalization of higher education, and universities have committed themselves to supporting these students in coexisting and collaborating within the globalized landscape (Park, 2022). Precisely, the count of international students is on the rise in various countries each year. Annually, more than half a million Chinese students venture abroad for their studies, with Western countries such as the USA and Australia serving as their primary destinations (God & Zhang, 2019). Luxembourg, Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Austria, and New Zealand boast the highest proportions of international students among their respective populations (Huhn et al., 2017), and the largest contingent of international students hails from China (Sato & Miller, 2021).

4.3.2 The Role of English as a Lingua Franca

The second theme elaborated on the role of English as a Lingua Franca. As a result of the continually growing number of English speakers worldwide, stemming from diverse cultural backgrounds, English has become a prominent medium for intercultural communication (Genç, 2018). Presently, it stands as a global language, spoken to varying degrees by approximately one-fourth of the world's population. English has attained a novel status as a worldwide language. It is evident that in contemporary times, English serves as a means of communication, with non-native speakers surpassing native speakers in numbers (Babai Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). There exists an immense demand and keen interest in acquiring proficiency in English. Numerous global organizations actively promote the development of English language skills to facilitate communication with individuals from across the globe (Genç, 2018). Furthermore, there is a necessity for the integration of culture as an essential element within the English language.

4.3.3 Challenges Associated with Intercultural Interaction

The third theme pertains to the challenges related to intercultural interaction, with 7 out of the 17 studies providing explanations on how these challenges impact intercultural interactions (Yassin et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2016; God & Zhang, 2019; Huhn et al., 2017; Yi & Meng, 2022; Yarosh et al., 2018; Park, 2022). A study provided that academic difficulties are linked to the learning processes, comprehension of instructors, and understanding the educational systems within the university (Yassin et al., 2020). In addition to the overarching challenges, Asian international students encounter entirely new and markedly distinct learning environments, and they also grapple with obstacles like acculturation and social isolation (Hu et al., 2016). This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the divergent concepts in Chinese and Dutch education, examining them through the lens of individualism versus collectivism. It also highlighted the contrast between an emphasis on qualifications and schooling in one approach versus an emphasis on personal and moral development in the other. International students from China and other Asian countries often encounter significant challenges in forming friendships with local residents. Two commonly identified issues are communication difficulties and a lack of motivation (God & Zhang, 2019). It was stated that enhancing research skills is crucial for all students, including international ones, as they are vital for future employability; however, international students may face challenges in this regard (Yassin et al., 2020). Another study explored three major intercultural challenges in Chinese higher education for non-local teachers: a preference for interactive, student-centered classes by non-local instructors, contrasted with Chinese students' tendency to be quiet and reluctant in large, linguistically diverse classes (Yi & Meng, 2022).

4.3.4 Barriers Leading to Intercultural Miscommunication

The fourth theme concerns the presence of barriers that often result in intercultural miscommunication. Numerous studies have consistently found that both language barriers and

cultural differences can persist as significant impediments during intercultural interactions (Sato & Miller, 2021; Henderson et al., 2016; Meletiadou, 2023; Huhn et al., 2017). A finding showed the main challenge was language barrier (Henderson et al., 2016). Another study has also revealed that the primary challenge that needs to be addressed is the language barrier (Brendel et al., 2016). Owing to these language barriers, intercultural discussions often tend to remain on a somewhat superficial level. Language barriers can be categorized into several aspects, including accents, body language, intonation, pace, tone, and even nuances like sarcastic expressions, among others. Various types of accents have consistently been identified as one of the major language barriers during academic interactions, causing delays in students' adaptation to new learning environments (Park, 2022). The findings indicate that the concept of preserving dignity through the use of polite body language is at times overlooked, and the issue of how the inappropriate use of tone can lead to problems in communication (Henderson et al., 2016). Students often encounter challenges in communicating with their lecturers and fellow foreign students, primarily stemming from difficulties related to differences in intonation and speech pace (Yassin et al., 2020). When using sarcastic expressions, it's crucial to exercise caution because such expressions can potentially place international students in uncomfortable situations if they do not interpret them as jokes (Sato & Miller, 2021). Furthermore, due to the inherent diversity of cultures, misunderstandings in intercultural communication are almost inevitable. This issue is particularly prevalent among university students, especially when there is a lack of awareness regarding differing cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors (Henderson et al., 2016; Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). Another study highlighted that cultural barriers often stem from misunderstandings related to conventional cultural codes, idioms, and terminology employed within specific host settings (Yassin et al., 2020). Insufficient background knowledge in a specific area can hinder effective comprehension (God & Zhang, 2019). During interactions between speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, there is a greater likelihood of misunderstandings, as distinct cultural groups often adhere to varying norms and rules of appropriateness in verbal communication (Babai Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). Ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and discrimination represent another set of barriers that contribute to intercultural miscommunication.

