

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Ain Temouchent - Belhadj Bouchaib



**Faculty of Letters, Languages and Social Sciences Department of
Letters and English Language**

**The Impact of Cross-Cultural Communication
Challenges on Students' Mental Health: Case of
International EFL Learners at the University of Ain
Temouchent**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a Master's Degree in
Didactics and Applied Languages*

Submitted by:

Ms. Lamis Lamia BELEBBED

Supervised by:

Dr. Fatima Zohra ELOUALI

Board of Examiners

President: Prof. Chahrazed HAMZAOUI MAB Ain Temouchent University

Supervisor: Dr. Fatima Zohra ELOUALI MCA Ain Temouchent University

Examiner: Mrs. Assia BOUZID MAA Ain Temouchent University

Academic Year: 2024/2025

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

My lovely mother, Danoun Souad, is my biggest supporter and source of inspiration.

To my father, Belebbed Djamel

To my siblings, Ahmed, Zinou, and Anfel

To my grandmother

To my girls

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my supervisor, **Dr. Fatima Zohra ELOUALI**, most sincerely for her guidance, support, and helpful comments throughout this study. Her guidance, expertise, and encouragement have been the key to the completion of this dissertation.

I am very grateful to **Prof. Chahrazed HAMZAOU**I and **Mrs. Assia BOUZID** for willingly providing their valuable time and comments. Their valuable evaluation has significantly contributed to further enriching and refining the quality of this work.

I would be grateful to acknowledge the teachers who allowed me to observe their classes.

In addition, I am sincerely indebted to the international students who participated in my research. Your generosity in sharing your data and experiences has been very significant in building this research; your time and efforts are much appreciated.

Abstract

The present research explores the effects of cross-cultural communication issues on the psychosocial well-being of international EFL students at the University of Ain Temouchent, Algeria. It tackles the socio-psychological challenges that affect their mental well being as foreign language learners. Accordingly, a mixed-method design was adopted including interviews, a questionnaire, and a classroom observation. Data analysis demonstrate that disparities in languages, especially in French and Arabic, were the most daunting issues. Besides, cultural barriers led to tension, anxiety, and mild depression that were injurious to both social relations and academic achievements. Students also experienced challenges in unfamiliar classroom interactions due to cultural differences. The study also examined coping behaviours, such as a trend towards seeking help from teachers and peers rather than utilizing personal coping mechanisms. Findings indicated that emotional distress was most severe during the culture shock phase of the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adjustment. Even with some recovery indicators, most students' self-regulation systems failed. Accordingly, the study insists on the importance of addressing the link between cross-cultural challenges and mental well-being as there is a need for using an adapted emotional and educational support systems in our teaching environments.

Table of contents

DEDICATION.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	IV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	V
LIST OF TABLES	VI
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VII
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE : Theoretical Framewrok and Literature Review.....	6
1.1 Introduction.....	7
1.2 Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory.....	7
1.3 U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation.....	10
1.4 Key Concepts.....	12
1.4.1 Culture.....	12
1.4.2 Communication.....	13
1.4.2.1 Types of Communications.....	14

1.4.2.2 Communication in Educational Settings.....	15
1.4.3 Cross Cultural Communication.....	16
1.4.4 Mental Health.....	17
1.4.4.1 Mental Health Challenges Faced by International Students.....	18
1.4.4.2 Factors Contributing to Mental Health Issues.....	20
1.4.5 The Relationship Between Cross Cultural Communication and Mental Health.....	21
1.5 Review of Previous Studies.....	22
1.6 Significance of The Study.....	25
1.7 Conclusion.....	26
CHAPTRE TWO: Research Design and Methodology.....	27
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 Research Aims and Motivation.....	28
2.3 Research Design.....	29
2.4 The Present Case Study.....	31
2.4.1 Sample Population.....	32
2.4.2 Student’s Profile.....	33
2.5 Data Collection Tools.....	34

2.5.1 Semi structured Interviews with students.....	35
2.5.2 Questionnaire for students.....	38
2.5.3 Observation for students.....	39
2.6 Data Analysis and Data Preparation.....	41
2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis.....	41
2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis.....	42
2.6.3 Integration of Methods.....	42
2.7 Validity.....	43
2.8 Reliability.....	44
2.9 Ethical Considerations.....	45
2.10 Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTRE THREE: Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion.....	48
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Data Analysis.....	49
3.2.1 Questionnaire Findings.....	50
3.2.2 Interviews Findings.....	55
3.2.2.1 Theme one : Challenges Faced by International Students.....	55

3.2.2.2 Theme two : Mental Health Effects of Communication Barriers.....	57
3.2.2.3 Theme Three : Coping Mechanisms.....	59
3.2.3 Observation Findings.....	60
3.2.3.1 Findings of Session 1	61
3.2.3.2 Findings of Session 2.....	63
3.2.3.3 Findings of Session 3.....	66
3.3 Discussion of Findings.....	67
3.3.1 Communication Challenges.....	68
3.3.2 Mental Health Impacts.....	69
3.3.3 Coping Mechanisms.....	69
3.4 Limitations of The Study	70
3.4.1 Language Barriers and Accents.....	71
3.4.2 Difficulties with Specific Participant’s Communication.....	71
3.4.3 Recruitment Challenges.....	72
3.4.4 Time Constraints.....	72
3.4.5 Sample Size and Generalizability.....	72
3.5 Implications of The Study.....	73

3.5.1 Enhancing Language Support Programs.....	73
3.5.2 Cultural Orientation and Integration Initiatives.....	74
3.5.3 Psychological and Emotional Services.....	75
3.5.4 Encouraging Active Participation in Classrooms.....	75
3.5.5 Developing Independent Coping Strategies.....	76
3.5.6 Strengthening Institutional Support and Engagement.....	76
3.5.7 Fostering Peer and Faculty Collaboration.....	77
3.5.8 Promoting Further Research and Continuous Improvement.....	77
3.6 Conclusion.....	78
GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	84
APPENDICES.....	90

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L1/L2: License

LCAT: Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory

M2: Master 2

UCT: U-Curve Theory

List of tables

Table 3.2.3.1: Findings of session 1.....	63
Table 3.2.3.2: Findings of session 2.....	65
Table 3.2.3.3: Findings of session 3.....	67

List of Figures

Figure 3.2.1.1: Participants' age range.....	51
Figure 3.2.1.2: Participants' gender.....	51
Figure 3.2.1.3: Participants' home country.....	52
Figure 3.2.1.4: Participants' level of study.....	52
Figure 3.2.1.5: Students' difficulties in communicating with others.....	53
Figure 3.2.1.6: Communication barriers in social settings impact on mental health	53
Figure 3.2.1.7: seeking help from someone when facing communication challenges.....	54

List of Figures

Figure 3.2.1.1: Participants' age range.....	51
Figure 3.2.1.2: Participants' gender.....	51
Figure 3.2.1.3: Participants' home country.....	52
Figure 3.2.1.4: Participants' level of study.....	52
Figure 3.2.1.5: Students' difficulties in communicating with others.....	53
Figure 3.2.1.6: Communication barriers in social settings impact on mental health	53
Figure 3.2.1.7: seeking help from someone when facing communication challenges...54	

General Introduction

Students' movement across borders has significantly increased, making international students a visible component of higher education systems worldwide. Today, with increased interaction at different levels between countries and people (globalization), students travel to different nations for their studies. Students from different countries bring along new cultures and experiences, and creating the appropriate academic setting becomes challenging. However, learning in another country often carries numerous problems, especially in cross-cultural communication. As earlier pointed out, communication is paramount to academic success and social assimilation, which, sadly, is usually very problematic for international students because of the limitations of language, cultural norms, and media of communication. These communication barriers subject students to academic, emotional, and psychological tension. The burden of adapting to a new culture, losing the productive mode of communication with it, results in isolation, anxiety and depression, and negatively impacts one's mental well-being. Undoubtedly, every student will face various challenges, e.g., a different lifestyle and culture. One must consider the type of cross-cultural communication barriers that influence a student's mental well-being, facilitating their adjustment and ensuring their well-being.

This research aims to determine the correlation between cross-cultural communication problems and international students' psychological well-being. Based on communication problems experienced by students in their academic and social lives, this study aims to analyze the impact of these problems on the mental well-being of the students. The findings will provide evidence that can be used to inform support services and interventions in learning institutions to improve international students' overall experience and mental well-being.

The more globalized aspect of Algerian higher education poses unique challenges to international students. The students are multifaceted in campus life, but they confront daunting challenges to adjust to the culture and language nuances of the Algerian higher

education system. Specifically, this paper explains how cross-cultural communication issues such as language variations, misunderstanding of non-verbal signals, and communication methods between cultures adversely influence the psychological welfare and good condition of overseas EFL students pursuing their studies at Algerian universities. Such issues are likely to hinder higher degrees of anxiety, loneliness, and culture shock, whose potential might lead to interference with their learning performance and university adaptation in Algeria. In addition, there is a lack of qualitative studies specifically emphasizing the experiences of the international students in the Algerian University of Ain Temouchent. Such a lack of data hinders the formulation of effective support policies and interventions, which directly confront the particularities of these international students at this specific university.

It is necessary to understand the extent to which these issues contribute to the psychological loads being carried by international students and whether and how a proper arrangement has been established in the University of Ain Temouchent. This is one of the reasons the present research attempts to study and address the psychological well-being of the international students at the University of Ain Temouchent, specifically the determinants of the key stressors, with particular reference to the cross-cultural communication ones. The research objectives of conducting this study are to:

- To investigate international students' cross-cultural communication problems from a sociolinguistic approach, considering how the convergence of linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic factors in their academic and social experiences affects their mental health and overall emotional well-being.
- To recommend interventions and strategies for international students to cope with and handle cross-cultural communication problems, ensuring their social integration, mental health, and overall emotional well-being.

- To examine the coping strategies of international EFL students for addressing cross-cultural communication issues and their de-enhancement efficacy on their psychological well-being.

In order to accomplish the general objectives of the study, the researcher made the following three research questions:

- What are the most common cross-cultural communication issues that face international students?
- How do the problems impact the psychological well-being of international EFL students?
- What coping strategies are adopted by foreign EFL students when faced with mental problems created by cross-cultural communication problems?

To address the following questions, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- Students may be capable of experiencing less social interaction as a result of communication problems created by linguistic variations, non-verbal variations, and culture-bound study practices.
- Difficulty in communication may increase the anxiety, depression, and tension levels of students by creating social isolation, loneliness, and low self-esteem.
- Problems concerning mental health may be overcome by students through coping strategies such as communication practice, relaxation skills, and social support.

This study is structured into three chapters to present an answerable account of international EFL students' experiences and respond to the research questions.

The introductory chapter provides the required literature review, focusing on early underpinning research that explored issues pertinent to international EFL learners during the

new communicative and cultural adaptation process. It also acknowledges other prominent theories, such as Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory and the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation. The chapter will attempt to hypothesize a theoretical framework for the implications of cross-cultural communication problems on international students' psychological well-being, with particular reference to the Algerian setting. The second chapter gives the research methodology used in the present study with a clear explanation of the research design, participant recruitment, and data collection techniques. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach with international EFL students' interviews, classroom observations, and an online questionnaire.

The second chapter justifies the methodological choice and analytical procedures used to study how communication problems are linked with mental well-being. Ethical considerations are also presented to render the research acceptable according to international research ethics standards. The final chapter presents the results of data analysis and synthesizes the findings with the literature reviewed. The questionnaire, interview, and observation findings are reported and provide quantitative and qualitative information on how cross-cultural communication challenges affect the international EFL learners' mental health.

