INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDENTS UNDERSTANDING AND LEARNING APPROACH TOWARDS COURSES BASED ON BLOOM'S REVISED TAXONOMY

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BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

(1) This undergraduate FYP is the end result of my own work and due acknowledgement has been given in the references to ALL sources of information be they printed,electronic, or personal.

(2) No portion of this FYP has been submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification of this or any other university, or other institutes of learning.

(3) Sole contribution has been made by me in completing the FYP.

(4) The word count of this research report is _____10984_____ .

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project primarily to my supervisor, Mr Lee Yoon Heng, whose guidance and expertise have been invaluable throughout the project. Your encouragement and feedback pushed me to think critically and push the boundaries of my research. I would also like to dedicate this research to my parents and friends who have provided me with unwavering love and support throughout my academic journey.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

BRT   Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

CLO   Course Learning Objectives

FG   Focus Group

KWT   Key Word Table

LLMs   Large Language Models

SOLO   Structure of the Observed Learning Outcomes

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PREFACE

This research is focused on exploring the understanding and learning approach of international business students towards courses based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) is a framework widely used in higher education to structure learning objectives and outcomes. It categorizes cognitive skills into six levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

In conducting this research, a Focus Group discussion as a data collection method was employed. The findings were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the students' learning experiences and their interpretations of key verbs.

This study is intended to contribute to the existing literature on the use of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in higher education, particularly in the field of international business. It is hoped that the findings of this research will inform educators and curriculum designers in designing courses that are more effective in enhancing students' understanding and learning outcomes.

To summarize, this research is an attempt to shed light on an important area of inquiry and provide a useful resource for educators, students, and researchers interested in the topic of international business and learning approaches.

ABSTRACT

This research explores the understanding and learning approach of international business students towards courses based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) is a widely used educational framework in higher education for structuring learning objectives and outcomes. The study aims to provide investigate international business students' understanding in the context of their courses and assignments, and to identify common themes and patterns in their responses and how it can improve their understanding and learning outcomes.

The study also determined how students interpreted key BRT verbs in the final exam questions and whether they matched the examiner's intent. It provided clarity for instructors on student perspectives to improve teaching methods, learning experiences, etc., as well as course performances. The findings show that there are variations in their understanding and application of the taxonomy at different cognitive levels.

In a nutshell, this research contributes to the existing literature on the use of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in higher education and offers insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with its application in international business education.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This is a brief introduction and analysis of the overall research purpose to have a simple understanding of the research topic. The introduction content included the research background, problem, questions, objectives, and research significance.

1.1 Research Background

The Bachelor of International Business Course has gradually become one of the major courses at the University of Malaysia. International Business is a complex field of study that requires a thorough understanding of various disciplines, including economics, marketing, finance, and management. In addition, the constantly changing global business environment, language barriers, and cross-cultural differences make studying international business a challenging task. Furthermore, integrating theory with practice is another significant challenge that international business students face.

To overcome these challenges, educators often use Bloom's Taxonomy to design course learning plans and assessments. Bloom's Taxonomy is a well-known framework that classifies cognitive skills into different levels, which helps educators design courses that enable students to learn and apply different skills at different levels of complexity. By using relevant key verbs to develop learning outcomes, educators can create courses that help students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the field of international business.

There are three domains of educational objectives that were identified in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and his teams, which included cognitive (mental), affective (emotional/feelings/attitude), and psychomotor (physical ability) skills. (Bloom et al., 1956). Numerous studies have stated that the cognitive domain is appropriate and accessible for educational purposes relative to the taxonomies of affective and psychomotor domains. Simultaneously, compared to the other education models, such as the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) Model, which was developed by Biggs and Collis (1982), the cognitive domain under the Bloom Revised Taxonomy (BRT) model is the most commonly used in developing student learning objectives.

In 2002, the cognitive objectives were revised by Krathwohl (2002) into six levels of the process, including remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The purpose of BRT has been divided into three: provide a common language among educators; help determine the alignment of objectives, learning activities, and assessment; and stretch the educational possibilities to give greater breadth and depth to courses and curricula Krathwohl (2002).

Currently, the key verbs of BRT have been widely used in Malaysian higher education in the development of the course and learning outcomes, as well as assessment methods. These levels can aid in the development of learning outcomes for students' qualifications as well as their course performance. The construction of the course and learning objectives, as well as the assessment methods, including the questions on the final exam given to international business students, have extensively used Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) terminology.

1.2   Research Problem

There are significant gaps in the understanding of students' understanding level of BRT's key verbs, and how they affect the achievement of Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) remains underexplored. Despite the widespread use of BRT in course design and assessment, there is limited research on how students comprehend the key verbs and their relevance to the CLOs, resulting in inconsistencies in students' understanding and achievement of course objectives.

The majority of studies demonstrate and express the educators' perspectives on the use and comprehension of the BRT model, and learners are expected to meet the requirements from the educators' perspective. Indirectly, the lack of student perspectives in the study led to a diversion from the objective of BRT, which is to establish consistency. Ching and colleagues (2017) indicated that numerous students in the course have a blurring concept and understanding of the course's objective and learning outcomes.

Besides, many research studies emphasize the instructor's definition of the students' assumptions rather than defining the meaning of these verbs from the students' perspective (Slominski, et al., 2019). Such inconsistencies may have negative effects on students. For example, students may think that "evaluate" only requires writing about what they understand, thus ignoring the instructor's definition of "evaluate" as something that requires students to understand, apply, and analyze. In other words, students assume that the higher level is the lower level, in which case they cannot achieve the depth of cognition needed for the course.

Some academic studies have revealed inconsistencies between students' and instructors' interpretations and comprehensions of BRT terms concerning its application. In the research of Johnson and Gallagher (2021), the conceptions and definitions of the terms learning, understanding, memorizing, and studying are the difference between instructors and students. Research has shown that tutors assume

a definition of students' understanding of learning in their cognitive processes. The research of Kember (2016) defined that students prefer to use understanding and memorizing as their study approach.

These findings indicate a mismatch between the two, with students unknowingly adopting a learning approach incompatible with BRT and, at worst, negatively impacting student learning outcomes, achievements, and course performance. Instructors will tailor the learning objectives and teaching methods to his or her 'assumptions' about the student. In the literature of Nordin et al. (2018), it is noted that how lecturers educate and organize the course content affects students' motivation to study and their learning outcomes. Nonetheless, there is a gap in the literature as to the understanding of BRT's key verbs and how can be used effectively by students.

1.3   Research Questions

This study aims to focus on the comprehension of key verbs and their impact on the achievement of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). The research questions are designed to address the gaps in existing literature on this topic.

1. What learning approaches do international business students use to study and prepare for courses based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, and how do these approaches influence their understanding and academic performance?
2. How do international business students understand and interpret the key verbs of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy when answering their final examination questions?
3. What is the misunderstanding of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy's key verbs used in examination questions?

1.4 Research Objectives

There are two research objectives throughout this research:

1. To investigate international business students' understanding and interpretation of the key verbs of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in the context of their courses and assignments, and to identify common themes and patterns in their responses.
2. To explore students' interpretation of BRT key verbs of final examination questions inline with examiners' intention.

1.5 Research Significance

The goal of this study is to examine how international business students understand the key verbs and learning methods of BRT intending to promote a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with this pedagogy. By investigating students' perspectives and experiences, this study can identify students' weaknesses and areas of strength in examinations and suggest potential solutions to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

An important contribution of this study is its potential to provide information for more effective BRT-based curriculum outcome development in international business education. By providing insight into students' learning preferences, this study can help educators design courses that meet students' needs and interests. This, in turn, can increase student engagement, motivation, and achievement of course learning outcomes (CLOs).

In addition, this study can inform assessment designs that better reflect students' understanding and application of BRT concepts in the real world. This helps bridge the gap between theory and practice and prepares students for future careers in the global marketplace.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter only provides a basic understanding of the research study. International business education faces numerous challenges and BRT is commonly used to design course learning plans and assessments to help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in international business. However, limited research exists on how students comprehend BRT's key verbs and their relevance to Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs), resulting in inconsistencies in students' understanding and achievement of course objectives. Further discussion will unfold in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

This chapter will introduce the theory and literature review that underpins the paper's conceptual framework. It starts with a review of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT), which categorizes learning objectives and describes its evolution and pedagogical applications. The discussion then focuses on the specific key verbs used in continuous assessment design, moving on to how the taxonomy is used in International Business Education, particularly in course design, learning outcomes, and course assessment. The chapter concludes by exploring the relationship between BRT and students' learning approaches and strategies.

2.1   International Business Education

International Business Programme is a highly sought-after general management programme offered by universities worldwide. Through this programme, students gain a comprehensive understanding of various areas such as global market trends, cross-cultural communication, and international finance, among others.

2.1.1 Students' Challenges in the IB Curriculum

However, being a general management programme, IB covers a vast range of disciplines, which poses significant challenges for students.

1. The complexity of the subject

International business education encompasses many complex and diverse fields. Students must have a knowledge base in all areas to be comfortable with them. For instance, students must understand many areas of economics, foreign and trade policies, and intercultural communication (Schoemaker, 2008). In addition, international business incorporates the broader sociopolitical environment that influences it. It equips students with the necessary business knowledge and skills for success and prepares them for several career paths. Students must understand and apply theories from these different disciplines, which might be intimidating for individuals who are not well-versed in all of them.

2. Constantly Changing Environments make learning challenging

The global economy has been increasingly intertwined in recent years, making international business education more crucial than ever. It enables individuals to comprehend the complexities of the global economy and manage the ever-changing commercial landscape. The constantly changing international business environment presents a challenge for students. It is essential for business students to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and trends in the field. For instance, students should be aware of current business events such as economic policies, global pandemics, and trade negotiations. This knowledge enables students to analyze and understand the impact of these events on global business operations. Students must learn to adapt quickly to these changes to succeed in their courses (Jance & Morhan, 2013).

3, Language Barriers of business terminology and concepts

Jance and Morhan (2013) mentioned that language barriers could pose significant challenges for non-native speakers. International business students must master business terminology and concepts in a foreign language. This requires strong language skills, such as effective written communication and reading comprehension. Students must develop these skills to effectively communicate with clients, business partners, and colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. Malik and colleagues (2022) also highlighted the importance of English language proficiency for academic success among business students. The results suggest a significant positive correlation between business students' English proficiency and academic performance. The study found that students with higher levels of English proficiency tended to have higher GPAs and were more likely to succeed academically (Martirosyan et al, 2015). They also highlight the challenges faced by business students with lower levels of English proficiency, including a lack of confidence in their academic abilities and difficulty in understanding course material.

4. Lack of Cross-Cultural Differences in understanding

Understanding cross-cultural differences are critical in international business, as it can affect business operations. For example, how business is conducted in one country may differ. It is essential for international business students to develop cross-cultural competencies to thrive in today's global world. This involves profoundly understanding different cultural values, norms, and

beliefs. By doing so, students can effectively navigate and communicate in different cultural contexts (Penbek, et al, 2012; Johnson, Lenarrtowic & Apud, 2006).

5. Required Integration of Theory and Practice

Integrating theory with practice is an essential aspect of international business education. International business courses often require students to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios. This can be challenging for some students because they may have difficulty understanding and solving complex problems by rote. This concern is echoed in studies in management education (Porter & McKibbin, 1988) and business school disciplines (cf. Accounting Education Reform Commission, 1990) that urge curricula to develop students' higher-order thinking skills. Additionally, Jackson (2013) underscored that many business students lack the flexibility to apply abstract concepts in practical business scenarios, thereby drawing criticism for their perceived lack of relevance. International business students must develop critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills to overcome this challenge. These skills enable students to analyze complex business problems, identify potential solutions, and make informed decisions. Therefore, business schools should focus on developing these skills in their programs to prepare students for success in today's global business environment.