Ethnocentric individuals often place their own culture at the pinnacle and assess other cultures through the lens of their own cultural standards. Nevertheless, ethnocentrism can result in cultural misunderstandings because it confines people to a narrow spectrum of thinking and behavior, offering them only a limited perspective on human diversity (Dumessa & Godesso, 2014). Students may hold negative stereotypes, often based on misconceptions rather than factual truths, leading to social avoidance and thereby creating intercultural miscommunication (Sato & Miller, 2021). Perceived types of prejudice varied such as negative reaction to appearance, race, and age (Henderson et al., 2016).

The causes of these misunderstandings are multifaceted, with layers that are partly rooted in cultural and educational differences, partly associated with the adjustment to a new educational system, and partly influenced by individual personalities (Hu et al., 2016). Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty when interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds can sometimes lead individuals to refrain from initiating these interactions (Khor et al., 2021). Differences in the mental programming are thus one source of misunderstandings in intercultural encounters (Hu et al., 2016). Another obstacle is the issue of comprehension, which refers to difficulties in grasping the speaker's intended message (Park, 2020). The next barrier to intercultural communication is the assumption of similarity rather than recognizing dissimilarity. When individuals behave as if they were in their own familiar cultural context within a different culture, it can lead to a host of issues (Dumessa & Godesso, 2014).

4.3.5 Strategies for Mitigating Intercultural Miscommunication

The fifth theme explores effective strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication. Universities should provide training for educators in fostering tolerance within the educational process (Yi & Meng, 2022; Genç, 2018; Yarosh et al., 2018). This can be achieved through organizing workshops that emphasize the significance and enriching aspects of diversity (Genç, 2018). Students can resort to attending cultural awareness seminars and workshops as a means to acquire cultural knowledge (Henderson et al., 2016). A discovery emerged from the current study, indicating that students engaged in the experiential program cultivated valuable professional skills, including storytelling, negotiation, creativity, intercultural communication, and teamwork (Meletiadou, 2023). Universities should also consider establishing intercultural communication norms that can liberate students from intercultural constraints (God & Zhang, 2019). This would enable them to more effectively employ communication strategies, resulting in higher-quality communication experiences. Previous research has consistently demonstrated that immersing oneself in a foreign country significantly enhances students' attitudes and openness toward different cultures, thereby exerting a positive influence on both their behavior and attitudes (Genç, 2018). Furthermore, building intercultural connections or alliances with the individuals involved and seeking clarification when misunderstandings arise can effectively surmount negative situations (Henderson et al., 2016).

5. Discussion

The objective of this review is to consolidate the existing body of literature concerning intercultural miscommunication, specifically concentrating on the examination of prevailing research trends and identifying the barriers that can mitigate miscommunication, along with other factors that influence intercultural communication. It is noteworthy that, to the best of our knowledge, this systematic review represents an unprecedented effort to delve into the realm of intercultural miscommunication within HEIs. The articles encompassed in this review have directed their attention towards diverse facets of intercultural miscommunication. Consequently, our review provides a relatively thorough comprehension of intercultural miscommunication within the context of HEIs.

In response to the first research question, the results show that the main research trends include students' intercultural communication within HEIs, internationalization, English as the dominant language, challenges in intercultural communication, cultural and linguistic differences, teachers' intercultural communication and professional development, etc. It can be inferred that the majority of studies on intercultural miscommunication in HEIs primarily center on the student population, with relatively limited attention given to teachers. The majority of studies dealt with barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication. These barriers encompass academic and communicational challenges that arise as a consequence of the internationalization of HEIs. The findings reveal a dearth of empirical research on intercultural miscommunication within HEIs, with the highest concentration of 4 studies conducted in the year 2016. The bulk of the studies were carried out in Western countries, including the UK and Australia, owing to their status as early destinations for overseas students. Additional studies focused on Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Malaysia, as these nations have emerged as new destinations for overseas students. Most of the conducted studies were based on a qualitative research design, with the predominant method being the utilization of interviews as the primary research instrument. The qualitative approach can effectively gather data to yield profound insights into the barriers that can give rise to intercultural miscommunication. Nevertheless, it's worth noting that the amount of data obtained through the qualitative approach may be insufficient. However, it's important to note that, as of now, there have been no prior review studies such as this one conducted on the research concerning intercultural miscommunication within the context of HEIs.