The last chapter integrates the findings and theory constructed in Chapter One and presents a thorough description of students' psychological and emotional life experiences. It also provides recommendations for future research on enabling international students' academic and social integration.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The problems that foreign EFL students face in adapting to new communicative and cultural settings have a significant influence on their mental health. These students commonly face language issues, other cultural norms, and new forms of communication, which expose them to the strain of emotional frustration, such as anxiety, stress, and alienation. A theoretically integrative model that combines cross-cultural communication and psychology theories will be required to address the impact of cross-cultural communication issues on international students' mental wellbeing. Since this study employs two basic theory models to analyze cross-cultural communication issues as a possible cause of international EFL students' psychological well-being, it can act as the driving force to develop a new, improved method of assisting these learners: Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory and the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation.

The theories explain international students' psychological and emotional experiences differently, focusing centrally on how communication issues and cultural acclimatisation lead to these experiences. By integrating these paradigms, this study hopes to provide an integrated explanation of the mental health outcomes of international students, with a particular focus on the importance of communication issues in these processes.

1.2 Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory

LCAT, a cornerstone of stress and emotion research, significantly enhances our understanding of how individuals perceive and respond to stressful situations. Its importance

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

cannot be overstated, as it sheds light on the complex interplay of cognitive Appraisal and emotional response.

The theory relies on the presumption that stress is not the result of the situation but the individual's Appraisal of the situation. This is influenced by the individual's cognitive Appraisal, which includes evaluating whether a particular event is a threat, challenge, or benign, and whether or not he or she possesses the coping resources to manage it.

- a. **Primary Appraisal:** This is the initial evaluation of an event. In this phase, individuals decide whether the event is irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful (i.e., whether it poses a threat, challenge, or harm). For international EFL students, a breakdown in communication in an academic or social setting can be evaluated as a threat or challenge, based on their ability to understand and respond to the event.
- b. **Secondary Appraisal:** the next step in the process is where individuals assess their coping resources to meet the situation. These resources, whether personal skills, support groups, or environmental factors, play a crucial role in how international students manage cross-cultural communication issues. Understanding and leveraging these resources can empower students to navigate these challenges effectively.
- c. **Coping Mechanisms:** Lazarus distinguishes between problem-focused coping (aimed at changing or managing the situation) and emotion-focused coping (aimed at reducing emotional distress). How international students manage cross-cultural communication problems can significantly affect their emotional and mental health outcomes.
- d. **Reappraisal:** This is the ongoing process of re-evaluating a situation after new facts or knowledge international students can reframe their communication issues as they

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

become familiar with the new society, which can influence their stress level and emotional status in the long term.

Lazarus (1993) explains, “Stress is not a product of an event but of an individual's perception of the event, based on their personal resources and environmental context.” This insight particularly applies to understanding how cultural differences in communication may be perceived as stressors for international EFL students.

LCAT is directly relevant to this study as it explains how international EFL learners perceive and respond to stressors created by cross-cultural communication problems. The theory emphasizes that the emotional response of learners to such problems depends on how they appraise their communication problems and the coping resources they have at their disposal. For example, a student from a high-context culture with trouble adjusting to low-context communication in an English-speaking country can perceive the experience as a threat (primary Appraisal). They can become stressed, anxious, and helpless if they believe they lack the capability or support to handle such challenges (secondary Appraisal). Conversely, a student who views the situation as a challenge and believes that with practice, he or she can perform better can become motivated and resilient. Therefore, his or her stress levels could be minimised.

The theory can also explain how coping strategies influence mental health among international students. Those who employ emotion-focused coping (e.g., social withdrawal or communication avoidance) will likely experience more negative emotional responses. In contrast, those who employ problem-focused coping (e.g., seeking language support services

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

or peer help) will likely be more successful in managing cultural adaptation stresses. The utilisation of Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory is crucial because it offers a psychological model for understanding the emotional responses of international EFL learners to communication issues.

LCAT's focus on individual perception and coping makes it a powerful tool in understanding how learners manage the mental health challenge of cross-cultural adjustment. By utilising LCAT, this study can identify international students' coping strategies for reacting to communication issues. This knowledge can be harnessed in intervention planning, offering hope for promoting positive coping strategies and improving students' psychological and emotional well-being. It will also help identify solutions to mitigate these problems and improve students' psychological and emotional well-being.

1.3 U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation

The U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation was initially put forth by anthropologist Cora Du Bois in the 1950s and developed further by Oberg in the 1960s to describe the emotional adaptation process when individuals acclimate to a new culture.

The U-Curve model suggests that individuals undergo a series of emotional stages as they acclimate to life in a new culture. The theory is named because the adaptation process is labelled a U-shaped pattern. a. Honeymoon Phase: In the beginning, there is excitement and curiosity regarding the new culture, accompanied by an idealistic perception of the host nation. There are positive feelings and hope during this phase.

Once the initial novelty of the new culture fades away, individuals experience frustration, confusion, and anxiety. Here, they experience difficulty in dealing with unfamiliar

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

social mores, language barriers, and communication styles, giving rise to psychological stress. Individuals get used to the new culture with time. They learn to deal with cultural differences, develop coping mechanisms, and form social networks. This stage involves emotional recovery, greater confidence, and a higher sense of belonging in the new setting. This U-shaped emotional curve reflects the battle for cultural adjustment. It is of critical significance whenever cross-cultural experiences are under study, particularly in the situation of people who move to another foreign country or cultural setting.

When international students move to a foreign country, they typically experience extreme emotional fluctuations as they settle into a new culture, language, and educational environment. Understanding this process can be applied to account for how cross-cultural communication problems influence students' mental health and emotional well-being in the long run. Foreign EFL students can have:

a. Honeymoon phase: When they are excited about learning in a foreign country when they come in. Time can be full of expectations, but challenges can instantly substitute it once people start dealing with the complexities of language differences and different expectations around communication in the new culture.

b. Culture Shock: Students feel apprehensive, frustrated, and stressed upon initial entry due to language issues, misunderstanding in communication, and unfamiliar academic expectations. This is the phase when issues of mental health, such as loneliness, homesickness, and academic stress, become most severe.

c. Adaptation/Recovery: Eventually, with time, there is adaptation to the culture by some students, improvement in their communication skills, and familiarisation with their learning

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

environment. It is a phase of increased emotional well-being, confidence, and coping with cross-cultural factors.

The UCT helps link communication difficulties to mental health outcomes. Distress from acclimatisation to new cultural communication habits is a salient component of the culture shock phase for international EFL students. The theory explains how communication problems caused by language difficulties, different non-verbal communication, or social norm misunderstanding can negatively affect mental health during this critical stage. The theory also points out the significant role of coping mechanisms in helping learners to adapt. International EFL learners who can establish suitable coping mechanisms (e.g., language mastery or social support) while adapting are more effective in sustaining mental well-being and academic achievements at the adaptation phase.

In summary, the UCT is an informative theory that helps students understand how global EFL students adjust to new communication and cultural environments and how they are affected by these adjustments in terms of their mental health. The theory's brief description of the emotional struggles that students undergo during their adjustment is important information to grasp the stress and coping mechanisms that influence their mental health.

1.4 Key Concepts

Key concepts are the principles and ideas that guide and support the topic of this study. They allow the establishment of the purpose of the study, build research questions, and serve as the foundation for analysis. In this study, cross-cultural communication, mental well-being, Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory, and the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

are all essential to understanding the international EFL students' perception and response to communication challenges in a host-nation learning environment. These theories shed light on students' challenges and how they respond and adjust.

1.4.1 Culture

Culture is an intricate, multi-faceted system of general values, beliefs, customs, norms, languages, and symbols that influence behaviour and construct the worldview of individuals in a society or group (Hall, 1976). It provides a framework for understanding how people respond to the world and interact with each other, constructing social behaviours, communication styles, and expressions of emotion. Culture is learned through socialisation processes and passed down across generations, shaping individual and collective identities (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Culture dictates how individuals process information, make sense of occurrences, and respond to social cues. In cross-cultural relations, these differences can lead to significant challenges, mainly when the actors do not realise or cannot adapt to diverse norms. For instance, directness in communication is celebrated in some cultures, whereas others value indirectness and context (Hall, 1976). These differences will likely create misunderstandings even if the involved actors share a similar purpose or objective. Besides that, culture also affects non-verbal communication, such as body language, eye contact, and facial expressions, which might be interpreted differently according to culture. What is positive or neutral in one culture might be seen as offensive or disrespectful in another (Matsumoto, 2009). Understanding and accommodating the values and norms of the host culture is the key to successful integration (Berry, 1997). International students. However, international students

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

find it challenging to balance their home culture and the host country's culture, affecting their performance, social life, and overall well-being (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

1.4.2 Communication

Communication is the process by which individuals convey information, ideas, emotions, and meanings from one to another through both verbal and non-verbal means. It is one of the primary processes of creating understanding and forming relationships in day-to-day life and university settings. Effective communication is essential for successful social integration and academic achievement, especially in university settings. It enables individuals to connect with others, express thoughts and emotions, and understand different perspectives, particularly in multicultural environments (Samovar et al., 2015).

In academic contexts, communication plays a significant role in students' academic achievement, involvement, and establishment of social networks. Successful communication influences how effectively students grasp course content, interact in the classroom, and integrate into academic and social communities. Developing host-country communication ability for international students is key to success in a new learning context.

1.4.2.1 Types of Communication

Communication occurs through various channels, each with a specific role in transmitting information, emotions, and ideas. Understanding these different types of communication helps to attain successful communication, especially in multicultural and educational environments. The two most basic types of verbal and non-verbal communication are fundamental in understanding how messages are delivered and received. Whereas verbal communication is the application of language to pass on clear messages and meanings, non-

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

verbal communication includes body orientation, facial expressions, and other non-linguistic signals that tend to impose depth of meaning and context. The section below will cover these critical means of communication and delve into their functions in facilitating effective interactions in different settings.

Verbal communication refers to using spoken or written words to convey messages. It is among educational institutions' most significant means of communication, with teachers and students communicating during lectures, seminars, and other study activities. Verbal communication through speech allows individuals to share information directly, and written communication, such as assignments, reports, and e-mails, is formal paperwork (Samovar et al., 2015).

Non-verbal communication includes body language, facial expression, gestures, eye contact, posture, and voice tone. Such cues tend to follow or change verbal messages, infusing them with emotional tones or establishing intent. Non-verbal communication is important for interpreting how people feel, even when feelings are not clearly expressed through words (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2014).

According to this style, the speaker or writer's ideas, views, or intentions are articulated without vagueness. The purpose is primarily to pass on the message in the manner it is intended. Direct communication is used in individualistic, assertive, and specific cultures. It is generally believed to be effective and open, particularly where precise information and immediate understanding are needed. Indirect communication, on the other hand, involves delivering messages using suggestions, context, or body language rather than explicit statements.

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

In indirect speech, the speaker may imply their message indirectly, leaving the recipient with little room for interpretation. Indirect communication maintains social harmony, shows respect, or avoids confrontation. Indirect communication is prevalent where collectivism, oneness in a group, and avoiding frontal conflict are emphasised in society. This is a more refined approach in that it permits people to speak in a manner that makes an effort not to offend or cause distress to relationships.

1.4.2.2 Communication in Educational Settings

At schools, communication is key to learning as well as socialisation. Smooth interaction between teachers and students allows for knowledge transfer, clarification of ideas, and positive criticism. For the students, good presentation of ideas on paper and orally is critical in expressing understanding and academic success (Samovar et al., 2015).

Communication is also crucial for building relationships and belonging. Group projects, teamwork, and extracurricular activities all depend on effective communication. Students who communicate properly can form supportive peer groups, share ideas, and provide feedback on group projects. International students must learn such communication dynamics to enable social adjustment and learning in the host country (Hsu, 2010).