In conclusion, International Business education demands knowledge in diverse areas such as economics, foreign policies, and intercultural communication. The dynamic global economy necessitates continuous

learning and adaptation to emerging trends. Cross-cultural differences, language barriers, and the integration of theory and practice present challenges. Business students must develop higher-order thinking and critical thinking skills to excel in the global business world.

2.1.2 Bloom Revised Taxonomy (BRT) and International Business Education

An effective approach to support international business students in surmounting the complexities they face is through the implementation of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT), a comprehensive model for structuring and classifying educational objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Critical thinking skills are essential for success in the rapidly changing and complex business environment (Desai et al., 2016). Nentl et al. (2008) offer examples of how BRT can be applied in different business disciplines, such as marketing and management, emphasizing that BRT can promote higher-order thinking skills in business education.

Betts (2008) states that each course should provide clear objectives that are consistent with the overall course's expectations. Therefore, the cognitive dimensions of BRT used as a syllabus in international business courses include course objectives, learning outcomes, and assignments. Incorporating BRT into the course design process can help instructors create effective and engaging learning experiences for students in international business education.

BRT can also be used in curriculum design and development for international business education, such as Healy et al. (2011), by using the taxonomy to learn the theoretical design of a sales course. The study by Lau et al. (2018) suggests that BRT can be a useful tool for evaluating and

improving the alignment between course learning outcomes and assessment items in higher education programs.

In summary, success within the international business education curriculum necessitates several learning strategies. Students must be able to apply BRT to their coursework, as different courses require different learning methodologies and techniques.

2.2   Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT)

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) is a widely-used framework for classifying educational learning objectives into six levels of cognitive complexity. BRT has been shown to be helpful in providing students with knowledge of basic concepts and frameworks, while also requiring them to focus on observed phenomena and apply concepts to real-life situations.

2.2.1 Definition and Explanation of BRT

Krathwohl (2002, p. 212) defined the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as "a framework for classifying statements of what we expect or intend students to learn as a result of instruction." Bloom Taxonomy (BT) is a hierarchical classification that is among the most widely cited in curriculum development. It is a beneficial tool that educators can employ to cultivate students' advanced cognitive abilities, including analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

Subsequently, the original BT was revised known as Bloom Revised Taxonomy (BRT). The framework prompts students to transcend mere memorization of information and ideas and apply their acquired knowledge to authentic and complex scenarios, refining their critical thinking and problem-solving competencies.

2.2.2 Overview of the six levels of BRT

BRT is a hierarchical framework for classifying educational learning objectives into six levels of cognitive complexity. The six levels of BRT are illustrated in Table 2.1. The first two levels focus on knowledge acquisition and comprehension, while the next two levels involve using knowledge to solve problems and make decisions. The last two levels involve higher-order thinking skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. The taxonomy is widely used in education to design curricula, develop assessment tools, and evaluate student achievement.

Table 2.1: Six cognitive learning levels of BRT

Level	Cognitive Learning	Definitions	Emphasis
1	Remembering	Recalling previously learned information	Lower-order thinking skills (LOTs)
2	Understanding	Comprehending the meaning of information	
3	Applying	Using knowledge in new situations or environments	
4	Analyzing	Breaking down information into parts and understanding relationships	Higher-order thinking skills (HOTs)
5	Evaluating	Making judgments about the value or quality of information	
6	Creating	Combining information to form a new whole or produce a unique solution	

Source: Anderson. L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing.* Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon

2.2.3 Importance of BRT in Education

BRT has been widely used in a variety of educational contexts, such as learning theory, course content development, instruction, and evaluation, and has been the primary guidance (Seaman, 2011).

BRT's hierarchical pyramid thinking design undoubtedly provides a valuable framework for instructional designers and educators, particularly emphasizing higher-order thinking (HOTs). From the educator's standpoint, the BRT is expected to assist students in measuring and demonstrating their competence and ability at the required level of the course, commonly refers as "course learning outcome" (CLOs) (Krathwohl, 2002). BRT is an excellent guideline for educators to utilize when matching assessment items

to levels of Course learning objectives (Stanny, 2016). Using BRT as a framework can enable instructors to create assignments and assessments that target diverse cognitive skills, thus enhancing students' critical thinking abilities Nentl et al. (2008).

In summary, BRT is widely used to evaluate students' learning outcomes, with each of the six levels corresponding to distinct stages of the learning process and associated with key verbs describing the necessary cognitive processes. These key verbs are critical for educators to establish effective assessment and evaluation strategies.

2.3   Key Verbs of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

To help educators in developing and measuring CLOs, relevant key verbs have been developed in each of the BRT levels.

2.3.1 Introduction to key verbs

The six levels of BRT are associated with a corresponding key verb that describes the cognitive activity required to demonstrate proficiency at that level and the thinking or action required to achieve the learning goal.

Newton et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of action key verbs as they help to clarify the measurability of learning outcomes. Educators can construct instructional activities, assessments, and evaluations that match the desired learning outcomes by using these important action verbs as a guide. In addition, educators can use Bloom's taxonomy to evaluate their

students' progress by determining each learner's level and assigning them a suitable activity. The Table below is a list of key verbs of BRT level.

Figure 2.1: Key Verbs examples of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

REVISED Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs

I. Remembering	II. Understanding	III. Applying	IV. Analyzing	V. Evaluating	VI. Creating
Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers.	Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.	Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.	Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.	Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas, or quality of work based on a set of criteria.	Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing new solutions.
define describe duplicate enumerate examine identify label list locate match memorize name observe omit quote read recall recite recognize record repeat reproduce retell select state tabulate tell visualize	ask associate cite classify compare contrast convert describe differentiate discover discuss distinguish estimate explain express extend generalize give examples group identify illustrate indicate infer interpret judge observe order paraphrase predict relate report represent research restate review rewrite select show summarize trace transform translate	act administer apply articulate calculate change chart choose collect complete compute construct determine develop discover dramatize employ establish examine experiment explain illustrate interpret judge manipulate modify operate practice predict prepare produce record relate report schedule simulate sketch solve teach transfer write	advertise analyze appraise calculate categorize classify compare conclude connect contrast correlate criticize deduce devise diagram differentiate discriminate dissect distinguish divide estimate evaluate experiment explain focus illustrate infer order organize plan prioritize select separate subdivide survey test	appraise argue assess choose compare conclude consider convince criticize critique debate decide defend discriminate distinguish editorialize estimate evaluate find errors grade judge justify measure order persuade predict rank rate recommend reframe score select summarize support test weigh	adapt anticipate assemble collaborate combine compile compose construct create design develop devise express facilitate formulate generalize hypothesize infer integrate intervene invent justify manage modify negotiate originate plan prepare produce propose rearrange reorganize report revise rewrite role-play simulate solve speculate structure test validate write

Adapted from Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing,* Abridged Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

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2.3.2 Key Verbs Used in Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives is a valuable framework that can be used in designing educational objectives, curriculum, and assessments. It consists of six cognitive levels, with associated key verbs that describe the desired cognitive process or skill. Using this framework, educators can design assessments and evaluations that measure the cognitive processes required to achieve desired learning outcomes.

Nentl et al. (2008) found that BRT can be applied in different business disciplines, such as marketing and management, emphasizing that BRT can promote higher-order thinking skills in business education. However, it is important to ensure that students interpret the key verbs associated with each cognitive level in the same way as their instructors intended.

Therefore, educators should be clear in their expectations and give concrete examples of what each essential verb entails. They can use this to help students grasp what is expected of them in terms of their cognitive processes, which will boost learning outcomes and performance.

To summarize, BRT is a valuable tool for educators to design courses and align with specific learning outcomes. By using appropriate key verbs and communicating their expectations clearly, educators can develop assessments and evaluations that measure the cognitive processes required to achieve desired learning outcomes and improve student learning outcomes and performance.

2.4 Students' Learning Approach

2.4.1 Discussion of different learning approaches and strategies used by Students

Educators Marton and Saljo (1976) clearly distinguished the concept of university students' learning methods in their study programmes. They defined them into two categories: deep learning approach and surface learning approach. Students who use surface learning focus on memorization and rote learning, while those who adopt a deep learning approach engage with the material and put more effort into understanding it (Enswistle & Ramsden 2015; Lucas 2001).

Educator Ramsden (2003) suggested that two approaches were suitable for all courses, yet the definitions might differ in various disciplines. The factors such as educators' teaching approach or students' expectations of the course would influence students to use deep or surface learning approaches as well as the perceived beliefs on learning. Nordin and colleagues (2018) found that instructors should be mindful of how their course structure and teaching methods affect students' motivation.

2.4.2 Connection between Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and learning approaches.

Textbook materials and teachers' teaching styles often focus on lower-order thinking, which can lead students to use lower-order learning styles like rote memorization (Anasy, 2016). However, Razmjoo and Kazempourfard (2012) argue that students should be introduced to higher-level learning skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Alaoutinen and Smolander

(2010) found that students who use BRT can classify their knowledge well and find it helpful for learning. The tool can also track progress and motivate learning.

2.5   Conclusion

The literature review thoroughly examines the challenges students face in learning international business education and how the taxonomy is applied to curriculum design, learning outcomes, and assessment in international business education. It highlights BRT, its history and application in education, and the verbs that describe cognitive processes. The review also explores various approaches to learning and how BRT affects them. This review provides a solid foundation for examining students' understanding and use of key verbs in their final exams in international business education. The next chapter will discuss the methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

This section is to describe the methodology that this research used to address the research questions and objectives outlined in the previous chapter. This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the research design, sampling selection, and discussion guide development used to ensure the study's validity and reliability. By detailing the research process, readers will be able to understand how the research questions were addressed and how the results were obtained.

3.1   Research Design

This study was conducted as qualitative research with the focus group (FG) as the primary research methodology to investigate students learning approaches, whether students understand and apply or misunderstand the key verbs of BRT when responding to final examination questions.

Qualitative research is characterized by open-ended questions that offer flexibility and are ideally suited to collecting questions, ideas, experiences, meanings, etc. of things that cannot be described by converting the answers into numbers. Under the research methodology, there are a few methods, such as interviews, observation, and focus groups.

3.2   Focus Group (FG)

A focus group is a research method that involves gathering a small group of individuals to participate in a guided discussion about a particular topic or issue, with the aim of gaining insights into their perspectives and experiences (Krueger, 2014). The group discussion is usually led by a moderator and is designed to encourage participants to share their opinions and ideas. It may be used to analyze not just what individuals perceive but also how they think and why they think the way they do (Kitzinger, 1995).

FG methodology has been widely used in education-related research. It is a discussion and adaptive method that can be utilized at any level of research. Lynam and Cachia (2017) also suggested that utilizing focus groups is an effective approach to examining students' viewpoints and experiences on assessments. It could further aid in developing more equitable and efficient assessment practices. Tobias and colleagues (2018) also provide researchers with utilizing focus group discussions as a research method for conservation, including design, conduct, and analysis.

Therefore, this study will utilize the focus group method to investigate International Business students' understanding and learning approach towards courses based on BRT, focusing on exploring how students perceive and engage with higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and creating.

3.2.1 Advantages of FG

Focus groups have several advantages that make them a popular research method. These benefits include:

- Cost-effective and time-saving. Compared to surveys that require a larger sample size, FG can be conducted with relatively small groups of people to achieve representativeness (Trochim, 2006). Additionally, FG allows for recruiting a specific target audience, making this research easier to gather related comments or feedback (Krueger, 2014). This study's target audience was international business students in Year 1 to Year 3 who were only enrolled at UTAR. making FG an effective method for obtaining practical and supportive data for the collection.