The results pertaining to the research question about the barriers contributing to intercultural

miscommunication encompass various facets, including language, culture, ethnocentrism, personality, and more. This finding aligns with Barna (1997) about the barriers of language, assuming similarity instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice. It is undeniable that intercultural communication is intertwined with diverse challenges. Consequently, it is imperative to explore various pathways that may lead to intercultural miscommunication in order to adapt to varying intercultural communication contexts. The authors propose that barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication can be categorized into two aspects: those that hinder intercultural communication from occurring and those that result in intercultural miscommunication. Students who harbor negative stereotypes can result in social avoidance (Sato & Miller, 2021), and ethnocentrism are significant predicting barriers to avoid initiating the interaction (Khor et al., 2021). Linguistic and cultural difference are the main reason for causing intercultural miscommunication (Huhn et al., 2017).

Intercultural miscommunication in HEIs frequently arises as a consequence of internationalization, wherein a substantial number of staff and students originate from diverse countries. Universities have dedicated themselves to assisting these students to live and work conjointly in the globalised context (Park, 2022). Nonetheless, all the included studies exclusively concentrate on internationalization within the context of students studying abroad, with no empirical research conducted within the framework of IatH, also referred to as domestic internationalization. Additionally, various strategies have been identified to mitigate intercultural miscommunication. The authors found that these strategies can be categorized into three distinct aspects of improvement: knowledge, attitude, and skills. Students need to upskill in the area of cultural awareness (Henderson et al., 2016), increase tolerance of ambiguity (Meletiadou, 2023), and attend multicultural group work to gain practical competence (Brendel et al., 2016). These three components align with the theory presented by Spitzberg (1991), which posits that intercultural communication competence comprises motivation, knowledge, and skills. Consequently, the author postulates that enhancing one's intercultural communication competence can effectively reduce instances of intercultural miscommunication within HEIs.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review has synthesized research in selected articles and examined the trends in intercultural miscommunication as well as the barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication. Five themes were identified: (1) international mobility in HEIs; (2) the role of English as a Lingua Franca; (3) challenges associated with intercultural interaction; (4) barriers leading to intercultural miscommunication; (5) strategies for mitigating intercultural miscommunication. This study highlights the importance and value of identification of intercultural communication barriers and highlights the importance of training programs for enhancing the intercultural communication competence. Given the paramount significance of identifying barriers that contribute to intercultural miscommunication, forthcoming research endeavors should delve into the realm of teachers' intercultural miscommunication within the context of IaH among other under-researched topics. This investigation has the potential to yield profound insights into the structural and functional dynamics of such miscommunication. This review study has certain limitations. Firstly, it exclusively encompasses research articles found within two well-regarded databases, specifically Scopus and Web of Science. Secondly, it focuses on studies published between 2013 and 2023. Lastly, the study selection is limited to empirical research. These constraints could potentially influence the overarching findings derived from this systematic review. Furthermore, despite the diligent application of researcher triangulation techniques, the subjective assessment of the quality of the included articles, combined with the narrative approach employed in systematic reviewing, may pose challenges to the validity of the findings. More research on this topic is needed in HEI in the Asian context

given the strong emphasis on internationalization in universities in the region and the drive to seek international staff and students.

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Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram. This diagram offers an overview of the four-step selection process we employed to identify studies pertinent to the review.