Moreover, an open communication environment, in which all believe they are being heard and valued, is essential to building positive learning experiences. Open communication develops thought diversity, aids cooperation, and reduces barriers to participation. Students who can communicate freely in the new environment are more likely to achieve academically and socially (Gudykuns, 2004).

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

However, international students often face significant barriers to effective communication within their new learning context. These may include poor command of the host country's language, unfamiliarity with non-verbal cues, and confusion reading cultural norms about classroom interaction and hierarchy. These may encroach upon their ability to ask questions, engage in discussions, or seek academic support, causing frustration, embarrassment, or marginalization. These misunderstandings or reluctance to speak up can additionally marginalize students, damaging academic performance and psychological well-being (Zhou et al., 2008; Andrade, 2006). It is, therefore, essential to comprehend and address such communication barriers to develop suitable learning environments and facilitate international students' success and integration.

1.4.3 Cross-Cultural Communication

Cross-cultural communication refers to the communication and sharing of ideas between individuals from different cultures. Due to globalisation, cross-cultural communication is on the rise, especially within learning institutions (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Cross-cultural communication involves mixing differences in language, expectations of culture, and communication styles for mutual understanding and collaboration.

Cross-cultural communication is critical in international education, in which learners from diverse cultures come into contact with each other. Communication must be effective, with an awareness of cultural differences such as variation in values, norms of communication, and behaviour expectations. For example, high-context students, whose cultural meaning is implicit in non-verbal cues, may need to modify the frank communication inherent in low-context cultures (Hall, 1976).

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

Successful cross cultural communication builds relationships, promotes respect, and enables understanding between people from different cultures. It is an art that is learned daily, adaptable, and sensitive to other individuals' cultural traditions. International students who learn successful cross-cultural communication can adjust to the new setting, communicate with students and lecturers, and engage actively in studies and social activities (Gudykunst, 2004).

1.4.4 Mental Health

Mental health is a state of emotional and psychological well-being that allows individuals to deal with the usual stresses of life, be productive, and contribute to society. Mental health is a key part of overall health, affecting how individuals think, feel, and behave. Mental health is not simply the lack of mental disease but includes positive attributes such as emotional resilience, the ability to form satisfying relationships, and the capacity for self-actualisation (World Health Organisation, 2018).

Mental well being is inherent in several areas of life, including social life, academic performance, and personal growth. A mentally healthy individual can better deal with life's issues, adapt to changes, and engage in productive social and academic activities. Conversely, mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and stress have the potential to disable functioning, interfere with academic success, and ruin social relations, especially in challenging environments like college.

For international students, adaptation to a new academic and sociocultural setting can present unique mental health challenges. These include loneliness, culture shock, academic pressure and new social norms. These stressors can powerfully affect their emotional and

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

psychological well-being, possibly their social integration into the host society and academic success. Therefore, addressing mental health needs is necessary to deliver overall international student well-being and develop an inclusive and positive learning environment.

1.4.4.1 Mental Health Challenges Faced by International Students

International students are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues due to the complex stressors involved in adapting to a new cultural and academic environment. Varied internal and external influences exacerbate these issues, hence making them vulnerable to a variety of psychological conditions.

- a. **Stress, Anxiety, Depression, and Loneliness:** Adapting to a new country is a major academic, social, and cultural transition. For most international students, these stresses might result in high levels of depression, stress, and anxiety. Expectations to meet academic requirements, the language hurdle, and coping with new education systems are all sources of ongoing pressure. Furthermore, loneliness, low social support, and lack of ability to form meaningful connections may result in loneliness, further exacerbating mental health conditions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2010). Such emotional loads can impair focus, academic functioning, and interpersonal relationships, resulting in a diminished quality of life and mental health.
- b. **Acculturative Stress:** Acculturative stress refers to the psychological distress one experiences when he/she is having difficulty adjusting to a new culture. International students are typically impacted by acculturative stress due to differences in language, unfamiliarity with cultural expectations, and pressure to adjust to new social situations. The stressors can result in mood disturbances,

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

alienation, and loss of self-esteem. The greater the cultural differences, the greater can be the stress levels experienced by students in attempting to fit the new environment. Such stress takes a long-term toll on emotional well-being, particularly if students feel disconnected from the host and home cultures (Schwartz et al., 2010).

- c. **Identity Conflict and Cultural Dissonance:** International students typically have intrapersonal conflicts since they try to reconcile their native culture with the host culture's values and expectations. This contradiction can confuse their identity of who they actually are and, therefore, cause more psychological distress. The students are pressured to adjust to new cultural expectations but also fear losing their initial identity and values. This identity negotiation can be complicated for younger students as they are still developing their identities. When norms in the host country are very different from their own, students might experience cultural dissonance, which creates feelings of isolation, marginalization, and self-doubt (Berry, 2006; Yoon et al., 2013). Failure to incorporate both cultural identities well may result in lower self-esteem and feelings of broken belonging, which are highly correlated with depressive symptoms and emotional instability (Ward et al., 2001; Schwartz et al., 2010).

1.4.4.2 Factors Contributing to Mental Health Issues

Social isolation and homesickness are probably the most significant contributors to mental health problems among international students. The lack of close support networks,

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

such as family members and close friends, in a strange environment in a distant land can lead to extreme loneliness. Homesickness, or yearning for one's homeland and familiar environment, also enhances such experiences. The absence of emotional support networks and the difficulty of forming new social relations have serious mental health consequences for students, leading to depression and anxiety (World Health Organisation, 2018).

Academic pressures and performance anxiety on overseas students in universities can be particularly formidable. Language barriers and cultural acclimatization to new academic expectations and norms compound the stress. The majority of students experience performance anxiety, fearing that they will not achieve high expectations of their school or be unable to express themselves well in a foreign language. This may lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and a decline in academic performance. Failure or underperformance fear contributes to these stresses, giving rise to a cycle of anxiety and academic issues (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Adjusting to a new culture entail learning to manage unknown communication styles, social norms, and behaviour expectations. This may equate to frustration and confusion for international students, which will affect their emotional state. Inability to understand or adjust to the cultural norms of the host nation may lead to feelings of marginalization or ineptness, hence anxiety and depression. Besides this, the pressure to adjust to new requirements while maintaining their own culture may trigger internal conflict. This, in turn, would hinder psychological adaptation (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

1.4.5 The Relationship between Cross Cultural Communication and Mental Health

Effective communication is vital to a healthy mental state, particularly among international students transitioning to a new learning and cultural environment. Communication is one of the fundamental ways students express their needs, request assistance, and communicate socially and academically. Transparent communication that is heard brings about feelings of belonging, a sense of belongingness, and psychological well-being. Nonetheless, if breakdowns in communication occur, or when misunderstandings continue because of cultural and linguistic differences, it can intensify stress, anxiety, and social isolation, hurting emotional well-being.

Effective communication is necessary for international students to deal with academic stress, adjust to new social settings, and seek help when needed. Inefficient communication or inability to understand local norms may heighten confusion, frustration, and isolation. The above-mentioned stressors have been found to contribute to psychological distress, which may result in anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. Poor communication in academic settings can result in academic failure and yet further exacerbate mental health issues. Second, when students feel they cannot connect with peers and teachers due to cultural or language barriers, the outcome is rejection and feelings of marginalisation, which are strong predictors of mental health issues (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

As much as communication is essential in educational institutions, so is it in social interactions. Effective communication facilitates international students in establishing rapport with individuals to enable friendships and support groups. Social isolation occurs from

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

linguistic, cultural, or behavioural communication barriers that hinder effective social interaction. This social disengagement can lead to loneliness and alienation, affecting emotional well-being. In multicultural environments, students may not read non-verbal cues or social action appropriately, thus creating feelings of social exclusion and a reduced sense of belonging (Schwartz et al., 2010). Social isolation is one of the leading causes of psychological problems, and effective communication is the key to ending this issue.

Cultural sensitivity and acceptance of variations in communication style during cross-cultural communication can mitigate misunderstandings that cause emotional distress. For example, some cultures value indirectness in communication while others value directness. Misunderstandings occur when international students are unaware of these differences, leading to frustration, anxiety, and emotional disconnection. Increasing cultural sensitivity and resource availability for developing intercultural communication skills can help students develop effective coping strategies, raising their ability to manage anxiety and stress. By providing a context in which communication is clear and culturally sensitive, schools can reduce the stress arising from intercultural miscommunication and contribute to the psychological well-being of international students (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

1.5 Review of Previous Studies

Reading previous studies is important in academic research since it is the foundation for new questions. It allows the researcher to place their research within the existing knowledge, reveal gaps in theory and empirics, and avoid repetition. Reading the related literature situates the study, explains its purpose, and rationalizes the choice of methodology. For overseas student research, drawing on earlier work is especially vital to be familiar with the cyclical issues that these students face, the diversity of their experience, and the

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

effectiveness of support measures in diverse cultural and institutional contexts. This also enables the current research to develop significant contributions in a mature field of research.

Recent research has focused on the intricate relationship between cross-cultural communication challenges and mental health impacts on international students, particularly EFL learners. The following critically reviews six studies, highlighting their contribution to the field and the gaps that are aimed to be addressed by the current study.

Brown and Smith (2016) explored how linguistic variation and non-verbal miscommunication contribute to acculturative stress and academic issues in international students. They tested 200 students and found language problems and problems with communication to be related to higher stress and worse academic adjustment. They recommended communication training to reduce the stressors in the study. Limitations were a small sample and a cross-sectional design. The findings suggest the need for early communication support programs in universities for international students.

Chen and Yang (2018) used a mixed-methods approach to study the influence of intercultural communication competence on anxiety and depression among international students. Data were gathered from 150 students using surveys and interviews, and found that higher intercultural competence correlated with less anxiety and depression. Improved communication skills helped students manage cultural differences, reducing stress. Limitations were that it was cross-sectional and the potential for self-report bias. The study suggests that intercultural training would benefit international students' mental health.

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

Lopez, Martinez, and Kim (2019) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the long-term effects of cross-cultural communication issues on the well-being of international students. They tracked the mental well-being, social adjustment, and communication issues among 120 students over two years. Communication issues were linked with increased isolation and depression, particularly in the initial phases of adaptation. Early support interventions helped students build resilience. Limitations were one sample of the institution and one risk of participant attrition bias. The study reports that universities provide unique support at critical adaptation points for international students.

Nguyen (2020) examined how language difficulty impacted international EFL learners' psychological stress and academic performance. In a mixed-methods design, studies found that language difficulty triggered significant stress that negatively impacted academic performance and self-concept. Most of the students also felt demotivated and isolated. The limitations were that only EFL learners were included, and self-reported data were used. The study suggests that more excellent language assistance and intercultural training are necessary in alleviating stress among this group of people.

Garcia and Perez (2021) examined how social support and coping affected international students' mental health when they had communication problems. From a survey of 250 students, the study found that high social support and active coping significantly reduced depression and anxiety. The limitation was that it was cross-sectional and subject to possible self-report bias. The study highlights that universities should provide support services to enhance social integration and resilience among international students.

Patel and Kumar (2022) studied the impacts of social media and online communication on the psychological well-being of international students. They found that,

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

while digital media allows students to maintain their cultural heritage, excessive use leads to information overload and cyber solitude. The study indicates a requirement for balanced involvement in digital media. The restrictions were technological developments that appeared at an accelerated rate, and the application of self-reports. The research recommends that universities incorporate digital literacy and well-being courses to assist students in coping with online communication problems.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the current study lies in its approach towards the experience of international EFL students, particularly within the Algerian higher education context. With the spotlight concentrated this far, the research aims to conduct a detailed look into such students' problems academically, socially, as well as psychologically. The study aims to have results that are significant and can be applied towards the crafting of focused interventions for the improvement of academic attainment and mental health. By doing so, it hopes to contribute to the international student body of knowledge, more particularly their unique experience in Algerian universities.