- Flexibility. FG is a flexible technique that can be adjusted based on participants' responses, reactions, or behaviour (Kitzinger, 1995). Improvised questions can provide the moderator with complete information to analyze the study, allowing for a deeper understanding of the participants' attitudes and perspectives.

- Interactive. The group dynamics and interaction in focus groups encouraged students who are afraid to be interviewed alone to participate and stimulate comments from individuals who may be hesitant to express themselves in one-on-one interviews (Krueger, 2014). Also, participating in discussions generated by other group members stimulates comments from those students who believe they have nothing to say or are considered "unresponsive patients" (Lynam & Cachia, 2017). As participants can communicate with one another and build upon one another's ideas, the use of focus groups generated many student perspectives on topics specific to this study.

In summary, the advantages of using FG are enabled open and interactive data gathering in different situations. These advantages are crucial because certain participants recruited in this research are "not expressive" therefore FG is effective in removing these barriers.

3.2.2 Challenges or Disadvantages of FG

While focus groups have several advantages, there are also a few challenges to consider. The major challenges are:

- Limited generalizability. This may result in biased results that are not representative of the target group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). As the students who participated in this session are a sample of the audience group, the opinions and results of a small group of people may not generalize to a larger group than the international business student body.

- Opinion may be left out or influenced. Certain opinions may be left out in the FG, or participants may be influenced by the thoughts of others in the group, which resulted in a change in their own opinions (Krueger & Casey, 2015). There was a situation where students with introverted personalities have difficulty openly expressing their opinions. For example, students' shyness or opinions may be affected; some might not be willing to voice their self-opinions in front of others. Therefore, the collected information may be affected and be a low-quality result.

- Time-consuming. Focus groups might be more time-consuming than other data collection approaches, particularly in terms of recruiting and session scheduling. The inconsistent talking chance of each participant also is one of the disadvantages of FG. This disadvantage prompted some participants to speed through their points of view. Some active students dominated the conversation and had more time to talk than others, making their contributions disproportionate (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

In conclusion, the disadvantages of FG are acknowledged in this research, therefore, relevant strategies are developed to manage these know issues. These strategies are discussed in the section below:

3.3 The Role of Focus Group Moderator

To address these disadvantages, the moderator is crucial in managing and mitigating the FG session. The moderator selected participants who represent the target audience carefully before entering the session and allowed students to get to know each other before the session began, to create a safe and comfortable environment where all students can freely share their thoughts to overcome the challenge of limited generalizability.

The moderator also should be attentive to any disruptive participants who may influence or exclude certain opinions and encourage quieter participants to share their thoughts.

In addition, the moderator must carefully plan the focus group, including recruitment, scheduling, and venue. They should be flexible and responsive to any unforeseen issues that may arise during the process to ensure that the session runs smoothly and effectively.

3.4 Discussion Guide Development

To develop the discussion guide for the focus group, the researchers followed several steps. They began by identifying the three research questions and developing open-ended questions for each.

For Research Question 1, three open-ended questions were developed to explore students' experiences in preparing for final exams, their thoughts on the course plan and its learning objectives, and which subjects they found most difficult. For Research Questions 2 and 3, the researchers identified key verbs from past year

examination papers. For example: "Explain how the various facets of the general environment are likely to be important for BGC". So in this case, the key identified is "explain".

3.4.1 Key Verbs Interpretations

To identify these key verbs, the researchers pre-selected three core courses for each academic year of the international business degree program, totalling six courses. The mandatory course courses are identified based on the program structure for each academic year of the international business degree program.

For each course identified, the research examines the three-trimester final exam papers from the university's student portal. These exams were administered physically, and not online as the university was 're-open' from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3.1: Summary of the Final Examination Papers

Programme Year	Course Name	Final Examination Paper
Year 1	**Cross Cultural Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2019/20 September
	Management Principles	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 Dec 3. Year 2020/21 April
Year 2	**Operations Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2020/21 September 3. Year 2019/20 September
	International Trade Theory & Policy	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2020/21 October
Year 3	**Strategic Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2020/21 December 3. Year 2019/20 May
	International Logistics	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2019/20 May
Total FE = 18		

Source: Develop for the research

Subsequently, the researcher examined each final exam question to determine the presence of any BRT key verb and identify these key verbs with the respective level of Bloom Taxonomy. The key verbs identified were based on the a-priory Bloom Taxonomy (Figure 2.1). For example, based on the BRT, the question that contains the verbs 'describe' falls under the BRT cognitive level 1 of remembering. This step required a full description and associated words used in bloom taxonomy.

To begin the data collection process, an a-priory Bloom taxonomy is used based on the most common verbs and adverbs used in the past year's final examination papers of the international business courses. These verbs and adverbs were developed to help guide the discussion during the FG sessions and ensure that all aspects of BRT were covered in the study. The process

of exam question key verbs identification was applied to all the final exam questions for each of the program years to produce a key verbs frequency list. A key verb frequency table was created (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Key Verbs frequency from final year exam paper

1. Explain (28)	1. Calculate (13)	1. Discuss (15)	1. Explain (50)
2. Describe (11)	2. Explain (16)	2. Justify (8)	2. Discuss (29)
3. Discuss (10)	3. Describe (8)	3. Explain (6)	3. Describe (20)
4. Identify (9)	4. Show (7)	4. Recommend (3)	4. Justify (14)
5. Provide (8)	5. Evaluate (5)	5. Propose (3)	5. Calculate (13)
6. Define (6)	6. Discuss (4)	6. Elaborate (3)	6. Identify (12)
7. Justify (4)	7. Construct (4)	7. Provide (2)	7. Recommend (10)
8. Recommend (3)	8. Recommend (4)	8. Distinguish (2)	8. Provide (10)
9. Support (3)	9. Justify (3)	9. Summarize (2)	9. Define (9)
10. Propose (2)	10. Elaborate (3)	10. Comment (2)	10. Evaluate (7)

Note: number in the bracket denotes frequency

Source: Developed for the research

Finally, the 8 key verbs were selected and transformed into PowerPoint Slides as a visual aid for the focus group discussion.

Figure 3.1: Key Verbs of PowerPoint Slides

Source: Developed for the research

3.4.2 Open-ended Questions

In addition to the visual cards, a discussion guide is also developed. The guide focused on the three open-ended questions for Research Question 1 and was pilot-tested with a small group of three Year 3 students before the focus group

Following the pilot test, the researchers made two specific changes to the discussion guide:

a) The number of key verbs tested in the discussion guide was reduced from 16 to 8. The original 16 key verbs were found to be too time-consuming and were therefore reduced to make the discussion guide more efficient.

b) In the pilot test, the wording of the first question in the discussion guide was considered confusing. Therefore, the question was changed from "What is your approach to learning?" to "Can you share your experience in preparing for your final exam?" to make it clearer and more specific for the participants.

Therefore, the finalized discussion guide focused on the following area:

a) Can you share your experience in preparing for the final examination?
b) What do you think about Course Plan and its learning objective?
c) What subjects are difficult for you?

3.5 Sampling

The "sample" is called the participants in a focus group study. Participants were recruited from the International Business degree program at a private university in Malaysia using a combination of purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling methods.

- Purposeful sampling involved selecting participants based on their academic study year, including years 1-3 of the bachelor's degree program.

- Convenience sampling was also utilized to select participants who were easily accessible to the research team.

- Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants who may have been difficult to find through the other two methods. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were also asked to refer other potential participants who met the purposeful sampling criteria.

18 participants were recruited for the focus group. Table 3.3 show the details of the participants.

Table 3.3: Summary of Participants

Participant	Participant detail (Y – year; F-female; M = Male)	FG grouping
Year 1	Y1_M1 Y1_M2 Y1_F1 Y1_F2	FG 1
	Y1_F3 Y1_F4 Y1_F5 Y1_M3	FG 2
Year 2	Y2_F1 Y2_F2 Y2_M1 Y2_F3 Y2_M2	FG 3
Year 3	Y3_F1 Y3_F2 Y3_F3 Y3_M1 Y3_M2	FG 4
Total	18 Participants	4 FG groups

Source: Developed for the research

3.5.1 Sample Size

According to Krueger (1994), there might be a minimum of three and a maximum of twelve. Nyamathi and Shuler (1990) stated that four focus groups are sufficient; nevertheless, after the third group, it is important to consider the possibility of response saturation. Therefore, to achieve the data, the study conducted four focus groups, following the recommendation of Guest, Namey, and McKenna (2017) for two to three FG.

One group of Year 3 students (n = 5), one group of Year 2 students (n = 5) and two groups of Year 1 students (n = 4 and 4) were included, with each

group comprising two males and at least two females. FG conducted two group interviews with first-year students because an adequate reference response was not obtained in the first group interview.

3.6   Conclusion

In conclusion, this study utilized a qualitative research design with the focus group method as the primary research methodology. Besides, this chapter shows a systematic approach to developing the discussion guide and sampling method. In the next chapter, the data collection and data analysis process will be presented.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.0   Introduction

The previous chapter explicitly discussed the methodology. Therefore, this chapter will show the data collection and how to analyze the research project data using statistical methods based on the previous chapter's methodology to determine variable relationships.

4.1   Data Collection

Four focus groups were conducted between February 13 and 22, 2023, and lasted for approximately one hour.

The participants were seated at round tables in UTAR Cafeteria to encourage interaction and discussion. The groups were divided according to students' years of study, with each group consisting of students in the same year to foster empathy and conversation between the participants.

Before the start of each session, the researcher introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the study. Participants were asked to briefly introduce themselves to the group before the discussion began.

Verbal informed consent was obtained from every participant before data collection began. Students are allowed to respond in their native language, with most students speaking Mandarin as their primary language and English as a secondary language.

This will enable participants to express themselves more closely to their ideas without being hindered by language barriers.

To facilitate the discussions, the researcher created PowerPoint slides of individual key verbs and presented them to the participants. This helps stimulate discussion and encourages participants to share their experiences and thoughts on the topic.

The discussions were recorded using phone recording and transcribed for further analysis. If a particular student's point of view began to dominate the discussion, the researcher intervened to ensure that other participants had the opportunity to contribute.

All responses provided by participants were followed up and clarified if there were any areas of ambiguity. As an incentive for their participation in the focus group, participants received five snack packs upon completing the session.

4.2   Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis (TA) will be used in this research to assist in data analysis. TA is a qualitative research method to identify and analyze patterns within data, which can be used to generate insights and gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon. In this case, TA will be used to analyze the two main types of data collected.

4.2.1 Data Category

For the first data category related to the student learning approaches and study methods, TA will identify recurring themes within the data that relate to how students approach their learning, their attitudes toward the learning process, and any other relevant insights that emerge from the data.

For the second category of data, which is related to participants' interpretation of the final exam questions' key verbs, TA will identify and analyze data patterns related to how participants interpret the key verb in the exam questions. This may include identifying common themes related to how participants understand and interpret the meaning of the key verbs, as well as any divergent perspectives or interpretations that emerge from the data.

4.2.2 Thematic Analysis (TA)

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within qualitative data to answer a research question or understand a topic. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), TA involves "identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data that relate to the research question" (p. 58). TA focuses on identifying shared meanings rather than individual experiences and can be used to analyze the entire dataset or specific aspects of a phenomenon.