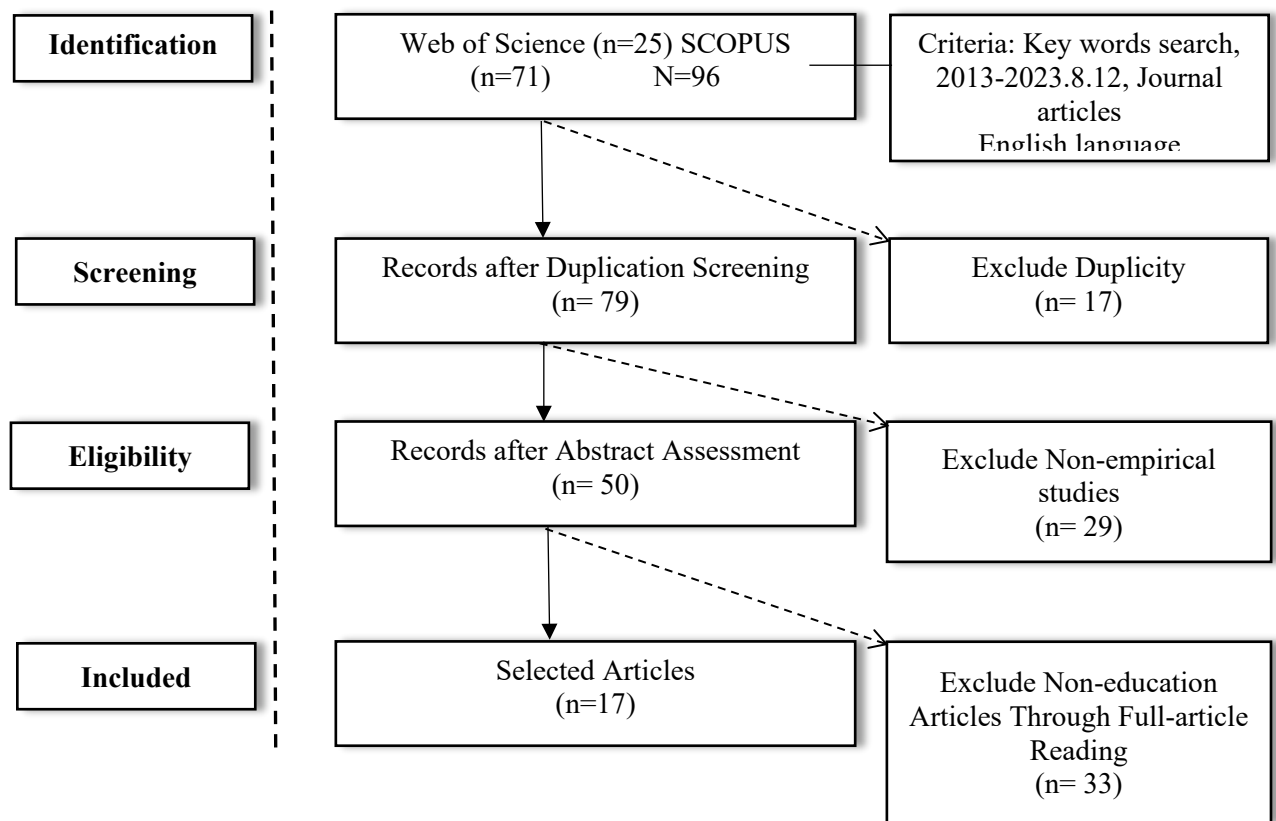


Table 1 An overview of the findings extracted from the selected studies

Study	Country	Method	Instrument	Sample	Barriers	Findings
Meletiadou (2023)	UK	Mixed method	Reflective reports and anonymous feedback	50 multilingual students	Linguistic and cultural barriers	Students in the current study of Lego Serious Play developed valuable professional skills, such as storytelling, negotiation, creativity, intercultural communication, and teamwork.
Park (2022)	Australia	Qualitative	Close-ended and open-ended questions	306 East Asian students	Accent, unfamiliarity, different speech style, the use of colloquialisms	It revealed that there were two main strategies: (a) verbal strategies, and (b) non-verbal strategies.
Yi & Meng (2022)	China	Qualitative	In-depth semi-structured interviews	3 non-local English-speaking EFL teachers	Teacher-dependent and shy students, oversized classes	The non-local EFL teachers strategically shift their teacher identities and instrumentalize their non-local identity to adapt to their intercultural teaching work and to empower themselves professionally in their language teaching work.
Sato & Miller (2021)	Japan	Qualitative	In-depth semi-structured interviews	7 American students	Communication styles, cultural differences, sarcastic expressions	Four different themes (seeking strategies for overcoming intercultural communication challenges, addressing challenges for explaining sarcasm concepts, finding mutual hobbies and interests, and integrating field trips into the conversational program) were extracted related to American students in interacting with Chinese international students.
Khor et al. (2021)	Malaysia	Quantitative	Self-administered survey questionnaire	450 undergraduates	Anxiety, uncertainty, and ethnocentrism	When there is an opportunity to communicate with students from different cultural backgrounds, anxiety, uncertainty, and ethnocentrism will negatively influence students' willingness to initiate the communication and indirectly influence intercultural communication.
Kimura & Canagarajah (2020)	Japan	Qualitative	Interview excerpts and artefacts	1 international professional	Accent	Certain professional task structures are framed in such a way that status differences are finely distributed, collaboration encouraged, and nonverbal resources treated as more important than verbal
Yassin et al. (2020)	Malaysia	Quantitative	Cross-sectional survey	273 international students	Academic, language and research barriers	1. English language, research, and academic challenges have a negative effect on learning sustainability among international students. 2. Intercultural challenges did not have a significant influence on learning sustainability
Benabdelkader (2019)	Australia	Mixed method	Online survey, focus group	124 students and a series of focus groups (N= 16)	Comprehension difficulties, hard to keep the conversation going, lack of	While students were aware of language and cultural differences, many were not well prepared for challenges generated subsequently.