Its utility can extend to teachers, policymakers, and institutional decision-makers on the specific needs of EFL foreign students. The study can guide strengthened support structures in and out of the classroom setting through knowledge of how the condition affects their schooled life and psychological well-being. They can include teaching approaches especially tailored to suit them, culture adjustment courses, and psychological counseling services covering English cross-cultural communication and adjustment issues. Additionally,

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

the study bridges the gap in Algerian university research concerning the socio cultural and academic lives of foreign students.

This research also acknowledges the rising ratio of foreign students in certain universities in Algeria and seeks to reverse the trend of inadequate studies in specialized studies for foreign students. By presenting a clearer picture of such challenges faced by such students and how they overcome them, this study aims to make adaptation and acculturation smoother processes, guaranteeing the overall well-being and success of international students in Algeria.

1.7 Conclusion

Finally, the literature review of the subject in question has provided a comprehensive and critical appreciation of the intricate problems international students face adapting to living in the host country. This chapter has covered an extensive range of interconnected concepts, theoretical processes, and empirical studies highly congruent with the specifications of the present study. It has illuminated the complicated reality of international students by examining academic pressure, cultural discrepancy, and social estrangement most typically experienced by them. Through the intensive scrutiny of these variables, the review stressed communication competence, psychological strength, and cultural awareness as much as they are important in impacting adaptation experience among students.

In identifying significant determinants such as language barriers, intercultural miscommunication, and mental health stressors, the chapter critically assessed the internal and external forces influencing international students' academic achievement and overall well-

Theoretical Framework and The Literature Review

being. It has illuminated the necessity of cross-cultural communication competencies and adaptation processes as central characteristics of successful integration into the host education system. Moreover, the chapter has given a good grounding for this study by synthesizing relevant theories i.e., LCAT and the UCT of Cultural Adaptation and corresponding practical experiences on institutional support systems, classroom communication patterns, and student coping processes. Doing so creates a firm ground that informs the current study's design, direction, and interpretation and confirms the need for culturally responsive pedagogies and inclusive academic practices.

Chapter Two

Research Design and Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research process used to examine the effect of cross-cultural communication problems on foreign EFL students' mental health at the University of Ain Temouchent. It delineates the research design, participant selection, data-gathering tools, and analysis process. The study chose a mixed-methods approach to secure the depth and range of student experience by combining qualitative interviews and observations with quantitative questionnaires.

The rationale behind each method is explained, emphasizing how they were tailored to address the study objectives. The chapter also discusses ethical considerations, validity, and reliability, ensuring transparency and academic integrity. This chapter demonstrates how the chosen methods align with the research goals and provide a solid foundation for exploring the complex intersection of language, culture, and mental health.

2.2 Research Aims and Motivation

This study aims to investigate the effects of cross-cultural communication problems on the mental health of international EFL students. The study will investigate the specific language and culture problems that cause stress, anxiety, and other mental illnesses in international students. Furthermore, the study will analyse the coping mechanisms that are used by the students to deal with the problems, with the ultimate goal of offering information that would have the potential to aid improvements in support systems for international students within Algerian institutions and other learning environments.

The Motivation for this research rests with the researcher's strong interest in cultural diversity. Throughout childhood, the researcher was fortunate enough to interact with online

Research Design and Methodology

friends from many different cultures, and it created a lasting interest in how different cultures interact, communicate, and adapt to different environments. This interest in culture, language, and human interaction led the researcher to investigate the unique experiences of international students in university life. Driven by a desire to discover cultures and acquire languages, the researcher has always been interested in how international EFL learners manage the problems they face to settle into a new academic and cultural setting. The researcher's long experience at university, combined with these interests, has given rise to a desire to discover the health implications of cross-cultural communication failure and explore how students can be better helped with academic and social integration.

2.3 Research Design

Research design is the blueprint of research work showing the strategies and steps to study a research problem. Kothari (2004) has defined research design as "the advanced planning of the methods to be adopted for collecting the relevant data and the techniques to be used in their analysis, keeping in view the objective of the study" (p. 32). It is a structured model that ensures the study's goals are met in a valid and trustworthy process. Research designs can be differentiated as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods designs (MMR), each possessing its strengths according to the nature of the research questions. The quantitative design tests objective theories by examining relations between numerical variables. This design is based on deductive logic and systematic measurement (Payne & Payne, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It allows researchers to establish patterns, correlations, or trends, which may be further generalised to large populations.

The qualitative paradigm, however, deals with understanding social phenomena from Participants' perspectives. It seeks to explore individuals' subjective meanings of their experiences, allowing for a deeper insight into their lived realities (Corbetta, 2003; Marcon &

Research Design and Methodology

Gopal, 2005; Kroeze, 2012). Qualitative research uses non-standardised methods such as interviews and observations to explore emotions, behaviours, and experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Kothari, 2004; Flick, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach, as described by Hesse-Biber (2010), unites qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study. It is particularly appropriate for analysing complex research questions that are only understandable in a satisfactory manner from a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative information. MMR provides a rich and well-rounded understanding of research phenomena by combining quantitative data's numeric precision with qualitative data's contextual richness.

The study in this research has an MMR approach to provide a firm and extensive, multifaceted examination of the research problem. Mixed methods design was employed as a result of the following:

- **Delicate understanding:** The MMR approach enables broad, statistical trends (via quantitative methods) and rich, detailed descriptions of people's experiences (via qualitative methods).
- **In-depth data collection:** This design incorporates both qualitative and quantitative techniques, allowing for a richer examination of the research issues from a multi-perspective understanding of the phenomenon under study.
- **Breaking methodological limitations:** MMR breaks free from the limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative information, for instance, can yield generalisable trends with shallow depth, while qualitative information provides meaning but cannot be easily generalised. By integrating the two methods, one has a greater comprehension of sophisticated

Research Design and Methodology

phenomena, including acculturation problems experienced by overseas EFL students.

- **Increased validity and reliability:** The combined application of both methods improves the credibility and validity of the research findings. The quantitative data provides statistical evidence for the findings, while qualitative data offers a more affluent background and an explanation of such results.

2.4 The Present Case Study

This research investigates the communication challenges experienced by international students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), focusing on how these challenges affect their mental health. The study was conducted in the Department of Letters and English Language at Ain Temouchent University, Algeria. The chosen sample included six international students, five from Nigeria and one from Niger, who are currently enrolled in English programs.

A case study is defined by Gerring (2006) as "the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is at least in part to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)" (p. 20). This approach is particularly appropriate when the aim is to explore under-researched populations or phenomena in depth and when theoretical frameworks are still emerging. In this context, the study seeks to understand how international EFL students adapt to a new linguistic and cultural environment, manage communication-related stress, and cope with its implications for their academic and emotional well-being.

A mixed methods approach was employed within the case study framework to address these aims. Data collection tools included semi-structured interviews (conducted remotely via WhatsApp), a structured online questionnaire (distributed through Google Forms), and classroom observations of student participation and interaction. This combination of tools

Research Design and Methodology

allowed for methodological triangulation, increasing the study's internal validity and enabling a more holistic view of the participants' lived experiences.

According to leading scholars, case study research offers several key advantages:

- Firstly, it allows for an in-depth and context-rich understanding of a specific phenomenon. As Eisenhardt (1989) observes, case studies are well-suited to grasping the complexity and dynamics of real-life settings.
- Secondly, case studies effectively explore nuanced social phenomena—such as acculturation, adaptation, and communication stress—within their natural contexts (Yin, 2014). Thirdly, case study research can facilitate the development of new theoretical insights. George and Bennett (2005) emphasise the method's potential for identifying causal mechanisms and generating hypotheses.
- Finally, case studies provide a platform for capturing participants' subjective perspectives, offering “thick description” and insight into meaning-making processes (Merriam, 1998).

By focusing on the experiences of a small group of international students in Algeria, this study contributes to the limited literature on cross-cultural communication in North African educational contexts. The findings are expected to inform institutional practices and policy decisions, offering guidance on better supporting international students linguistically, academically, and psychologically during their educational journey.

2.4.1 The Sample Population

In research, a sample refers to a part of the population whose data are collected. According to Kothari (2004), a sample design is an orderly plan for choosing items or participants for inclusion in research. The sample must represent the target population since this ensures that findings can meaningfully be generalised (where proper) and that the

Research Design and Methodology

inferences drawn from the sample are valid for the overall patterns in the population. The sample population is at the very heart of the research, as it directly impacts the quality and reliability of findings.

The current study's sample population consists of international students pursuing studies within the Department of Letters and English Language at Ain Temouchent University, Algeria. More specifically, the study examines the acculturation processes and cross-cultural communication issues faced by six international students: five Nigerian students and one Niger student. The significance of the sample is that it can provide rich information on the acculturation process of international English as a Foreign Language students in Algeria.

2.4.2 Students' Profile

The procedure for identifying participants in this study started with evaluating the international student population at the Faculty of Letters, Foreign Languages, and Social Sciences at the University of Ain Temouchent. The objective was to determine which department had the most significant number of international students to be studied further. The Department of Foreign Languages, more precisely the English Department, was found to have the most international students. This department was chosen as the research location due to its international student population, which presented an ideal setting to explore the cross-cultural communication concerns that the students face. However, getting in touch with all the potential participants proved challenging since most international students were not easy to reach directly. The difficulty was bridged by using the snowball sampling approach, which effectively reaches hard-to-access populations. Snowball sampling utilises the initial contacts to refer additional research participants, fulfilling the research criteria. Snowball sampling is usually applied in research with a concealed or difficult-to-define population, e.g.,

Research Design and Methodology

international students, where gaining trust is crucial to participant cooperation (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Noy, 2008).

Snowball sampling was applied in the research to recruit six international students, i.e., Nigerian and Niger students. The sample consisted of both undergraduate students (License L1-L2) and postgraduate students (M2) to create diverse academic backgrounds. Such diversity allowed the research to capture various views on the cross-cultural communication issues confronting international students in their studies and social environment. A focus on international students accommodated the research objectives of examining the effect of cross-cultural communication issues on mental health. The selection of this group allowed examination of how such students cope with communication barriers and the psychological effects of those experiences. Snowball sampling also assisted in maintaining inclusivity within the research by enabling participants to be recruited who otherwise would not have been included. In total, participant recruitment used initial departmental information and snowball sampling to gain a diverse and representative sample. In reaching out to international students in the English Department, the study aimed to explore their barriers and how they influence their mental health and academic experiences.

2.5 Data collection tools

Data collection instruments are important tools in the research process that allow for the gathering of empirical evidence within the study's goals and objectives. According to Creswell (2014), such instruments, including interviews, questionnaires, observations, and others, are critical in ensuring that data is reliable, accurate, and valid. Good data collection tools allow for systematic access to proper information and provide comparable data. They help alleviate bias, raise the consistency of findings, and ensure that conclusions drawn from

Research Design and Methodology

the study are based on solid evidence. By providing a systematic approach to data gathering, these tools enhance the rigour of the research process in general.

The choice of data-gathering instruments depends on the design and nature of the data needed. This study employs qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the complex phenomenon of cross-cultural communication challenges and their impact on the mental health of international EFL learners. The tools used in this research include interviews, questionnaires, and observations, each contributing unique perspectives and insights into the Participant's experiences. These tools are discussed in detail below.