This research uses TA to systematically identify common patterns of meaning in participants' responses related to the research question. TA is particularly useful for those new to qualitative research because a deep understanding of complex theoretical perspectives is not required. It also

provides accessibility and flexibility which is an advantage in this research (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

In focus group sessions, participants generate large amounts of data for analysis, and TA provides a structured and systematic way to identify patterns and themes that run through group responses. TA can also help identify differences and similarities in participants' responses, providing insight into how different individuals or subgroups experience or perceive the topic under investigation.

Overall, TA is a valuable tool for analyzing focus group data because it allows researchers to identify and analyze patterns and themes that emerge in participants' responses, providing insight into their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and experiences of a particular topic systematically and rigorously.

4.2.3 Six Phases Approach

The six-phase approach to thematic analysis provides a structured and systematic way of analyzing qualitative data. By following these six phases, researchers can ensure that their analysis is grounded in the data and that their findings are credible, reliable, and valid (Braun and Clarke, 2012). This approach helps researchers identify patterns and themes in their data and develop a rich and detailed understanding of their study topics.

Table 4.1: Six-Phase Approach Development

Thematic Analysis Process	Explanation	Example
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	involves immersing yourself in the data by reading and rereading textual data	The researcher listened back to the recorded audio a few times and translate it into full dialog conversations to familiarize themselves with the data and take relevant researcher notes.
2. Generating Initial Codes	generate initial codes, which are labels or tags that capture the content of the data.	The researcher emerged into the initial code by using the responses obtained from the three open-ended questions and the key verbs a-priory. For example, 'memorization' or 'understanding' was the code for how students learn.
3. Searching for themes	looking for similarities or patterns within the codes across the initial codes. This would involve grouping codes based on their content or context similarities.	The researcher constructed a theme from the code of the participants' related learning experiences and delineated the participants' learning tools as another theme, but it appears that the students' learning tools were categorized as learning experiences and therefore included in that theme.
4. Reviewing themes	review and refine the potential themes that have been identified. Look for overlap between themes or consider whether a theme captures a meaningful aspect of the data.	The researcher reviewed all the themes defined to ensure it encompasses all relevant analysis, evaluation, and creation codes.
5. Defining and naming themes	define each final theme in more detail and give them a clear name that accurately reflects it.	Four themes have been defined, which are: a) Students' learning approach b) Understanding Course Plan and Course Learning Objectives c) Challenges in understanding the course. d) Students' interpretation of key verbs
6. Producing the report	present the themes and their supporting data in a clear and organized way, making sure to explain how	The researcher wrote up the analysis in a report that provided a clear and concise overview of the research question, methods, results, and interpretations.

A-priori coding is particularly important in studies that build on previous research or test a specific theoretical framework (Blair, 2015). By identifying codes in advance, researchers can ensure they are looking for specific concepts or ideas in their data rather than relying solely on emergent themes that may not align with the research question or theoretical framework. This approach ensures that the coding process is consistent with the purpose of the research and allows researchers to identify key concepts and ideas from the outset.

4.2.4 Thematic Coding Development and Research Objectives

In qualitative data analysis, thematic coding development is vital and guided by the research objectives. This study aims to investigate international business students' interpretation of BRT, and the coding process is driven by two primary research objectives.

Research Objective 1 requires identifying codes related to students' interpretation of course learning objectives and how they align with examiners' intentions. These codes can then be grouped into broader categories that represent the key themes related to the research objective.

Similarly, in Research Objective 2, the coding scheme should focus on identifying themes related to how students interpret key verbs in exam questions and whether they align with examiners' intentions. This involves identifying codes that capture students' understanding of key verbs, which

can then be organized into broader categories representing the research objective's key themes.

4.3 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data in this research project, the researcher used member checking and reflexivity methods. Member checking involved verifying the accuracy of data interpretation by summarizing the analysis to the participants and asking for their feedback on the findings (Krueger, 2014). Reflexivity was adopted by acknowledging the researcher's biases and assumptions through mutual collaboration with the participants during the data analysis process (Finlay, 2002). This approach recognized that knowledge in qualitative research is co-created by both the participants and researcher, and collaboration helped to reduce subjective biases and interpretations.

The researcher also used inter-rater reliability to ensure the consistency of interpretation across raters and reduce errors in the analysis (Krefting, 1991). This involved involving the supervisor reviewing the same data and determining interpretation consistency. The two raters then compared their interpretations and discussed any differences to reach a consensus on the final analysis

To summarize, the researcher used multiple methods to enhance the validity and reliability of the data. These methods provided a rigorous and systematic approach to the data analysis process and helped to ensure that the research findings were accurate and credible.

4.4   Conclusion

This chapter clearly shows the data collection process, analyzes data by using the Thematic Analysis method, and the validity and reliability of this research. The next chapter will explain the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.0   Introduction

Chapter 5 provides findings and an in-depth discussion of this study's data analysis. This chapter summarizes the previous data analysis and aims to draw comprehensive conclusions. In this chapter, we will revisit the research questions and objectives presented in Chapter 1 and examine how they are addressed in subsequent chapters. The findings consist of two parts. Part 1 is on the students' learning approaches and understanding of course plans and subjects. Part 2 is students' interpretations of the key verbs in the final exam question.

5.1   Part 1 Findings

5.1.1 Students' Learning Approach

This section explores the levels of BRT that international business students attained during the learning process. Two general approaches to learning were identified: a single approach and an integrated approach.

a) Single Learning Approach

A single approach to learning refers to students using only one method to study and prepare for exams. This study further divides this method into two subcategories: memorize and understand.

- **Memorization as a learning approach**

  Students who rely on memory as their primary learning approach tend to focus on rote memorization without understanding the concepts. They can usually recall basic facts and theories without difficulty but are unable to learn more deeply or think critically. Students usually include practicing past exams or tutorials and revising lecture notes to supplement their memorization learning.

  > *"I will revise lecture notes every week and I prefer rote study because I don't understand the concepts." – P1(1)*
  >
  > *"I only can use rote learning. I will do the past year and handwriting down to help me memorize it" – P1(2)*
  >
  > *"Theory subjects are no problem for me as only memorization is required." – P4(4)*

- **Understanding as a learning approach**

  Students who use understanding as their primary learning approach tend to focus on understanding and analyzing concepts. They try to relate new information to what they know and look for underlying patterns and connections. This approach allows for deeper learning and critical thinking. Students typically involve practicing past year or tutorial questions, revising lecture notes, discussing with friends, and conducting online research.

  > *"I like to discuss with friends to get different solutions and help to understand. For all subjects, I will do further research online to make me understand after the lecture class." – P4(2)*
  >
  > *"After understanding the whole topic, I would summarize and make a mind map. This makes it easier for me to understand." – P1(3)*

b) Integrative Learning Approach

The integrative approach refers to using multiple learning approaches or a combination of different learning approaches. Memorization & understand is the most common integrated learning approach. Several students also used the apply, understand, and memorization, and they think it is helpful for them.

- **Memorization & Understand**

Typically, this integrative approach entails practicing tutorial or past year papers, note revision, imagination, discussing with friends, and linking the concepts logically.

> *"When I took note, I had tried to understand the concepts." – P3(1)*
> *"I will make all theory logical and understand first, then rote learning will become efficiency to me." – P4(2)*
> *"Some subjects are easier to understand because it is close to real life, so I can apply the theory. If I really can't understand, then I will use rote study." – P4(3)*
> *"I like to imagine something interesting to connect and relate it, even without logic." – P1(4)*

- **Apply & Understand & Memorization**

Students who use this method can mainly master the skills of memorization, understanding, and application. Typically, they will apply the theory to the actual case or practice by doing past-year papers to assist their learning.

> *"I will try to do the past year papers, and I prefer to understand it and apply it to some examples." – P2(1)*
> *"I don't understand the logic, and I can only draw some frameworks and try to apply the theory to real cases." – P2(4)*

The results showed that UTAR's international business students preferred an integrated approach that combined memorization with comprehension to prepare for exams effectively. While memorization alone can be useful, combining it with an understanding approach allows students to connect new information with existing knowledge, making it more meaningful. Active learning that involves applying, analyzing, and evaluating information not only helps students memorize facts but also develops critical thinking skills, which are essential for higher-level courses and future careers. However, mastering memorization is crucial for active learning, as students need a solid foundation of knowledge to build upon.

Students who were able to apply their knowledge to examples or cases had mastered the BRT levels of understanding and remembering, enabling them to move to higher levels. Nevertheless, the study revealed that students' learning approaches only reached the lower BRT levels, indicating a preference for surface learning rather than deep learning. While students' reliance on memorization may hinder their ability to think critically, they still need to use it as a tool to support their learning. In summary, students need to move beyond the lower BRT levels to develop the critical thinking skills necessary for academic and professional success.

5.1.2 Importance of Understanding Course Plan and Course Learning Objectives

The majority of participants in this study made an effort to read the provided course outline. However, most of them who attempted to read found the course plan unclear and confusing. Moreover, even after reading the course plan, the participant still is 'clueless,' meaning that students felt they did not understand the purpose of the CLO or its usefulness, leading them to believe

that reading it would result in a "waste of time." Simultaneously, students lack a clear understanding of what is expected of them in the course or how to prepare for the assessment,

> *"I will look briefly at the CLO part… This brief shows the objective of what we can learn from the subject, but I don't think the subject is relevant to CLO." – P2(1)*
>
> *"I don't know what the meaning of CLO is." – P3(2)*
>
> *"I look at the assignment only. The others are wasting time and useless." – P4(2)*
>
> *"I don't know what the purpose of CLO is." – P2(3)*
>
> *"I looked at the CLO in the first year but didn't think it was useful." – P2(4)*

This is a concerning issue because the course plan is developed with a specific BRT level in mind, it is the first classroom communication tool that students receive in a course, and it contains essential information such as the required cognitive level, assessment methods, and rubric. It also is a bridge that instructors use to transfer the learning objectives they expect students to achieve. Unfortunately, this research found that these course plans did not have the effect that instructors expected. Instead, students were confused by the plan and struggled to understand the learning objectives, which resulted in low value.

To do well in the course assessments, such as the final exam, students must comprehend the course learning outcomes level because they describe what students are expected to know and what level of learning they will be assessed. If students do not comprehend the course learning outcomes, they may struggle to understand the course and how to do well in the course assessment. As a result, it may lead to poor performance and course dissatisfaction.

5.1.3 Challenges in Understanding the Courses.

Different subjects have different levels of BRT. Thus, the researcher explored the subjects that students find challenging and the reasons why to determine whether they can handle the relevant BRT level. Typically, the participants felt courses such as Financial Management and Quantitative Techniques were especially challenging. They said that:

> *"QT has too many formulas, I also don't know which formula can be used in question." – P4(1)*
>
> *"QT 2 is a very difficult formula to use and I am always confused that I don't know what formula is suitable for this problem." – P1(3)*
>
> *"There have many formulas in the lecture notes. I don't know how to use the formula in the question." – P5(4)*
>
> *"Agree, the questions are so diverse and different from tutorial questions. It easily confuses me on how to use it." – P4(4)*
>
> *"Especially for questions requiring your formatting calculations, you need to explain why the theory of using this format or discuss how the answer will have any impact." – P3(4)*

Some students mentioned that the lecturer's pedagogy also became a reason that affected students, such as unclear explanations, lack of review foundation, boring lecture style, etc. The challenges in applying the specific formulae or performing specific analyses are sometimes compounded by the pedagogical approach of the instructors:

> *"Most calculation subjects require a foundation, but sometimes we forget what we learned. The lecturer also didn't want to recap, so the weak foundation made me can't follow the new topic." – P1(3)*
>
> *"Some lecturers did not explain clearly, and I am very confused. I do not understand what the lecturer is teaching." – P3(3)*

In addition, the findings also uncovered students' dislike of calculation. While reason like 'lack of foundation", and "not fully explained" was commonly cited as the root of the issues, it seems the root of the dislike and thus difficulties in applying the formula is related to what the research

referred to as "unintelligible logic". Specifically, the participants express their frustration with their inability to apply the formula successfully and not understanding the specific theory or the logic behind a 'formula'. This finding is consistent with Taskin's (2012) study on students' understanding of chemical formulae. For example, a student may struggle to understand the concept of present value to apply the net present value formula correctly. This could be attributed back to the challenges in studying international business – studying international business could be challenging because it is based on abstract concepts from multiple disciplinary areas, which may be very foreign to the students. Ultimately, these challenges can hinder students' ability to perform well in course assessments and lead to dissatisfaction with the course.