sensitivity						
Genç, (2018)	Turkey	Quantitative	Questionnaire	145 prospective English teachers	Age, gender, year of study at the university, overseas experience	Gender, year of study at the university and overseas experience are important factors connected to students' intercultural communication levels.
Yarosh et al. (2018)	Spain	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	29 students and graduates	the differences between national and academic cultures, and the language barrier	It is important for students to conceptualize IC as a competence and thus something they can develop intentionally; to value IC development efforts and to start reflecting on their own IC level and developmental priorities.
Huhn et al. (2017)	Germany	Quantitative	OSCE	1033 students	Language problems and cultural barriers	International students showed poorer results in clinical-practical exams in the field of psychosocial medicine, with conversational skills yielding the poorest scores. However, regarding factual and practical knowledge examined via a multiple-choice test, no differences emerged between international and local students
Brendel et al. (2016)	Germany	Qualitative	Interview	8 students	Language barriers, prejudice, lack of understanding, cultural misinterpretation	Fieldwork in multicultural groups triggers intercultural learning processes on a personal level.
Hu et al. (2016)	Netherlands	Qualitative	Self-study	1 doctoral supervisor	how formal the supervision should be, how feedback and assessment should be provided and understood	Causes of these misunderstandings are layered, partly rooted in cultural and educational differences, partly related to the transition to an independent researcher that is new to most PhD students, and partly related to supervisor and student personalities.
Henderson et al. (2016)	Australia	Qualitative	Focus group	19 clinical facilitators	Prejudice, unfamiliarity with culture, stereotype, difficulty understanding English	The study provides another perspective of how each of the four categories of intercultural communication challenges were conceptualized and uniquely experienced by participants, including the actions they took to address challenges.
Babai Shishavan & Sharifian (2016)	Australia	Qualitative	DCT and FGI	24 Persian native speakers, 24 Anglo-Australian undergraduate and postgraduate students	Cultural underpinnings of speech acts as well as the cultural conceptualizations attached	The production of speech acts varies from one language and culture to another. The preference for generally using more indirect refusal strategies seems to arise from the face-threatening properties of refusals.
Dumessa & Godesso (2014)	Ethiopia	Qualitative	Focus group discussion and in-depth interview	About 100 participants	Linguistics, cultural and former political prejudice and ethnocentrism	Causes of the intercultural communication barriers are clearly listed, such as ethnocentrism, linguistic and cultural difference, and food habit of the different students might be a source of intercultural communications challenges.
Qin (2014)	China	Qualitative	Participant observation, document analysis, and interview	20 American	Roles, place, time, audience, and scripts	This five-element analytic model highlights the key elements in a communicative event and provides intercultural practitioners a practical tool to analyze the complicated reasons caused by culture in intercultural misunderstandings.