2.5.1 Interviews

Interviews are among the most common qualitative data collection instruments that entail direct contact between the researcher and the respondent. They are meant to investigate individual experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and emotions on a given issue (Kvale, 2007). Interviews, in particular, are helpful if the researcher wants to understand the respondent's personal experiences and the meaning they ascribe to these experiences. Unlike other data collection techniques, interviews offer a chance for participants to provide their own words and give rich, detailed responses that can reveal complex emotional, psychological, and social determinants.

Interviews can be applied in varying forms, and the structure of the interviews depends on the research objectives and the degree of flexibility desired by the researcher.

The principal types of interviews are as follows:

- **Structured Interviews:** These are strictly structured interviews with pre-established, closed-ended questions. The participants' answers are usually countable, making this form of structure more applicable in a survey or if the researcher wants specific

Research Design and Methodology

information from a significant sample of participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Structured interviews limit the depth of the answers since the participants are limited to responses from a set list of alternatives.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** This form involves a set of prepared questions, but the researcher retains the flexibility to probe deeper based on the Participant's responses. Follow-up questions can be asked to explore themes that emerge during the interview, allowing for spontaneous and detailed insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This type of interview is most commonly used in qualitative research, as it strikes a balance between structure and flexibility, enabling the researcher to explore the Participant's experiences in depth while maintaining Focus on the research questions.
- **Unstructured Interviews:** Unstructured interviews are more conversational and do not employ predefined questions. The researcher would typically begin with an open-ended question on a broad topic and allow things to go where they may (Cohen et al., 2018). They are helpful in research areas that are unknown or less well known, but they are challenging to analyse and are not comparable with more structured approaches.

In this particular study, semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary qualitative data collection method. The semi-structured format allows for a flexible yet focused approach to understanding the experiences of the students. Semi-structured interviews provide a predefined list of questions, but they also allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions and adapt the conversation based on the Participant's responses, making the tool highly effective for capturing detailed and personal insights (Kvale, 2007). The decision to use semi-structured interviews was based on the nature of the research and the need to capture a detailed and comprehensive picture of the student's lived experiences.

Research Design and Methodology

The researcher investigates a topic involving subjective experiences and emotional responses, cross-cultural communication challenges and mental health impacts, which are best understood through in-depth personal narratives. Given the diversity of experiences among international EFL students, the semi-structured interview design allows us to explore the individual nature of these issues but with a measure of consistency between interviews. This flexibility is required because the research deals with issues like mental health, and the respondents may articulate their challenges differently. Some students may be more forthcoming about their emotional experiences, while others may provide more defensive responses. The semi-structured design enables the researcher to penetrate deeper into such sensitive topics, taking care to capture a complete set of experiences without getting off course from the research goal.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary qualitative data collection method. The semi-structured format allows for a flexible yet focused approach to understanding the students' experiences. Semi-structured interviews provide a predefined list of questions, but they also allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions and adapt the conversation based on the Participants' responses, making the tool highly effective for capturing detailed and personal insights (Kvale, 2007).

The decision to use semi-structured interviews was based on the nature of the research and the need to capture a detailed and comprehensive picture of the student's lived experiences. In this study, the researcher investigates a topic involving subjective experiences and emotional responses, cross-cultural communication challenges and mental health impacts, which are best understood through in-depth personal narratives. Given the diversity of experiences among international EFL students, the semi-structured interview design allows us to explore the individual nature of these issues but with a measure of consistency between interviews. This flexibility is required because the research deals with issues like mental health, and the

Research Design and Methodology

respondents may articulate their challenges differently. Some students may be more forthcoming about their emotional experiences, while others may provide more defensive responses. The semi-structured design enables the researcher to penetrate deeper into such sensitive topics, taking care to capture a complete set of experiences without getting off course from the research goal.

2.5.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are an extremely popular data collection tool that collects focused information from a sizeable group of respondents in a structured and orderly fashion (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). They are most effective when researchers aim to collect quantitative data, enabling them to identify patterns, trends, and relationships in a sizeable population. They are typically statistically analysed, and comparison among participants and generalisation of the findings are easier. A questionnaire is a series of pre-prepared questions, including closed-ended questions (with pre-established response choices) and open-ended questions (where the responder can choose to clarify their answers).

In the current study, a questionnaire is a useful tool to complement the interviews and observations. It enables the researcher to obtain quantitative information from a larger sample of the participants. The structured nature of the questionnaire helps ensure that all the participants provide similar information, enabling comparison of their experiences.

In addition, using the Likert scale questions or other rating scales helps to measure Students' stress, anxiety, or social isolation due to cultural issues. While the interviews provide in-depth personal accounts of students' experiences, the questionnaire would provide a broader overview and help increase the study's validity and reliability by gathering data from more participants. The combination of the two methods allows for a close analysis of the student's challenges, experiences, and emotional impacts in a way that ensures the study covers both

Research Design and Methodology

individual nuances and overall patterns across the data. Questionnaires are generally an effective data collection tool that provides a structured way of gathering quantitative data on a large scale. While they cannot yield the depth of personal experiences like interviews, they complement qualitative methods by offering statistical data and helping render the research findings reliable and generalisable. In conjunction with semi-structured interviews and observations, questionnaires can offer a composite view of cross-cultural communication problems and mental health consequences international EFL students face.

2.5.3 Observation

Observation is a prevalent data collection method that involves systematically noting and recording behaviours, actions, or events in a naturally occurring context or setting as they naturally happen (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). It provides immediate access to participants' behaviour, attitudes, and interactions, yielding rich data that other methods cannot readily access. In qualitative studies, Observation is very effective when the researcher is interested in knowing how people behave in the natural setting without interfering with the situation or participants. Observation can be structured or unstructured based on the study type and data to be collected.

There are four types of Observations:

- **Structured Observation:** it is a type in which the researcher possesses a clearly defined set of behaviours or events that he or she desires to observe and record. Structured Observation generally utilises a clear-cut structure or checklist to observe particular variables, such as student engagement, emotional responses, or interpersonal interactions. Keeping the researcher consistent throughout observations using structured Observation provides quantifiable data that can be analysed systematically (Cohen et al., 2018).

Research Design and Methodology

- **Unstructured Observation:** Unlike structured Observation, unstructured Observation is less structured and more flexible. The researcher does not have an advanced list of behaviours to observe but just sees the environment in general and records whatever might be relevant to the research question. This kind of Observation is exploratory and allows the researcher to absorb the richness and complexity of human behaviour, which cannot be anticipated beforehand (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- **Participant Observation:** The researcher himself is actively involved in the setting, occasionally being a member of the group to be observed. Participant observation allows the researcher to gain a closer, insider perspective of the setting, which often translates into more intimate and nuanced data. However, it may also create bias or affect the initial behaviour of the participants (Cohen et al., 2018).
- **Non-Participant Observation:** Non-participant observation is where the researcher is not involved with the participants but is present as an observer. This is so that the researcher does not influence the observed behaviours or events, giving a more objective perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In studying the cross-cultural difficulties of overseas EFL students, classroom observation will be pivotal in identifying the non-verbal forms of such difficulties. For instance, observing how students relate to their teachers and peers can inform us regarding the extent of social integration or exclusion, which is, in turn, followed by mental health problems. Not participating in class discussions, struggling with group work, or not maintaining eye contact may indicate deeper problems regarding cultural adaptation and communication breakdown. Direct Observation can also be employed to identify how students cope with these challenges in the classroom. For example, while some students may disengage from interaction, others might try to silence their discomfort by overcompensation or misbehaving. Observations can determine coping strategies, including overcompensation and avoidance, that can inform the

Research Design and Methodology

interpretation of students' classroom modes of interaction with language differences and culture.

In brief, Observation is a valuable qualitative research technique, especially for observing behaviour and emotional responses that are hard to put into words. This study applies Observation to gain valuable insights into international EFL students' cross-cultural communication problems and identify both verbal and nonverbal responses affecting their mental well-being. Through observations of classes, the researcher will better understand how mental health issues manifest and are addressed in the social and cultural dynamics of the classroom.

2.6 Data Analysis and Data Preparation

Data analysis is a basic, ongoing process that begins with data collection and continues through interpretation and reporting. As defined by Creswell (2009), data analysis entails reducing, preparing, and arranging data into comprehensible patterns and themes. This is undertaken in mixed-method research, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to create a more comprehensive view of the research problem.

This study utilised a mixed-methods data analysis approach, combining qualitative and quantitative procedures to reveal the impact of cross-cultural communication challenges on Nigerian international EFL students' psychological well-being. Data analysis covered three main stages that corresponded with the three sources of data: online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (distributed through WhatsApp), and classroom observations.

2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted on the data collected from the online survey designed and distributed via Google Forms. First, responses were sorted and filtered, ensuring that

Research Design and Methodology

incomplete or contradictory entries were removed. Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation), were then employed to describe response patterns and trends. Data was displayed graphically in bar charts, pie charts, and tables to show primary findings regarding communication problems, mental health symptoms, and coping mechanisms.

2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data, including interview answers and classroom observation field notes, were analysed using thematic analysis. This involved beginning with open coding, where meaningful data units were labelled and coded. These initial codes were synthesised into broader themes such as "language anxiety," "cultural misunderstanding," "emotional isolation," and "coping mechanisms." This inductive strategy allowed in-depth consideration of participants' lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the class observation data provided corroboration and contextualisation of verbal data, highlighting non-verbal cues, peer interaction, and participation patterns unavailable through self-report measures.

2.6.3 Integration of Methods

Upon independent examination of qualitative and quantitative data, results were merged and contrasted to establish convergence, divergence, and complementarity. This method, called triangulation (Denzin, 1978), introduces depth and authenticity to the research outcomes. For instance, students who reported high anxiety levels in the questionnaire questionnaire exhibited a feeling of loneliness during interviews and were also shown to be less engaged in class activities.

Through various facets of statistical, thematic, and behavioural analysis, the study provides an in-depth image of the effects of cross-cultural communication issues on international

Research Design and Methodology

students' mental health. Integrating the diverse modes of analysis ensures that the conclusions drawn are well-established, accurate, and pertinent to similar study contexts.

2.7 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a study has measured what it is meant to measure and whether the findings indicate the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research enhanced internal and external validity through proper design, instrument development, and data triangulation.

All the research tools, interview questions, questionnaires, and observation guides were developed based on the study's goals, cross-cultural communication, and international EFL mental health literature to ensure internal validity. Alignment guarantees content validity, as the tools comprehensively cover the areas under investigation (Bryman, 2016). Having conducted semi-structured interviews, it was feasible to explore the students' personal experiences profoundly, and the standardised questionnaire provided quantifiable data on generalised trends and concerns. Data source triangulation helped make the research more credible. According to Denzin (1978), using multiple methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observation) allows for cross-checking results, thereby removing bias and improving credibility. For instance, interview verbal responses were supported by trends identified in survey responses and validated through real-time classroom behaviour.

To maximise external validity, the study clearly articulated its context (Nigerian international EFL students at the University of Ain Temouchent). It used purposive and snowball sampling to ensure a range of student experiences were captured. Though the sample was small, richly contextualised data obtained across multiple instruments will likely generalise to similar groups in similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In total, this study

Research Design and Methodology

sought to guarantee that findings are reliable and representative of participants' everyday lives by combining several methods and ensuring meticulous matching between the research tools and the study's goals.

2.8 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the research findings (Bryman, 2016). Various methods were applied in the current study to determine the reliability of the data collection tools and the analysis process. To provide the questionnaire reliability, it was framed in clear, concise, and closed-ended questions to ensure consistency in how the participants read and responded to every question. Closed-ended questionnaires give less scope for variation in responses by limiting the scope of the response, states Creswell (2014). Also, using Google Forms for distribution provided an equal display of questions, providing less room for variability in the tool's administration (Fowler, 2014).