5.1.4 Conclusion of Part 1 Findings

In conclusion, the findings of Part 1 of this study indicate that memorization is the default learning approach used by the majority of students in the study of international business. Therefore, it can be deduced that memorization is used to seek understanding, and the likelihood that likely the prevalent use of memorization is due to students' perception that course assessments require them to re-produce what has been re-produced (Kember, 2000).

Viewing both single and integrated learning approaches, the finding shows that "to memorize" is overwhelmingly practised by the students. It is the 'default' learning approach with the purpose of passing if not scoring good grades in examinations. Memorization is commonly viewed as a passive form of learning which only promote surface learning (Kember, 2000; Trant, 2013). The relatively small number of participants who only practice memorization as the only learning approach is thus worrisome.

Interestingly, the study found that practicing the past years' examination papers helped them study effectively. In addition, more than half of the students were in the habit of taking notes and felt that this would stimulate their desire to study. This validates the findings of Berezan et al. (2023) that notes are an effective means of encouraging higher levels of thinking and learning in business courses.

Students' perceptions of the course plans and learning objectives were concluded as a low value, as most still do not know its true purpose even though some students try to understand.

Besides, instructor pedagogy affects student mastery of BRT skills; As confirmed by Garnjost and Brown (2018), there were significant differences in students' perceptions of gains in the six skill areas depending on the teaching method. Lecturers may perceive certain teaching methods as effective in transferring knowledge for students to master. In fact, students are bored or confused by the lecturer's delivery methods while losing out on opportunities for students to gain skills in the subject.

5.2   Part 2 Findings

Students' interpretation of BRT-key verbs in Final exam paper

As described in Chapter 3, a total of 8 key verbs were identified and used as a discussion guide in the FG. If the participants' interpretation is not found in the Bloom Revised Taxonomy Table (BRT), a definition of the level will be used. For example, "Remembering" means "Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts, and answers". Below is the result arranged by 8 key verbs used: and for ease of reference, Figure 2.1 is reproduced.

5.2.1 Key verb – "Describe"

The verbs "describe falls under BRT level 1 – Remembering. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.1: Key verb – "Describe"

Key Verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Describe	C1	• Provide a definition (C1) • Listing (C1)	• Give Examples (C2) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3)

Source: Adopted for the research

Participants' interpretations of "describe" mostly align with the key verbs table (KWT) - 'definition' and 'listing.' However, 'definition' was not found in the KWT. Nevertheless, after reading the definition given of each of the BRT definitions, 'definition' is categorized as Remembering (C1). Other interpretations that mismatch with the first level of 'describe' all revolve around the second and third levels, with verbs including 'example,' 'discuss,' and 'explain.'

Overall, students understood the expected BRT level as determined by the key verbs of the final exam questions while using a level that exceeded it to answer the questions.

5.2.2 Key verb – "Discuss"

The verbs "discuss" falls under BRT level 2 – Understanding. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.2: Key verb – "Discuss"

Key Verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Discuss	C2	• To Discuss (C2)	• Provide a Definition (C1) • Listing (C1) • Describe (C1) • To Explain (C3) • To Summarize (C5) • Evaluating (C5) • Creating (C6))

Source: Adopted for the research

Participants' interpretations of the key verb 'Discuss' vary greatly, covering Remembering (C1) to Creating (C6). Students' responses to these were more inclined to "remember" by 'definition,' 'listing', and 'describe.' The other misinterpretations verbs included 'explain,' 'summarize,' 'evaluating,' and 'creating.' The only explanation that met the expected BRT level was 'discuss'. The table also shows that students did not meet the expected level of key verbs.

5.2.3 Key verb – "Explain"

The verb "explain" falls under BRT level 3–Applying. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Key Verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Explain	C3	• To Explain (C3)	• Provide a Definition (C1) • Listing (C1) • Give Example (C2) • To Analyze (C4)

Source: Adopted for the research

"Explain" is the most frequently used verb in international business past papers and has appeared in almost every paper. Students interpretations of the key verb "explain" revolve around BRT levels 1 to levels 4, which included 'definition,' 'listing,' 'example,' 'explain,' and 'analyze.'

"Explain" can be challenging because they require students to understand, apply, and analyze the information to provide a clear and coherent explanation demonstrating their understanding of the concept or information. However, the majority of students only reach Levels 1 & 2.

In general, students understand the intended BRT level moderately well, and students respond using verbs below that level, as evidenced by the key verb "explain" in the final exam questions.

5.2.4 Key verb – "Demonstrate"

The verb " demonstrate" does not appear in KWT. However, after reading the definitions of each BRT definition, " demonstrate" is categorized as applying (C3). The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.4: Key verb – "Demonstrate"

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Demonstrate	C3	• To Explain (C3) • To Illustrate (C3)	• *None*

Source: Adopted for the research

The verb "Demonstrates" infrequently featured in past years' examination papers. 'Explain' and 'illustrate' are those KWT participants interpret with the verb "demonstrate." Both of these KWT fall under Levels 2, 3, and 4. Students need to respond through comprehension, application and analysis. However, suppose students' responses included only explanations or illustrations and did not demonstrate the ability to perform or implement the task or concept. In that case, they may not have fully met the requirements of the question.

5.2.5 Key verb – "Compare"

The verb " Compare" falls under BRT 4 – Analyzing. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.5: Key verb – "Compare"

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Compare	C4	• Compare (C4) •	• To summarize (C5)

Source: Adopted for the research

"Compare" is also one of the verbs that students are asked to understand and analyze. The KWT interactions of the participants are 'compare' and 'summarize'. It is easy to see that students have a relatively good understanding of the word. However, students used "summarize" in their responses, which is at Level 5 "evaluate", showing that they misunderstood the word and responded with a level of exceeding.

5.2.6 Key verb – "Justify"

The verb " Justify" falls under BRT level 5 – Evaluating. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.6: Key verb – "Justify"

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Justify	C5	• Evaluating (C5) • To Summarize (C5)	• Give Example (C2) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • To Analyze (C4)

Source: Adopted for the research

'Justify' is a verb under evaluating (C5), a higher-order thinking skill. The students' interpretations of KWT aligned with 'evaluate' and 'summarize' only. The misinterpretations verbs included 'example,' 'discuss,' 'explain,'' and 'analyze.' Obviously, students did not fully comprehend the verb, which was biased toward BRT level 2 to level 4.

Participants may better understand lower-level thinking skills such as remembering, understanding, and applying information. However, they may not fully grasp the higher-order thinking skills of evaluating and creating. This will lead to low performance.

5.2.7 Key verb – "Assess"

The verb " Assess" falls under BRT level 5 – Evaluating. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

Table 5.7: Key verb – "Assess"

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Assess	C5	• Evaluating (C5)	• Identify (C1) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • Apply (C3) • No idea

Source: Adopted for the research

Students have a very broad definition of "Assess." Participants' interpretations of "assess" with the key verbs table (KWT) included 'identify' 'discuss,' 'explain,' 'apply,' and 'evaluate.' 'Evaluating' is the only key verb interpretation that matches the expected level (C5). Some students also stated that they have no idea about the verb, which means they did not understand the meaning of "assess".

Students do not perform well on the word "assess," meaning they misunderstand it. This can also lead to students not meeting the teacher's expectations, affecting grades.

5.2.8 Key verb – "Propose"

The verb "Propose" falls under BRT level 6 – Creating. The emerging codes from these key verbs are:

<p align="center">Table 5.8: Key verb – "Propose"</p>

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Matching Interpretations	Mismatch Interpretations
Propose	C6	• Create (C6)	• Give Example (C2) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • Recommend (C5) • No idea

Source: Adopted for the research

Compared to other verbs, 'propose' is also a verb that rarely occurs. The students' interpretations of KWT aligned with 'example,' 'discuss,' 'explain,' recommend,' and 'create'. Some students said they did not understand the meaning of the word. There is also a verb that mismatches with lecturers. Students are failed to master the skill of "creating".

5.2.9 Conclusion of Part 2 Findings

The study revealed a concerning trend where higher Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (BRT) levels were more difficult for students to achieve, resulting in a mismatch between instructors' intended BRT level and students' understanding. This mismatch resulted in inconsistent delivery and lower student performance. Johnson & Gallagher (2021) found that students' misunderstanding of the BRT verbs used in the final exam led to frustration, anxiety, and poor performance. Students' lack of attention or

misunderstanding of the verbs indicated that they did not understand the teacher's meaning. Moreover, students' inability to apply higher-level critical thinking skills may impact their ability to cope with the complex and ever-changing business environment.

Additionally, some students believed the verbs used in exams were not critical and did not impact their answers, further highlighting the need for increased attention to BRT levels and clear communication between instructors and students. They stated that:

> *"The verbs are not important; they won't affect my answer." – P4(4)*
>
> *"I don't care about what the verbs are. I only focus on the topic." – P3(2)*

It emphasizes the importance of clear communication between instructors and students and the need for instructors to pay closer attention to BRT levels and the verbs used in exams. Instructors must ensure that students understand the intended meaning of BRT verbs to apply higher-level critical thinking skills successfully. It is important to note that international business students struggle to achieve the six cognitive skill levels based on the BRT curriculum, particularly in applying higher-level critical thinking skills to understand and apply complex theories.

In conclusion, instructors need to pay closer attention to BRT levels and the verbs used in exams. It is also essential for instructors to communicate clearly with students to ensure they understand the intended meaning of BRT verbs and can apply higher-level critical thinking skills.

5.3   Conclusion

This chapter identified key themes related to students' learning approach, course plan and learning objectives, and challenges in understanding the courses, and students' interpretations of key verbs. Based on these findings, it was clear that students were only achieving lower-order thinking skills, rather than higher-order thinking skills. In addition, there is a significant gap between lectures and students' interpretations of key verbs or course plans, which may contribute to low student achievement. The next chapter will provide recommendations based on these findings.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter generated the four themes of findings. This chapter will disclose the recommendations of findings, identify the limitations of the study and discuss future recommendations. Finally, a general conclusion will be provided for this research.