Figure 2: Article Distribution by Year

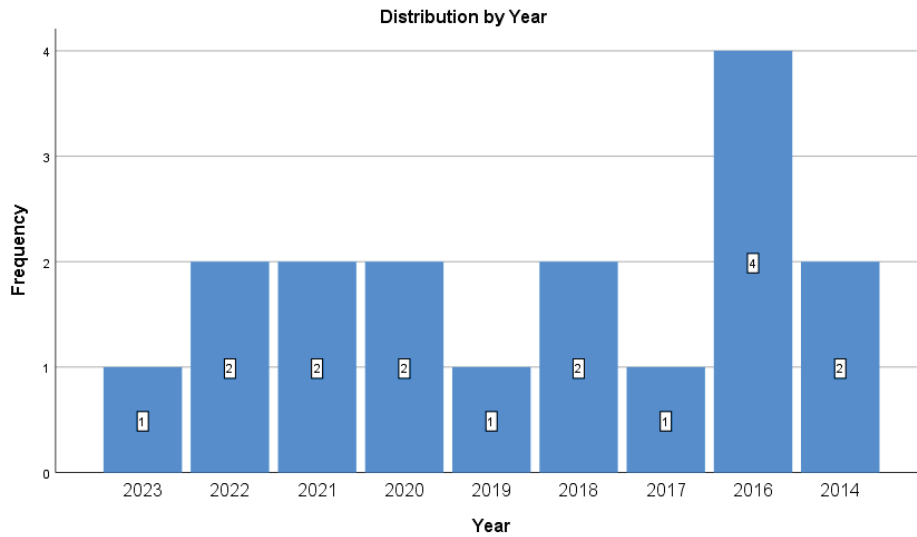


Figure 3: Article Distribution by Country

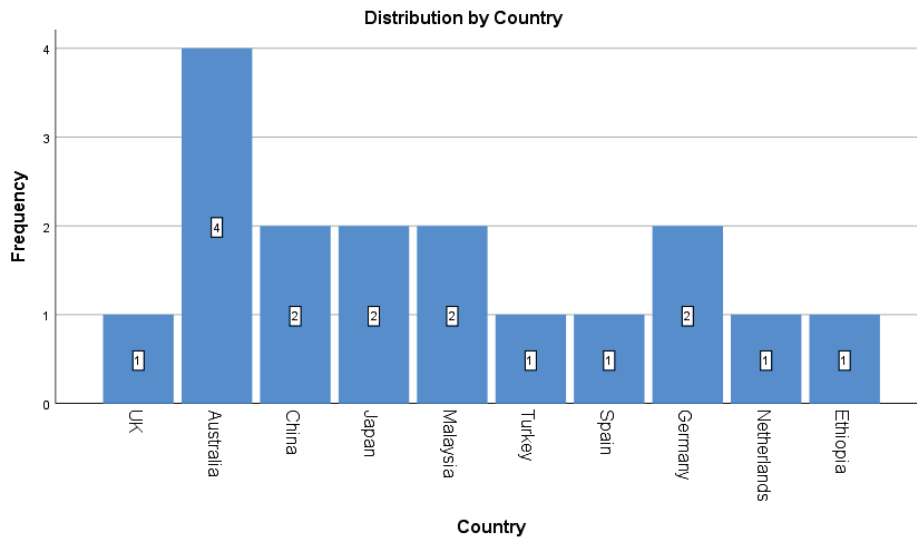


Figure 4: Article Distribution by Method

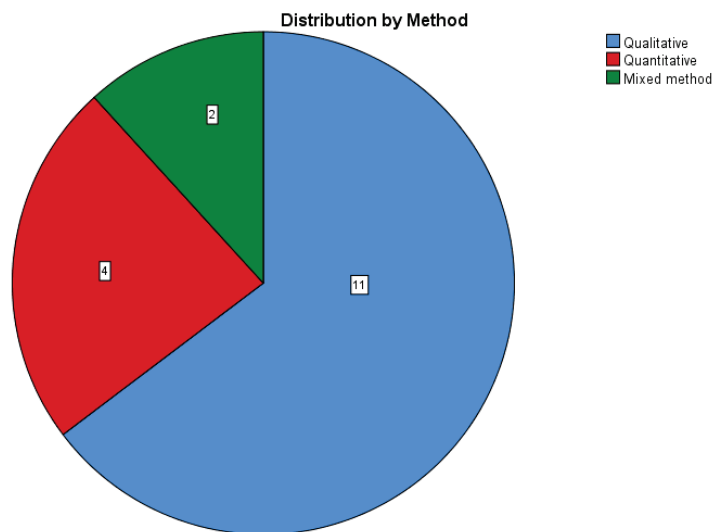


Figure 5 Word Cloud by NVivo