The interviews were semi-standardised, following a pattern with room for variation but ensuring that everyone was asked the same prominent issues. The method is recommended for maintaining consistency when conducting qualitative research without precluding personal opinions (Gill et al., 2008). Regarding ensuring precision, all the interview responses, either text or voice notes, were recorded verbatim. Any unclear parts were double-checked with participants, which is qualitative research best practice (Kvale, 2007). Within the classroom observations, there was a guided observation to highlight specific behaviour and communication patterns that were significant for the research. According to Silverman (2016), applying a structured guide for Observation aided in keeping the researcher's Focus intact over a series of sessions. The non-participant observation technique also aided in avoiding the distortion caused by the researcher to the interactions and ensuring the data collected reflected natural classroom dynamics.

Research Design and Methodology

Responses were thematically coded and classified to enhance the overall reliability of data analysis further. In Denzin's (2017) opinion, triangulation was employed for cross-validation of the results by pitting evidence from different sources (interviews, questionnaires, and observations) against each other. Triangulation creates internal consistency through consistent patterns and ensures that several types of evidence converge to validate conclusions. Through this, the research aimed to produce reliable results that would be replicable every time there was a repeated study under similar conditions.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles are integral to any research work, mainly when research is conducted on human subjects. This research followed the set ethical rules to provide safety, respect, and dignity to all subjects at all stages during the research. The researcher was determined to maintain openness, confidentiality, and voluntariness standards. Before data collection, all the participants were adequately informed concerning the study's purpose and objectives, the nature of their participation, and the use of their data. All the participants provided informed consent prior to conducting interviews and questionnaires. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any moment without suffering any adverse effects.

Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained in the research. Pseudonyms were used rather than real names to protect participants' identities, and all information obtained whether WhatsApp messages, voice recordings, or questionnaire responses was secured in password-protected files that only the researcher could access. No personal identifying details were found in the final report or publications resulting from the study.

Special attention was paid to the delicate nature of the research subject matter, namely the impact of communication difficulties across cultures on mental health. Volunteers were

Research Design and Methodology

instructed to speak only as much as they felt comfortable discussing, and the researcher established a courteous and non-judgmental environment in all encounters. Should emotional distress arise, participants were reminded of their right to stop or withdraw from the process, and local support systems were offered if required.

Prior permission was requested from the teachers of the observed classes for class observation. The consent of individual students was not necessary for observing, although caution was taken to ensure no personal or identifying information was recorded. The Focus remained on overall communication and interaction dynamics rather than on specific individuals. Following these ethical guidelines, the researcher ensured that the research was conducted responsibly, with respect, and in accordance with institutional guidelines and international standards of ethical research.

2.10 Conclusion

The mixed methodology adopted in this study, combining Observation, student interviews, and questionnaires, offers a comprehensive framework to examine how cross cultural communication challenges influence the mental health of foreign ELF learners. The qualitative data gained through interviews and observation offer rich, fine-grained information about students' experiences and problems, and the questionnaire gives a broader, numerical view of students' perceptions and behaviours.

This methodological triangulation ensures not only reliability but also the depth and richness of findings by employing more than one data source. The study derives a three dimensional understanding of the participants' experience with firsthand accounts and observable behaviour by incorporating interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observation. The multilayered approach offers a deeper insight into the complex nature of cross cultural communication, namely how linguistic variation, cultural miscommunication, and unfamiliar

Research Design and Methodology

academic habits intersect to impact learners' psychological states. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods elevates the study's validity by using findings double checking and reducing sources of bias from using a single method alone. Moreover, it enables a holistic investigation of the research problem, not merely what international students report but also how they behave and present themselves in real classroom settings. With this broader perspective, the research offers a more comprehensive, credible account of international EFL students' challenges and how they deal with them in the Algerian university setting.

Chapter Three

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the data collected through the online survey, interviews, and observations are analyzed and discussed about the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. This analysis aims to gain a deeper insight into the patterns, trends, and meanings derived from the data. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, data analysis is "transforming raw data into meaningful information" (p. 204), and it plays a critical role in drawing conclusions and understanding the broader implications of the study's findings. The data will be presented under three headings based on each data collection method: online questionnaire, interviews, and observations. The questionnaire results are considered first, providing quantitative information on the participants' responses. Then, interview findings are presented. Finally, the results of the observational data are considered. This section will integrate observational findings with the questionnaire and interview data to provide a complete picture of the overall themes of the study. The chapter concludes by elaborating on the findings in the literature reviewed in Chapter 1. The findings will be described in the context of existing theory and previous research, drawing new conclusions and implications for future research.

3.2 Data analysis

The research instruments were tested in three successive stages to determine a rich and triangulated understanding of the data. Firstly, the questionnaire responses were qualitatively analyzed to gain background information and determine overall trends in students' experiences in cross-cultural communication and mental health. Second, the classroom observational data were examined qualitatively, enabling the researcher to see real students' behavior, interactions, and evidence of cultural adaptation or communication issues. Third, the international students' semi-structured interviews were analyzed using themes to

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

understand better students' personal experiences, emotional responses, and coping strategies, thus augmenting and supporting the quantitative and observational findings.

3.2.1 Questionnaire Findings

In addition to the qualitative information gathered through interviews, a questionnaire was used to gather further data on the students' experience in communication. The questionnaire aimed to reinforce the interview findings by systematically focusing on some aspects of the students' experiences. It was designed using closed questions to provide quantitative data on key issues regarding Language Barriers, Emotional Impact, and Coping Mechanisms.

The questionnaire had some basic demographic questions like age, grade, and nationality to give a background to the respondents. It also had several close-ended questions regarding challenges students face while communicating in a foreign language, the emotional effects of these challenges, and how they are managed. These questions were crafted carefully to suit the issues in the interviews such that there would be a direct comparison between the qualitative results and quantitative data. The six students interviewed for this research also filled out the questionnaire, providing an equal sample for both the data collection methods. The closed-ended questionnaire allowed patterns and trends to be identified, providing a broader perspective on issues brought out in the interviews.

The following section presents the questionnaire results, including the students' reactions to various challenges, emotional reactions, and coping strategies with communication issues. This quantitative data further adds to the study's understanding of the mental health effects and coping strategies of international students in Algeria.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

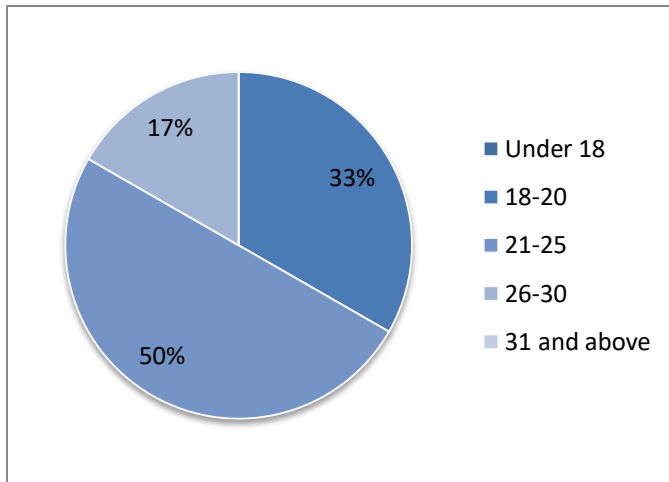


Figure 3.2.1.1 Age Range

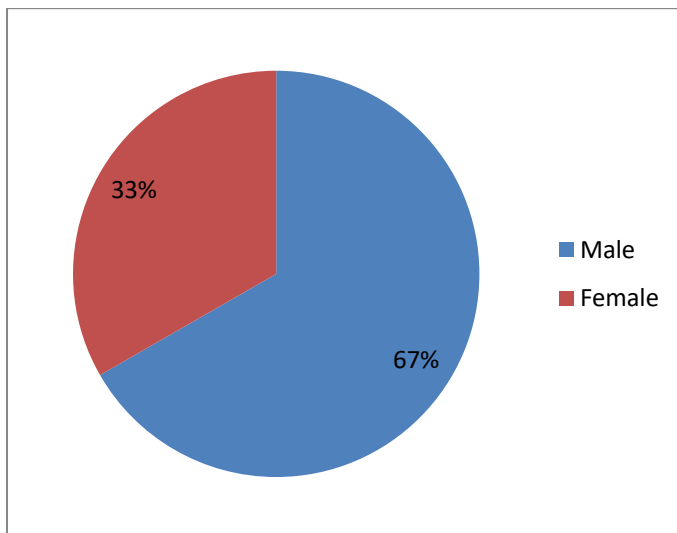


Figure 3.2.1.2 Gender Distribution

The majority of the respondents are male. Even though the sample is small, it might be interesting to investigate whether gender plays a role in ratings of communication difficulty or coping with difficulty, especially emotional expression and seeking help.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

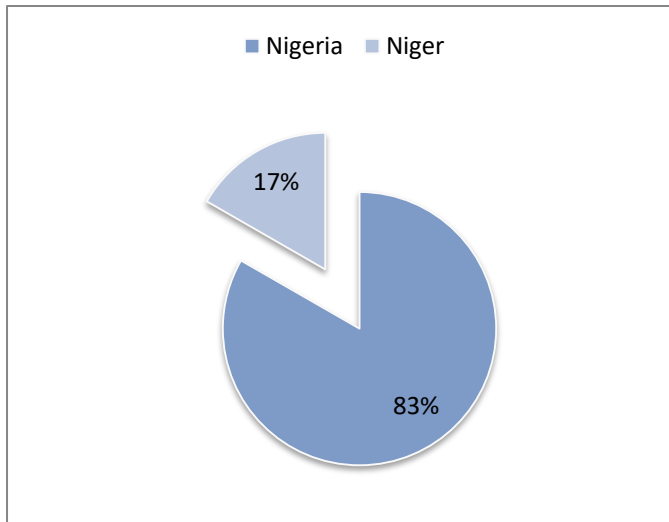


Figure 3.2.1.3 Home country

The sample population is primarily Nigerian. While both countries are West African and, to some extent, French-speaking, Nigeria's greater emphasis on English usage may lead to special challenges in adjusting to Algeria's French/Arabic language environment.

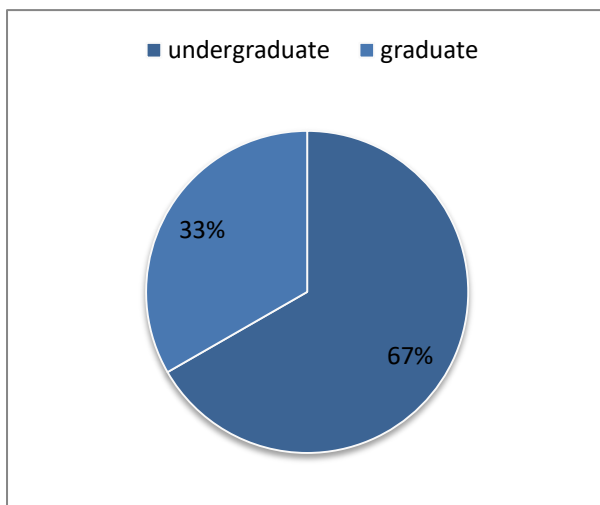


Figure 3.2.1.4 Level of study

Most of the respondents are undergraduates, which may indicate that they have been exposed less to international environments or academic French/Arabic and may find it harder to communicate at first.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

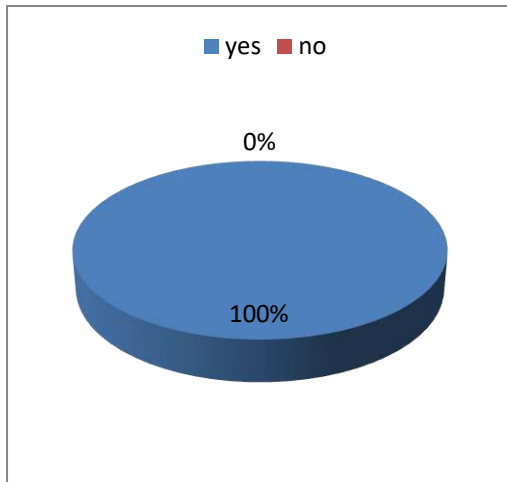


Figure 3.2.1.5 Students' difficulties in communicating with others

All the respondents had experienced communication difficulties. This confirms that language is a general challenge that international students experience regardless of their background and level of study.