6.1 Discussion of Recommendations

The table below recaps the research questions and summary of the emerging findings, In addition, relevant recommendations are also provided. A detailed discussion of the recommendation to follow Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Themes	Emerging Findings	Recommendations
Part 1		
Students' Learning Approach	• Memorization is commonly practiced, most students tend to combine it with an understanding approach. • Therefore, when students combine memorization with understanding, they become actively engaged in learning. • Nonetheless, achieving mastery in memorization is essential for active learning.	To strengthen students 'memorization' skills as a pre-requisite for active learning through Mnemonic strategies (Scruggs, 2000; Manolo, 2002; Levin 1992)
Course Plan and Learning Objectives	• Understanding course learning outcomes can be a challenge for many students. • When students fail to understand course plans and learning objectives, it can hinder their ability to perform well in assessments and grasp the course content. • This can ultimately lead to poor academic performance and dissatisfaction with the course.	To review course plan design (Elbery, 2002; Smith, 1993; Blair 2007)
Challenges in Understanding the Courses.	• Participants commonly find courses that involve specific calculations or require practical application to be challenging. • Participants express frustration with their inability to apply the formula successfully or understand the underlying theories or logic behind a 'formula'. • Studying international business can be particularly challenging, as they are based on abstract concepts from multiple disciplines that may be unfamiliar to students.	Enhancing learning experience (Bhattacharyya, 2008; Elbery, 2002)

Part 2		
Key Verbs Interpretations	• Students struggle to attain higher levels of BRT, indicating difficulty in critical thinking and being stuck in lower-order thinking. • A mismatch between the definitions of BRT verbs used by students and instructors negatively affects students' performance.	Enhancing Understanding of Key Verbs (Ellerton et al. (2022)

Source: Adopted for the research

6.1.1 Recommendations – Students' Learning Approach

To strengthen students 'memorization' skills as a pre-requisite for active learning through Mnemonic strategies (Scruggs, 2000; Manolo, 2002; Levin 1992)

a) Mnemonic strategies are memory

Mnemonic strategies can effectively enhance memory for specific content, particularly in areas, such as terminology and classification (Scruggs, 2000). The researcher suggests that the instructors incorporate mnemonic strategies into the teaching slides to help with memorization. Specifically, the keyword method is suggested.

b) Keyword method

The keyword method involves linking topic-specific keywords to visual or pictorial representations to create a more memorable mental image.

This approach has been shown to be effective in a variety of content areas, including business (Manalo, 2000). The instructors need to identify and develop topic-specific keywords and subsequently to links these keywords to any visual or picture to form a 'whole.' The keyword method has been proven to be effective in content area learning, such as terminology and classification (Scruggs, 2000), which are commonly found in international business courses.

6.1.2 Recommendation – Course Plan and Learning Objectives

Based on the students' perceptions, it is evident that there is a lack of value placed on course plans and learning objectives, indicating a discrepancy between students and lecturers, resulting in the student's inability to achieve the required level of BRT. This is due to the fact that instructors write the learning objectives, and students do not comprehend them, resulting in ineffective communication between both parties. To address this issue, the study suggests creating a learning-centred syllabus focusing on the student's needs and learning outcomes.

A course syllabus serves multiple purposes, such as a legal document, an organizational tool, and a communication tool (Elberly, 2002). It outlines the course policies, rules, and regulations as a legal document. As an organizational tool, it provides a weekly teaching plan, assignment due dates, marking rubrics, and reading materials. Moreover, as a communication tool, it includes information about the instructors, contact details, and course learning outcomes. However, over time, the syllabus tends to evolve into a document with conflicting roles, constraining, alienating, and dehumanizing students and moving away from becoming a student-centred document (Blair, 2007).

To address this issue, universities must review the overall design of the course syllabus to streamline the roles and reduce conflicting roles that can alienate students. The study recommends creating a learning-centred syllabus that emphasizes clear course schedules, detailed assignments with rubrics, and essential clerical information. Additionally, the syllabus should include information about using technologies such as Large Language Models (LLMs) as technology continues to play an increasingly important role in education. By creating a more student-centred syllabus that emphasizes essential information and focuses on learning outcomes, universities can help students feel more engaged and motivated.

6.1.3 Recommendation – Challenges in Understanding the Courses

Due to the instructor's pedagogy and a perceived lack of clarity in the material, students may find it challenging to comprehend certain subjects. This could be due to a mismatch between the instructor's teaching style and the preferred learning style of the students, resulting in a disengaged and uninterested class. Additionally, when students are unable to attain the required level of BRT for a subject, they may perceive the instructor as unclear and the subject matter as uninteresting. (Bhattacharyya, 2008).

There are several strategies that instructors can employ to enhance the learning experience of students. First, instructors can provide some examples relevant to the student's lives, rather than relying solely on the textbook material. This can help to engage students in the material and make it more relatable (Bhattacharyya, 2008). Instructors can also provide detailed unit outlines, speak slowly and clearly, and split lecture time into

shorter, focused sessions to maintain students' attention and reduce misunderstandings.

Clarifying the marking criteria and providing examples for students to follow can also help students understand what is required of them and improve the quality of their work. By providing explicit instructions for the format and structure of submitted work, instructors can ensure that students know what is expected of them and can focus their efforts on meeting the criteria.

Overall, the key to enhancing the learning experience of students is to understand their needs and preferences and tailor teaching strategies accordingly. By employing effective teaching techniques and providing clear and concise instruction, instructors can create an engaged and interested classroom that promotes student success.

6.1.4 Recommendation – Students' Key Verb Interpretation

The study highlights a downward trend in student's ability to attain higher levels of BRT as the level of verb difficulty increases. This trend indicates that students are stuck in lower-order thinking and face challenges in reaching critical thinking. Instructors should provide clear definitions for BRT verbs and explain their expectations for each verb's response to students. Additionally, students should be given examples of responses that demonstrate the appropriate use of each BRT verb to help them understand the expected level of thinking. Incorporating explicit instruction and assessment of critical thinking skills in the curriculum is also recommended to address this issue (Ellerton, 2022).

6.2 Limitations

The sample size and participant selection may be the limitation of this study that make it hard to apply the results to a bigger population. Specifically, the study only included international business students from year 1 to year 3, which may not fully represent the diversity of international business students across different academic levels or business fields, potentially limiting the broader applicability of the results.

This research is also limited by its reliance on identified keywords and the assumption that they accurately reflect the instructor's intent. This assumption may not always be valid, as instructors may use different terms or phrases to convey similar concepts. This limitation may impact the accuracy and validity of the study's results, particularly in cases where the identified keywords do not fully capture the intended content or scope of the courses being analyzed.

6.3 Future Research Recommendation

There are two future research could be focused on. Firstly, to examine the impact of teaching methods on students' learning approaches. The current study focused on students' learning styles but did not investigate how different teaching approaches influence students' learning. Thus, future research could investigate how different teaching methods, impact international business students' learning approach toward courses based on BRT.

Secondly, there is a need to explore how course design can enhance international business students' understanding of the course plans and learning objectives. Therefore, future research could investigate the use of various instructional

methods, such as explicit instruction and providing examples of responses, to enhance students' understanding of BRT verbs and their expected level of thinking.

6.4   Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is to explore international business students understanding and learning approach toward courses based on BRT. It discussed the emerging findings from a research study that investigated students' perceptions and experiences in learning international business. Based on these findings, the report provided recommendations to improve student's learning experiences, such as strengthening students' memorization skills through mnemonic strategies, creating a learning-centred syllabus, and enhancing students' understanding of key verbs. These recommendations aimed to address the challenges and discrepancies in communication and alignment between students and instructors. By implementing these recommendations, universities can help students feel more engaged, and motivated, and achieve higher levels of learning outcomes in international business courses.

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Appendix 1.1: Focus Group Discussions Dialog

Focus Group 1 (P = participant)

1. Can you share your experience on preparing the final examination?

P1(1): I very focus and listen carefully during lecture and I will revise every week. And I prefer rote study, because I don't understand the concepts.

P2(1): I started preparing for the exam 1 month ago. I will review and try to do the past year papers for calculation subjects. And for theory subjects, I prefer to understand it and apply to some examples.

P3(1): I like to take notes 1 or 2 weeks before. And for the revision before the exam, I just focused on studying my notes. Because when I took note, I had tried to understand the concepts.

P4(1): Same with P3(1), I will understand summarize the lecture notes, make them my own, and I prefer study only my notes rather than the lecture notes. I try to understand first, then I handwriting to help me memorize by rote.

P2(1): I tried to do past year papers, but I don't think I really understand the past year questions and I also don't know whether my answer is right or wrong.

P3(1): Me too. Mostly I done, but I am not sure the answer.

P4(1): Ya, I think past year is useless because we do not have any answer and also lecturer didn't provide any answer or explanation. So I only referred to the exam syllabus.

P1(1): Past year papers is only wasting my time. So I do not read it. (Why?) I think the lecture notes and tutorials have covered all the topics and the tutorials have the answers, but the past year papers do not have the answers.

P3(1): But I think it is useful because the exam format is similar and then I have mastered or speculated on the topic that might come out.

P2(1) & P4(1): Agree that there has the similar format.

Q: How do you overcome those you don't know?

P2(1): I will discuss with my friends first and then ask the lecturer.

P3(1) & P4(1): Search online first, then discuss with friend. But won't ask lecturer.

P1(1): I search online and never ask lecturer.

Q: Is this an effective way for you to prepare all subjects?

P1(1): No, even though I focused very much on lecture class and provided a formular list during the exam, I still got confused on Quantitative Techniques subject.

P2(1): Mostly yes, but I think QT is my most difficult subject. Theory subject is easier because it is only required memorization.

P4(1): Agree, QT has too many formular, I also don't know which formular can be used in question.

P3(1): But for me, I am not too much calculation problem. I am only confused by the questions that need to explain the theory of why this formula is used.

Q: Can you share your experience in class?

P2(1): I like lecturers who give a lot of examples and relate theories to real life. It was interesting and it was easier for me to understand the concepts.

P3(1): Some lecturers make theories and concepts easier with simple words and sentences that I can actually understand and use in real business.

P1(1): Some lecturers followed the slide and read it out only. For those lecture classes, I will read myself instead of listen.

P4(1): I think the most important thing is that lecturers put themselves in the students' shoes and care about whether they really understand rather than just asking them to do it. For example, some lecturers will restate concepts we have learned before, which is helpful for us to understand new theories quickly.

2. How do you think about Course Plan and its learning objective?

P1(1): I don't look at it. It's useless.

P3(1): I only refer to it when the lecturer mentions it, but only for the assignments and mark allocation.

P4(1): Same with me. I refer the assignment only.

P2(1): I will look at the topics the lecturer will teach. I also looked briefly at the CLO part, but I don't really understand what it means. (Further explore?) I think this is a brief showing the objective of what we can learn from the subject, but I don't think the subject is relevant to CLO.

P3(1) & P4(1): I don't know the meaning of CLO.

Q: Do you think your course work relates to the learning objective?

P2(1): Yes, the assignment can help me to apply the theory.

P1(1): Through assignment is more easier for me to understand the subject.

Q: How do you think you can master the LO / any additional comments on specific aspects of this instructor's teaching that you think are relevant and useful.

P3(1): The slide can be more briefly and attractive

P4(1): Maybe can apply more example to the business environment.

Focus Group 1 (P = participant)

1. Can you share your experience on preparing the final examination?

P1(2): self-learning and must have a quiet environment. I start preparing 1 or 2 weeks before, because too early preparation will make me forget. I only can use rote learning. I will do the past year and handwriting down to help me memorize it.

P2(2): Same with P1(2), start preparing 1 or 2 weeks before. But I will do tutorial before class to ensure I understand the theory and know how to use in the question. But I will discuss with friends if I don't know the answer. Tried to understand then rote learning.

P3(2): Also start preparing before 1 or 2 weeks and I prefer to learn with friends to discuss together. I will make all theory logical and understand first, then rote learning will become efficiency to me. Also I will take note before exam and only read my note when preparing exam.

P4(2): I like to discuss with friends to get different solutions and help to understand. But also start preparing before 1 or 2 weeks. All subjects, I will do further research through online to made me understand after lecture class. I will use understanding rather than rote study, because rote study will forget when in examination. I must do tutorial every week.