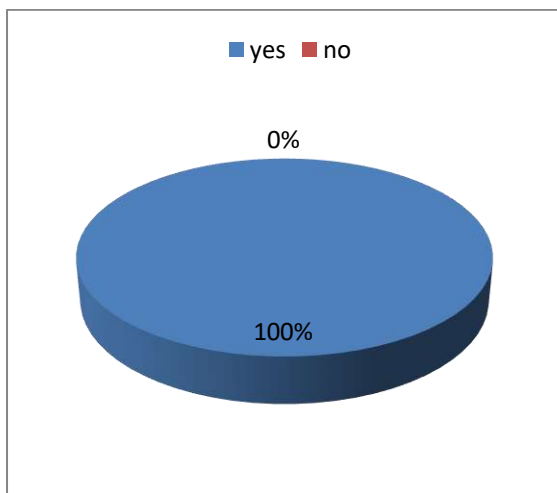


Figure 3.2.1.6 Communication barriers in academic or social settings impact mental health.

Again, they all answered in the affirmative, clearly linking language problems to psychological or emotional stress. It shows a need for institutional mental health services, mainly targeted toward international students.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

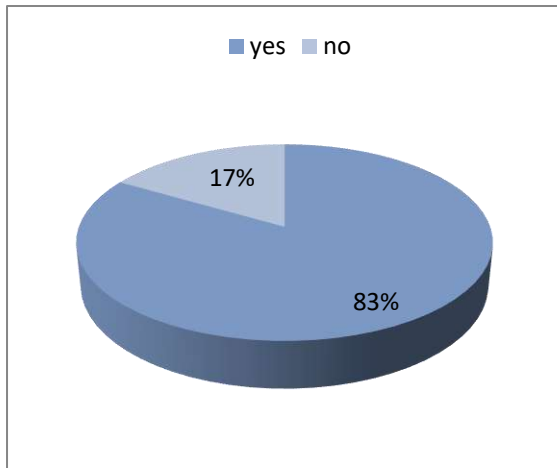


Figure 3.2.1.7 Help from someone when facing communication challenges.

Findings on demographics and experiences of the participants through the questionnaire presented different results. For age, 50% of the participants were in the 21–25 years bracket, 33.3% in the 18–20 years bracket, and 16.7% in the 26–30 years bracket. None of them were less than 18 or more than 31. Based on gender, two-thirds of the participants (66.7%) were males, and the remaining were 33.3% female. The more significant proportion of the respondents (83.3%) were from Nigeria, while only a single participant (16.7%) was from Niger. Based on their study level, 66.7% were undergraduates, and 33.3% were postgraduate students. Significantly, 100% of respondents indicated that they experienced communication difficulties on their arrival in Algeria, and all the respondents indicated that such communication led to mental problems. Surprisingly, when the respondents were asked if they ever assisted themselves when experiencing communication difficulties, 83.3% indicated "Yes" as proof of being proactive in addressing them. In comparison, 16.7% indicated that they never assisted themselves.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

3.2.2 Interview Findings

This study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis to examine the qualitative interview data and identify patterns systematically. The process began with familiarization through repeated reading of the transcripts; then, codes were created to identify the central features of participants' cross-cultural communication experience, mental health impact, and coping strategy. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader themes, which were extensively debated and honed for salience and consistency before being accurately described and named. To preserve findings in terms of participants' perspectives, direct quotes were included to illustrate each theme. This allowed rich, detailed interpretation supported by the data and consonant with the study's research aims, including detailed descriptions of participants' everyday lives.

3.2.2.1 Theme One: Challenges Faced by International Students

Communication is central to academic success and social integration, and for Nigerian EFL learners in Algeria, language problems significantly limited their communication with the locals. This topic examines the communication issues of Nigerian EFL students, including their emotional response to language limitation, difficulty connecting with peers and locals, and the impact of such issues on their everyday and academic lives.

The language gap was at the center of the communication issue. Members looked back at their frustration and loneliness whenever they found themselves unable to express simple needs or communicate. Student A shared an experience from a local shop, where communication gaps resulted in embarrassment and helplessness.

Student 1: When I first arrived in Algeria, I went to a small shop to buy a SIM card... I did

not speak both languages fluently, so I could not explain myself. I felt ashamed

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

because I could not even tell you something so simple.

This distress state demonstrates how language problems might be perceived as threatening a student's autonomy and sense of competence, creating apprehension and tension, as consistent with Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory suggests.

Participants further felt excluded in both educational and social areas, where French and Arabic language dominance often marginalized them. Student B explained how the language issue produced an isolated feeling in discussions during courses, where they felt unable to engage fully due to the multilingual environment.

Student 2: Sometimes, I feel left out of the course discussions. People talk in different languages and I cannot respond in the way I want to.

This context points to the social and educational impact of language differences, indicating that students felt alone in learning environments. This had direct implications for their involvement in their studies and their capacity to form connections with other individuals.

On the other hand, some students could adapt and deal with communication issues in Algeria. Student 3 was strong in employing non-verbal communication, such as interpreting people's body language, to bridge the gap resulting from language variations.

Student 3: It is tough, but I try to read people's body language and rely on visual clues to help me understand what is happening.

This coping is an instance of emotion-focused coping, wherein students reinterpret not being able to communicate as fully verbally as a circumstance to be coped with, using alternate methods of communication to ease the strain of language issues.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

Similarly, Student 4 liked the structured academic environment since teachers taught more slowly in class, which made it easier to comprehend lessons.

Student 4: In class, it is easier. The teachers explain things slowly, but outside of class, it is hard to talk to people.

This highlights the differences in levels of communication challenges on a situational basis. While the informal setting remained cumbersome, the classroom provided an ideal environment in which students could engage with the subject and other students in a more organized setting.

3.2.2.2 Theme Two: Mental Health Effects of Communication Barriers

The communication difficulties of international students in Algeria were severe regarding their emotional and psychological effects. The challenges, which arose from the barriers of language and social integration, generated heightened anxiety, stress, and feelings of ineptness. The subject elaborates on how students' insufficient use of proper communication in a foreign environment led to an array of mental health results ranging from social loneliness to emotional suffering.

Student 1 and Student 2 shared the stress of emotions that arose from their language disabilities. Student 1 expressed a sense of embarrassment and social awkwardness, particularly during times in which they were unable to verbalize simple needs. The inability to express even easy requests contributed to a sense of self-consciousness, so everyday social interactions appeared overwhelming.

Student 1: When I try to talk, I often feel like others are judging me for my accent. It makes me feel embarrassed and stressed.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

Similarly, Student 2 explained how alienated they became in social settings since they could not engage in conversations, which were predominantly in French or Arabic. Not being included in the conversation created a feeling of loneliness and alienation from other students and the general social setting.

Student 2: I just cannot follow what they are saying, and sometimes I feel like they are laughing at me because of the language barrier.

In spite of all these, most of the students managed their emotional reactions to some extent. Student 3 was aware of the anxiety that went with studying a new language. However, instead of focusing on the anxiety, they tried to reinterpret the experience as usual to the learning process. This healthier adjustment helped them handle the emotional burden more effectively, reflecting the role of resilience in dealing with stress.

Student 3: I sometimes feel anxious but try to remind myself that I am learning. It is not easy, but it is part of the process.

For other students, however, the emotional effect was more substantial. Student 4 felt lonely due to the language gap, describing a sense of being in their world because they could not join simple conversations. This stressed them even more, and they always felt isolated from the host culture.

Student 4: I feel like I am trapped in my world. I cannot talk to anyone without feeling completely lost.

Student 5 reported frustration and self-blame, primarily in the classroom environment. Ineffective communication within the class made them feel incompetent because they

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

believed that their language issues were interfering with their school performance and relationships with peers.

Student 5: I feel dumb sometimes when I can't explain myself. I want to say more, but I get frustrated when I can't express it.

3.2.2.3 Theme Three: Coping Mechanisms

As a response to the excessive stress and tension caused by communication issues, the students employed various coping mechanisms to cope with the emotional and psychological challenges of adjusting to living in Algeria. Such coping mechanisms were not only a means of stress relief but also a means of enhancing their ability to cope with the world and communicate more effectively.

Student 1 achieved emotional support and functional aid by openly seeking assistance from a friend. The instant rapport worked to reduce anxiety because the friend provided advice and encouragement to help build greater confidence. Through receiving help through this assistance, Student 1 was better able to cope with communication challenges.

Student 1: I found a close friend who understands me, and they have been helping me a lot. They gave me advice and encouragement, which helped me become more confident.

Student 2, who was not as reliant on outside aid, used a more reflective method of coping. By believing in positive thinking, they motivated themselves to believe that the challenges they faced were temporary and would only improve with time. This allowed them to remain strong during adversity.

Student 2: I try to stay positive. It's tough now, but I know that with time, I'll get better.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

Focusing on nonverbal communication and visual signals was a powerful method for Student 3 to manage social anxiety. By paying attention to body language, facial expressions, and other visual signals, Student 3 navigated situations where linguistic differences hindered verbal communication, reducing their stress level significantly.

Student 3: I try to focus on body language and other signs to understand what people mean.

It reduces my anxiety when I can't speak the language well.

Student 4 employed spiritual coping mechanisms and emotional family support to manage communication difficulties. Using prayer as a means of coping provided emotional stability, comforting them and giving them the sensation of being strengthened when faced with difficult situations. Communication with family members at home also helped to keep them strong and maintained.

Student 4: I pray and talk to my family when stressed. They always remind me to stay strong.

Student 5 was also more assertive in dealing with stress by being prepared for social interactions. They acquired greetings and academic vocabulary ahead of time so that they would feel safer and more confident when engaging in interactions. Preparing for interactions allowed them to feel a sense of mastery over interactions, hence reducing anxiety.

Student 5: I practice speaking before I go out. It helps me feel more confident when I have to interact.

3.2.3 Observation findings

For this study, three observation sessions in the classroom were conducted to explore cross-cultural communication problems between international EFL students and their implications

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

for mental health. The observation was conducted in a tertiary institution and involved diverse mixed groups of international and local students. Each session was analyzed separately, recording the most significant classroom interactions, students' engagement, and the teacher's response to students' assistance.

The researcher analyzed the data against the research questions, specifically looking at:

- Students' communication challenges, such as language or non-communication difficulties.
- Such mental health impacts are signs of anxiety, disengagement, or isolation in international students.
- The students use visual and non-visible coping strategies to address communication or emotional challenges.

Systematic field notes were written at length across each session, with verbal and non-verbal answers. After every session, data were examined, and dominant patterns were observed to assess the research questions. The analysis also involved cross-session comparison to find similarities and differences through which communication challenges and coping mechanisms emerged across various student populations.