P2(2): I think the past year papers are useful, not only to see the format but also to see the verbs in the questions. Because different verbs are used to answer it in different ways, it made me more familiar with how to answer and get marks.

P3(2): Past year paper can help me familiarise myself with the format, so I will not feel nervous. But I will only do for calculation subjects' past year papers, others only refer to the format.

P1(2): For me I will think past year paper is similar to do a note. It can help me memorize my memory also see whether I master the knowledge.

P4(2): I only refer the past year paper format and guess the possible topic that will come out.

Q: As just now mentioned, what subjects are difficult to you?

P1(2): QT 2, I always confused how to use the formular in question. The lecturer did not capture the previous knowledge and made my foundation weak.

P2(2): Information System, because I do not have any interest, and then I only can rote study.

P3(2): same with P1(2)

P4(2): Law, because it is fixed and cannot change. Also QT 2, it is hard to understand.

P2(2): I think all subjects is required memorize and understand.

Q: How to overcome those you don't understand?

P1(2), P2(2), P3(2), P4(2): search online > discuss with friends > ask lecturer

Q: What kind of lecturer's teaching style will attract you to focus on the class?

P1(2): Some of the lecturers explain is insufficient because they only follow the slide.

P2(2): I like those lecturers giving detailed explanations and many examples.

P3(2): Give the example with simple and easy to understand. But some of the lectures are boring.

P4(2): For calculation subjects, I like lecturers give us many questions and let us practice. So that I can know how to apply the formular. But for theory subjects I hope lecturer can give easier example rather than directly apply into case study.

P2(2): But I think assignment is good for us to apply the theory.

P1(2): The assignment something is related to the subject, but those part that need to provide own opinion is not related to the subject.

P4(2): But I think it is related because it must relate to the lecturer's teaching.

P3(2): Assignment is a summary of the subject, so I can apply the theory.

2. How do you think about Course Plan and its learning objective?

P3(2): No, I won't look at it.

P2(2): I only refer the assignment part.

P1(2): Same with P2(1), but I will also look at the CLO on marks allocation

P4(2): I also look on the assignment only. The others are wasting time and useless.

P1(2), P2(2),P3(2): I don't know what the meaning of CLO.

Focus Group 3 (P = participant)

1. Can you share your experience on preparing the final examination?

P1(3): I started preparing for the exam 1 month ago. After understanding the whole topic, I would summarize and make a mind map. This makes it easier for me to understand.

P2(3): I prefer taking notes during class because handwriting helps me remember more easily. Before the 2 week exam, I will just focus on studying my notes instead of lecture notes. But I will try to understand and create a story to help me better understand the theory, then use rote study.

P3(3): I started preparing before exam 1 or two weeks. I will review all lecture note and take note to my own. Handwriting can help me to memorize.

P4(3): I print out the lecture note and take note during class, and I will do revision and tutorial every weekend. I won't feel stressful since I always done my revision. But I will memorize and conclude the subject before 2 weeks.

P5(3): I also started preparing exam before 1 or 2 weeks. But I will try to understand first, then use rote study.

P4(3): I don't like rote study, so I will try my best to understand the theory. Such as marketing is easier to understand because it is close to real life so that I can apply the theory. If I really can't understand, then I will use rote study.

P3(3): Unlike P4(3), I prefer rote study rather than understand. (Why?) Maybe it is because some of the lecturer did not explain clearly, and I am very confused. For example, Quantitative Technique 2 and Business Research. I do not understand what lecturer is teaching, I only can ask my friends.

P5(3): My calculation is weak. Financial Management is also one of the difficult subjects because I do not know how to use the formulars in the questions. But theory subject no problem to me since my memorization is ok. Except BR, I really don't understand the concepts.

P3(3): Same, I can't understand BR theory.

P4(3): I think theory is a bit difficult to me. Maybe I was from science class in secondary school, so I have the calculation background. But theory always need to understand, BR also need to understand.

P1(3): I prefer to apply all the theory to cases or real-life situations to understand how to use the concepts. But I will use rote memorization for those concepts I can't understand, like calculation subjects (Quantitative Techniques 2 and International Trade Theory & Policy). Because I'm not interested in ITTP, it's too boring.

P2(3): I hate Principle of International Business and QT 2. POIB has too many theories that I can't understand. I am very weak in calculation.

P1(3): QT 2 is very difficult formula to use and I am always confused that I don't know what formula is suitable for this problem.

P2(3): Another difficult subject is Business Research. I do not understand the concepts.

P1(3): Ya, BR seems to have no relevance.

P3(3): Yes, the calculation subjects lack of practice.

P5(3): QT does not show the answer and process, also the lecturer has a very bad temper.

P4(3): Some of the lecturers are bored. They followed slide and read without further explanation, make me no interested on that subject. But I will be affected by my friends, like they always took note during lecture class, made me also need to take note.

P3(3): Agree. My friends always force me to take note. I think environment is a key factor affecting my listening to class.

Q: How do you overcome those difficult subjects?

P2(3): For theory, I only can rote study. While for QT 2, I do past year paper and tutorial, I will discuss with my friend if I don't know.

P1(3): I will search online first, then ask friend. I won't ask the lecturer because I think they won't answer me. But I will review the past year paper to know the format rather than to do. And try to guess the topic.

P2(3): Past year papers are useful. I will do past year papers because I think it can be used as a kind of revision as I can refer to the relevant topics. But for calculation subjects, there do not have any answer provided, so I also don't know whether right or wrong.

P3(3): I will be doing and reviewing past year papers, which I think is a useful way to do a revision.

P5(3): I'm just reviewing the format to get me familiar with it.

P4(3): I will do, and the format is similar. But I hope lecturer can explain and discuss the past year papers on how to answer or sharing the answer so that I can master the answer skills.

P3(3): I think we were just trying to cope with the exam, and it didn't feel like we were really trying to understand that subject unless it was very interesting.

P5(3): I hope to get more practical subjects, so that we can really practice the theory to real world and get experience.

P4(3): Agree, practical subjects can help us gain experience and be very useful for our future work.

2. How do you think about Course Plan and its learning objective?

P1(3): I will have an overview on the topic before choosing subject and also assignment parts.

P2(3): I only refer the assignment parts. I don't know what the purpose of CLO.

P1(3): I also don't know what its mean.

P4(3): I will look on the assignment

P3(3): I review the assignment and the marks allocations.

P5(3): I believe no one will look at the CLO, right? Its wasting time.

P3(3): Ya, there is nothing useful.

P4(3): It is also wasting time.

Focus Group 4 (P = participant)

1. Can you share your experience on preparing the final examination?

P1(4): I only started preparing 1 or 2 weeks before the exam. For me this is easier to memorize the knowledge.

P2(4): I also same with P1(4), preparing before exam 1 or 2 weeks. The pressure caused by time constraints can motivate me to read.

P3(4): I am same with P1(4) & P2(4) started prepare the normal subject before 1 or 2 weeks, and I will ask myself whether I understand the knowledge. But for some difficult subjects (such as Multinational Finance), I can only start prepared earlier, such as recap the lecture note and do the tutorial after class.

P4(4): I habitually take notes in class, and I like to design them in colour. This gets me interested in studying. So I skim through all my lecture notes a month beforehand, and then when exam week comes around, I just focus on studying my notes.

P5(4): I review the lecture notes every day after class, so when the exam comes, I don't feel any pressure and just skim all the lecture notes.

P1(4) & P2(4): I can't do that because I will forget all the things.

Q: As just now mentioned, what subjects are difficult to you?

P1(4): Theory subjects were no problem for me, but I am weak in calculation subjects (Financial Management, Quantitative Technique 1&2)

P3(4): As with P1(4), I have no problem with theory because it needs my understanding, yet the calculation subjects were relatively weak. But for me, the hardest subjects were those that required a combination of theory and calculation (International Trade Theory and Policy).

P2(4): I'm the opposite of P1(4) & P3(4). I'm weak in theory because they need to memorize, but I'm very good at calculations.

P4(4): Calculated subjects like FM, QT are very weak, except for account subjects. Theory subjects are also no problem for me as only memorization is required.

P5(4): I think I am the same with you guys. My calculation is relatively weak, but theory is no problem.

Q: Why are calculation subjects more difficult?

P5(4): There have many formular in the lecture notes, I don't know how to use the formular into the question.

P1(4): Ya, that's why I hate calculation subjects.

P4(4): Agree, the questions are so diverse and different with tutorial questions. It easily confuses me on how to use it.

P3(4): Especially for questions requiring your formatting calculations, you need to explain why the theory of using this format or discuss how the answer will have any impact.

P2(4): But I think the calculation subjects are easier. Maybe I was a science student in secondary school and have mastered some calculation formats? Because calculation is required linked to logic. On the contrary, theory is more rigid and I don't have any interest in it. I tried to understand the theory first, but sometimes it was hard to understand.

P3(4): But with theory, I always try to understand it, not to memorize it. I try to explain the theory in my own words so that I understand it.

P1(4): I like to imagine something interesting to connect and relate it, even without logic.

P4(4): I prefer to memorize by rote because I have a good memory.

P5(4): I will try to understand the theory before I memorize it by rote. In this way, even if I forget during the test, I can explain it in my own words through my understanding.

P2(4): It's too hard. It's like the theory has many scenarios and sometimes I don't understand the logic and I can only draw some frameworks and try to apply the theory to real cases.

Q: Do you tried to do past year paper?

P3(4): Yes, this is a very good approach for me to prepare exam, especially for those subjects are difficult, I will discuss with my friends. But I would only answer the past year's papers when the lecturer provided the answers.

P4(4) & P5(4): I only refer the format.

P1(4): I wasn't going to refer to it at all. Because I think I just need to memorize all the notes, which will be enough for the exam. Past year is too waste time, and lecture note has already mentioned all the information and I no need to filter what I wanna study.

P2(4): For me, I think the past year papers will help to review the lecture notes. Therefore, I always do the past year's papers first and then compare the topics from each year's papers to speculate the key topic.

P3(4): Ya, same with P2(4), I also analysed the questions and tried to find similarity.

Q: Do you think the subjects you find more difficult are related to the lecturers' teaching methods?

P3(4): Maybe it's somewhat related. We already have a foundation in some theoretical subjects, but the lecturer still repeats the same theory, which is boring. But for a complicated subject like MF, the lecturer talks too fast for me to understand.

P1(4): Most of the calculation subjects (FM, QT) are required a foundation, but sometimes we already forget the things that we learned before, the lecturer also don't want to recap, so the weak foundation made me can't follow the new topic.

P2(4): I understand what the lecturer teaches in class, but the exam differs from what the lecturer teaches. The exam is more critical thinking and does not have enough time to conclude what the lecturer teaches.

P5(4): Those lecturers who apply the case or give many examples will attract and motivate me to listen more.

P4(4): Mostly lecturer read slide only, so I don't want to listen. If I meet something I don't know, I prefer searching online rather than asking a lecturer.

P1(4),P2(4),P3(4),P5(4): Ya, prefer searching online first, second choice is asking friend, last choice is to ask lecturer.

P1(4): The question was not found in the instructor's notes for the Business Research exam, and the instructor did not teach the content in class.

P3(4): I agree with P1(4), lecturer teach too deep and don't care whether students really understand or not. But other subjects still related to the lecturer note.

P2(4): BR I tried to root study, but I really don't know what the exam asked. There is very less information about the exam question.

P4(4): The other subjects if you revise then you will answer. But except BR.

P5(4): All are related to lecture note unless you forget. But BR is too difficult.

2. How do you think about Course Plan and its learning objective?

P1(4), P4(4), P5(4): Reference only for the purpose of the assignment, such as the due date and the grade assigned.

P3(4): P1(4) general overview of the course content and the textbooks used. There is wasting time when lecturer introduce it.

P2(4): Only refer to the course content before bidding. In the first year, I looked at the CLO, but I didn't think it was useful, so I didn't look at it at all after that.

P1(4),P2(4),P3(4),P4(4),P5(4): Ya, CLO is really useless, I don't know what the purpose is.

P1(4): I don't think I can master those skills after I learn the subject.

Q: How do you think you can master the LO / any additional comments on specific aspects of this instructor's teaching that you think are relevant and useful.

P3(4): Lecturer maybe can apply more techniques or the subject into workforce to ensure the useful information to students

P2(4): Perhaps there could have been more group discussions and brainstorming to motivate us. But the tutorial was only one hour, not enough time for us to summarize

what we had learned. It was more like we were trying to capture everything rather than transfer knowledge to our understanding.

P4(4): Maybe designing the PPT as colourful will be better for catching our eyes.

P5(4): Design a framework is easier for us to capture what topic we learned.

P1(4): But the assignment is really helpful for us to understand the topic, since we need to spend time to do research.

P5(4): Ya, all assignment part is related to the topic so that we can apply the theory into physical. But I like the assignments that need to be linked together.

P4(4): Except for summary or conclusion part, I think that is useless since can't learn anything related to the topic.

P2(4)&P3(4): In opposite of P4(4), I think the conclusion is the most important and the useful part, because need to understand the whole topic.

P2(4): I like the critical thinking and brainstorming part, as it can gather all team members' opinions.

Appendix 1.2 Students Discussion on key verbs

Verbs	Students' Interpretation			
	FG4	FG3	FG2	FG1
Describe	P1(4): list P2(4): explain P3(4): definition P4(4): discuss P5(4): example	P1(3): discuss P2(3): list P3(3): list P4(3): example P5(3): explain	P1(2): explain P2(2): explain with example P3(2): explain P4(2): explain	P1(1): list P2(1): example P3(1): explain P4(1): explain
Discuss	P1(4): list + example P2(4): list + explain with example P3(4): explain with example + definition P4(4): explain with example P5(4): explain with example	P1(3): similar to evaluate P2(3): explain (rote) + opinion P3(3): explain + describe P4(3): evaluate P5(3): explain	P1(2): example + summary P2(2): explain + definition+ opinion P3(2): explain P4(2): explain with example + definition + opinion	P1(1): more based on own opinion P2(1): create a new opinion P3(1): explain with example P4(1): explain with example
Explain	P1(4): explain with example P2(4): explain with example P3(4): explain with example P4(4): explain with example P5(4): explain with example P4(4): the verbs are not important, all the same thing	P1(3): create an example + definition P2(3): create an example + analyze P3(3): create an example P4(3): create an example + list P5(3): definition with example + opinion	P1(2): example + definition P2(2): explain with example + definition P3(2): definition P4(2): example + definition + suggestion	P1(1): definition with example (understand on lecture slide) P2(1): definition with example P3(1): definition with example (understand on lecture slide) P4(1): definition with example
Demonstrate	P1(4): explain P2(4): explain P3(4): explain P4(4): explain P5(4): explain	P1(3): explain P2(3): explain P3(3): explain P4(3): explain P5(3): explain	P1(2): illustrate P2(2): illustrate P3(2): explain P4(2): explain	P1(1): explain P2(1): explain P3(1): explain P4(1): explain

Compare	P1(4): compare P2(4): summary P3(4): summary P4(4): summary + compare P5(4): explain + compare	P1(3): compare and explain P2(3): compare P3(3): compare and explain P4(3): compare and explain + summary P5(3): compare	P1(2): compare P2(2): compare with example P3(2): compare P4(2): compare + conclusion	P1(1): compare P2(1): compare + conclusion P3(1): compare P4(1): compare
Justify	P1(4): explain with example P2(4): analyse + summary P3(4): summarize + example P4(4): explain with example P5(4): explain with example	P1(3): explain P2(3): discuss with example P3(3): discuss with example P4(3): evaluate with example P5(3): explain with example	P1(2): discuss P2(2): explain with example P3(2): explain P4(2): summarize	P1(1): evaluate P2(1): summarize P3(1): example P4(1): example
Assess	P1(4): apply to case study P2(4): apply to case study P3(4): apply to case study P4(4): apply to case study P5(4): apply to case study	P1(3): evaluate P2(3): explain P3(3): evaluate P4(3): discuss P5(3): explain	P2(1): same with identify P1(2): no idea P2(2): no idea P3(2): no idea P4(2): no idea	P1(1): apply to case study P3(1): apply to case study P4(1): apply to case study
Propose	P1(4): example + definition P2(4): create something new P3(4): create something new P4(4): example + definition P5(4): example + definition	P1(3): no idea P2(3): explain P3(3): definition (rote) + recommendation P4(3): discuss P5(3): explain	P1(2): no idea P2(2): no idea P3(2): no idea P4(2): no idea	P1(1): give solution P2(1): give solution P3(1): give solution P4(1): give solution

Appendix 1.3 Summary of A-priory process

Programme Year	Course Name	Final Examination Paper	Most common verbs used by years	Most common verbs used	Discussion Verbs
Year 1	**Cross Cultural Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2019/20 September	1. Discuss 2. Explain 3. Define	1. Explain (50) 2. Discuss (29) 3. Describe (20) 4. Justify (14) 5. Calculate (13) 6. Identify (12) 7. Recommend (10) 8. Provide (10) 9. Define (9) 10. Evaluate (7)	1. Describe 2. Discuss 3. Explain 4. Demonstrate 5. Compare 6. Justify 7. Assess 8. Propose
	Management Principles	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 Dec 3. Year 2020/21 April	1. Explain 2. Describe 3. Identify		
Year 2	**Operations Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2020/21 September 3. Year 2019/20 September	1. Calculate 2. Recommend 3. Construct		
	International Trade Theory & Policy	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2020/21 October	1. Explain 2. Calculate 3. Describe		
Year 3	**Strategic Management**	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2020/21 December 3. Year 2019/20 May	1. Justify 2. Discuss 3. Explain		
	International Logistics	1. Year 2022/23 September 2. Year 2021/22 May 3. Year 2019/20 May	1. Discuss 2. Propose 3. Explain		
Total FE = 18					

Appendix 1.4 Summary of Students' key verbs interpretations

Key verbs	BRT Level	Participants' Interpretations
Describe	C1	• Provide a definition. (C1) • Listing (C1) • Give examples (C2) • To discuss (C2) • To explain (C3)
Discuss	C2	• Provide a Definition (C1) • Listing (C1) • Describe (C1) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • To Summarize (C5) • Evaluating (C5) • Creating (C6)
Explain	C3	• Provide a Definition (C1) • Listing (C1) • Give Example (C2) • To Explain (C3) • To Analyze (C4)
Demonstrate	C3	• To Explain (C3) • To Illustrate (C3)
Compare	C4	• Compare (C4) • To summarize (C5)
Justify	C5	• Give Example (C2) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • To Analyze (C4) • To Summarize (C5) • Evaluating (C5)
Assess	C5	• Identify (C1) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • Apply (C3) • Evaluating (C5) • No idea
Propose	C6	• Give Example (C2) • To Discuss (C2) • To Explain (C3) • Recommend (C5) • Create (C6) • No idea

Appendix 1.5 A-priory Key Verbs Count

	VERB	2022/23	2021/22	2019/20	total
	Discuss • Discuss how (1)	4	2	1	**7**
	Explain	4	1	1	**6**
	Define	2	1	1	**4**
	Justify			3	**3**
	Recommend • Recommend how (1)		3		**3**
	Illustrate		1	1	**2**
	Provide	1		1	**2**
Cross	Propose	1	1		**2**
Cultural	Assess		2		**2**
Management	Evaluate • Evaluate why (1)			1	**1**
	Elaborate	1			**1**
	Analyze		1		**1**
	Compare			1	**1**
	Predict			1	**1**
	Suggest • Suggest how (1)			1	**1**
	Defend		1		**1**
	Review			1	**1**
	ADVERB				
	Critically assess…		2		2

	VERB	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	total
Management Principle	Explain • Explain what (1) • Explain how (5)	8	9	5	**22**
	describe	6	3	2	**11**
	Identify • Identify which (3)	6	1	2	**9**
	provide	2	3	1	**6**
	discuss			3	**3**
	Support	1	1	1	**3**
	list	2			**2**
	define		2		**2**
	match			2	**2**
	justify			1	**1**
	compare		1		**1**
	evaluate			1	**1**
	Suggest	1			**1**
	apply		1		**1**
	ADVERB				
	Briefly				**2**
	Best				**2**

	VERB	2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	total
	Calculate	3		4	**7**
	Recommend	1	1	2	**4**
	Construct	2		1	**3**
	Evaluate • Evaluate how (2)		2	1	**3**
	Justify	1	1	1	**3**
	Show	1		2	**3**
	Describe	2		1	**3**
	Elaborate	2			**2**
	Suggest • Suggest why (1)		1	1	**2**
Operations	Explore			2	**2**
Management	Explain	2			**2**
	Determine			2	**2**
	Assess			1	**1**
	Define	1			**1**
	Identify	1			**1**
	Reason out • Reason out why (1)		1		**1**
	Argue • Argue why (1)			1	**1**
	Use			1	**1**
	Indicate	1			**1**
	ADVERB				
	Best				**2**

	VERB	2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	total

VERB	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	total
Explain • Explain why (1)	3	5	6	**14**
Calculate	2	2	2	**6**
Describe • Describe how (2)	2	1	2	**4**
Show		1	3	**4**
Discuss	1		3	**3**
Evaluate		2		**2**
Differentiate	2			**2**
Demonstrate		1		**1**
Construct	1			**1**
Elaborate	1			**1**
Identify		1		**1**
Determine	1			**1**
Analyze	1			**1**
ADVERB				
Graphically				**6**
Briefly				**6**
Critically				**2**
Numerically				**1**

The leftmost column spans all rows with the label "International Trade & Policy".

	VERB	2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	total
Strategic Management	Justify • Justify what (1)	2	1	2	**5**
	Discuss • Discuss what (1)	2		1	**3**
	Explain • Explain what (1) • Explain how (1) • Explain why (1)	3			**3**
	Provide		2		**2**
	Conduct			2	**2**
	Comment		1	1	**2**
	Recommend			1	**1**
	Apply		1		**1**
	Describe	1			**1**
	Determine		1		**1**
	Suggest • Suggest how (1)		1		**1**
	Define		1		**1**
	Identify		1		**1**
	Compare		1		**1**
	State			1	**1**
	ADVERB				
	Critically				**4**
	Clearly				**1**

	VERB	2022/23	2020/21	2019/20	total
International Logistics	Discuss • Discuss how (2) • Discuss when (1)	5	5	2	**12**
	Propose	1	1	1	**3**
	Explain • Explain when (1)	1	2		**3**
	Elaborate	1	2		**3**
	Distinguish	1	1		**2**
	State	1	1		**2**
	Summarize	2			**2**
	Justify		1	1	**2**
	Recommend • Recommend what (1)		1	1	**2**
	Conclude • Conclude how (1)			2	**2**
	Comment • Comment how (1)		1	1	**2**
	Define • Define what (1)	1			**1**
	Predict		1		**1**
	Suggest		1		**1**
	Evaluate • Evaluate how (1)			1	**1**
	Analyze			1	**1**
	Support			1	**1**
	ADVERB				
	Commonly				**1**