3.2.3.1 Findings of Session 1

- **Context:** The first observation session was held in a written expression class of 20 local and international students. The teacher was interactive and maintained contact with students occasionally throughout the class. Academic writing was the study topic, and a practical aspect to trigger active student participation was incorporated.
- **Communication Challenges:** Although the instructor's approach was participative, and he broke into groups, international students were typically quiet and did not join in

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

the hands-on sections of the session. This quietness reflects some communication challenges:

- **Language barriers:** International students may have experienced difficulty articulating their ideas or communicating confidently in English, so they may not have joined in because they were afraid or nervous.
- **Norms of culture:** Students of some cultures may feel uncomfortable speaking publicly or debating with the teacher, and this could be the reason they do not speak out even after positive encouragement from the teacher.
- **Lack of familiarity with academic norms:** Regarding active participation of words, the class exercise could have been out of the comfort zone of international students who are used to more passive learning methods or less interactive classroom environments.
- **Influence on Psychological Health:** Lack of participation and overt disengagement of international students can be an indication of some form of underlying emotional or psychological distress.
- **Fear of judging and anxiety:** International students could have felt apprehensive regarding their language or were scared of errors, thus refraining from participation.
- **Sense of isolation:** Active participation by Indigenous students, in contrast to overseas students' silence, might lead to isolation or exclusion from the study and social community.
- **Low self-esteem:** Refusal to participate might also reflect lower self-worth or confidence, mainly if students felt their contribution would not be valued or comprehended.
- **Coping Strategies:** No overt coping strategies were observed in the session. International students did not seek assistance from their peers or the instructor nor

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

attempt to employ available resources (e.g., asking for clarification or assistance). Silence and non-participation may reflect passive coping strategies such as avoidance, where students decline participation to protect themselves from potential sources of stress related to communication breakdown.

The teacher's one-on-one check-ins appeared to be encouraging but did not appear to translate into observable coping strategies or behavioral modification on the part of the international students. This shows that the students may not be utilizing current support systems or may be unaware of how to ask for help in these instances.

Table 3.2.3.1: Findings of Session 1

Category	Remarks
Classroom Context	Written expression class 20 students -Interactive teaching style - Practical tasks to encourage participation
Communication Challenges	- No verbal engagement during tasks - Difficulty expressing ideas in English, suspected
Impact on Mental Health	- International students showed visible disengagement - Avoided interaction despite teacher support
Coping Mechanisms	- Students did not ask for help or clarification - No peer interaction or support-seeking

3.2.3.2 Findings of Session 2

- **Context:** The second observation session was conducted in an oral expression class with seven local and international students. The instructor was very interactive, frequently engaging with students and assigning tasks for participation and verbal

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

interaction. Even with the teacher's encouragement and task assignment, the international student hardly spoke until asked to interact explicitly. When prompted, the student participated but was shy and anxious, struggling to construct responses. The teacher accommodated, developing an empathetic environment for the student to work through the exercise.

- **Language challenges:** The students struggled to express themselves throughout the oral exercise, suggesting a potential deficiency in English proficiency or speaking confidence, a typical problem for international EFL students.
- **Oral communication apprehension and fear of speaking:** The student suffered from oral communication apprehension, most likely due to fear of committing errors in front of peers and teachers. This is not uncommon for students who lack confidence in talking.
- **Cultural influences:** Some cultural backgrounds could influence a student to feel at ease speaking in front of others, particularly in small groups of students where their performance is more evident. This could be why the student hesitated to speak without the teacher's signal.
- **Performance anxiety:** The student's struggle to speak before the class may be due to language performance anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or fear of judgment by peers.
- **Confidence and self-esteem issues:** The students may lack confidence in themselves, as revealed by their inability to voice their opinions without prompts. This could lead to a sense of inadequacy compared to more confident peers, particularly in a setting where contribution is key to success.
- **Isolation:** The student's reluctance to participate until explicitly invited may also reflect an inherent feeling of isolation or disconnection from the group dynamic, potentially impacting their emotional well-being.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

- **Coping Mechanisms:** The international student's actions suggest that they may lack positive coping mechanisms in place, except for the explicit invitations made by the teacher:
- **Avoidance and passive coping:** The student's silence could indicate avoidance coping, where the individual does not respond to avoid potential stressors such as fear of failure or criticism.

However, the teacher's assistance was important in getting the student involved. The teacher's method of encouragement and patience was probably a coping strategy for the student, providing a sense of security and reassurance in a potentially stressful situation. This helped the student eventually become involved, although it was still carried out with anxiety.

Table 3.2.3.2: Findings of Session 2

Category	Remarks
Classroom context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral expression class - 7 students. - Highly interactive teacher
Communication challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appeared shy and hesitant when speaking - Participation only occurred under direct prompting
Impact on mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Displayed signs of anxiety and nervousness when speaking - Signs of performance pressure and fear of peer judgment
Coping mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not seek support from peers - Teacher encouragement and patience enabled some participation

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

3.2.3.3 Findings of Session 3

- **Context:** Observation was conducted in a writing expression lesson where there were 21 students, both local and foreign. The teacher adopted a highly interactive teaching method with high student participation through discussion, brainstorming, and group writing exercises. International students had virtually no verbal participation, being passive all the time except if they were directly spoken to by the teacher. Despite the welcoming classroom, their body language and brief answers expressed awkwardness, hesitation, and possible anxiety. Communication Issues While written expression was the primary concern, classroom life constituted active engagement through oral exchange of ideas and peer interaction. The observed behavior of international students points to different communication issues.
- **Impact on Mental Health:** The observed hesitance and lowered participation of international students may be a symptom of emotional and psychological strains in the learning environment. Aspects of performance anxiety were evident in their unwillingness to speak or respond without prompting. The reaction can also be a symptom of low academic self-confidence, especially compared to domestic students who appeared more comfortable participating in activities. Their lowered participation in peer discussion is a sign of social isolation, which may ultimately impact emotional well-being.
- **Coping Strategies:** The foreign students did not appear to employ self-initiated coping behavior during the session. Silence or minimal engagement was the most prevalent strategy, with the students choosing silence or minimal engagement as a way of coping with potential stress. Relying on the direct interaction of the teacher rather than opening up indicates that there was no internalized coping strategy.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

The teacher's supportive and caring personality played a key role in promoting minimal participation, thereby suggesting that individual coping capabilities were overridden by support systems outside of themselves that enabled participation to occur.

Table 3.2.3.3: Findings of Session 3

Category	Remarks
Classroom context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing expression class - 21 students (local & international) - Highly interactive teaching style
Communication challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rarely contributed unless directly addressed - Displayed passive behavior during peer interaction tasks
Impact on mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responses were brief and subdued - Seemed anxious about speaking in front of peers - Limited peer interaction suggested possible feelings of isolation
Coping mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not seek clarification or interact with peers - Participation occurred mainly through teacher prompting - Teacher support appeared to enable limited engagement

3.3 Discussion of Findings

This study examined foreign EFL students' communication challenges, psychological impacts, and coping behaviors in Algeria. Using interviews, questionnaires, and class observation, it was found that students had striking linguistic and cultural differences that

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

were leading causes of emotional stress and reliance on other support systems. These findings are interpreted through the lenses of Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory and the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation, providing additional insight into how students perceive, react to, and accommodate cross-cultural communication challenges.

3.3.1 Communication Challenges

Language Barriers were the most frequently described challenge. Students documented difficulty speaking and being understood in French and Arabic, the language of instruction, which hindered academic achievement and social integration.

Drawing from Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory, these language difficulties represent a primary appraisal whereby students perceive their linguistic limitations as threats to their academic and social competence. For some, this assessment engenders fear and inadequacy, especially when they feel they can outwit these hurdles (secondary appraisal). Emotional costs are increased when students use emotion-focused coping strategies, such as avoidance or remaining silent during classroom discussions, as witnessed in Observation 2. These are signs of a lack of control and capacity to control the situation.

The UCT supplies a longitudinal view of such struggles. On the honeymoon stage, international students may initially be thrilled at attending school abroad. The euphoria is short-lived since students experience the culture shock phase, which is marked by communication breakdown, classroom withdrawal, and apprehension. This was noted from the classroom observation and interviews where the students complained of being overwhelmed and misunderstood. The class oral non-participation, as in Observation 1, is symptomatic of this cultural mismatch and uneasiness. Cultural Differences further compounded communication difficulties. As noted in Observation 3, Overseas students preferred to remain silent and not interrupt or challenge the teacher, which is an initial

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

assessment of classroom dynamics as threatening or bewildering. For Lazarus, students' resistance to spontaneous action can indicate that they judge their social scripts as deviant relative to local norms and are unsure of their ability to change (secondary appraisal). Gradually, some students will reconstrue the situation more positively as they become more experienced in Algerian university culture, marking the onset of the adaptation/recovery stage of the U-curve model.

3.3.2 Mental Health Impacts

All three data sources indicated that communication difficulty hurt the mental well-being of students, particularly at the culture shock phase of the U curve. Anxiety, stress, and loneliness were prevalent, mainly when the students encountered language-based confusion. Lazarus' theory accounts for how the mental well-being of students is affected not merely by language difficulty per se but by how students interpret and perceive these difficulties. When students perceive that they are unable to manage these demands, emotion-focused coping responses like withdrawal or self-silencing promote feelings of helplessness, as seen in Observation 1 and 2. These findings agree with literature showing that foreign language anxiety is linked to reduced classroom participation and social isolation. Students who are unable to shift into problem-focused coping (e.g., asking for help, trying language abilities) may be caught in a cycle of negative emotional reactivity, according to Lazarus' model. However, signs of emotional recovery, such as increased participation or reduced anxiety on follow-up observations, can signify reappraisal of their situation and movement into the adaptation phase of the U curve.

3.3.3 Coping Mechanisms

Whereas most students utilized external support systems such as peers or institutional services, this research did not capture internal coping mechanisms such as self-regulation or

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

reflection. Lazarus' theory highlights that coping mechanisms define the outcomes of the stress appraisal process. Emotion-focused coping, such as avoidance and silence, increased emotional distress. In contrast, students who applied problem-focused coping, such as seeking help or social interaction with others, were more likely to attribute emotional resilience. To Lazarus, students who engaged in adaptive secondary appraisals (perceiving resources and support) could adapt better to stress and transform to states of healthier adaptation.

The U-Curve model also makes predictions of the role of support and time in recovery from emotion. Once students had reached the adaptation phase, those who had developed coping skills through either independent means or aided intervention demonstrated improved mental health and participation. Observation 2 outlined how teacher support can be an external catalyst for coping, allowing students to begin participating more actively and confidently. The data triangulated indicates that the perceptions and coping responses of international students, as predicted by Lazarus, are central to predicting their academic and affective challenges. Similarly, the temporal trajectory of affective adaptation described in the U-curve theory is an important model for mapping the shifting responses of students to cross-cultural stressors.

Collectively, these models emphasize interventions that address linguistic competence, positive reappraisals, and active coping. Support networks, teacher counseling, and intercultural training can assist students in reappraising their problems as solvable and thereby be a long-term influence on academic success and emotional resilience.

3.4 Limitations of The Study

While the current study made every attempt to better understand cross-cultural communication problems and their impact on the psychological state of international EFL students at the University of Ain Temouchent, several limitations must be acknowledged.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

These limitations in no way diminish the significance of the findings but rather reflect the contextual boundaries in which the research was conducted. Recognizing these constraints is essential for accurately interpreting the results and guiding future research endeavors in similar contexts.

3.4.1 Language Barriers and Accents

One of the challenges was the language disparity. While all participants were proficient English-speaking foreign students, variations in proficiency levels and accents sometimes made communication challenging. Language differences often thwart cross-cultural communications, as noted by Gibson and Han (2016), compromising the quality and distinctness of interview information. The disparity necessitated frequent clarifications to ensure correct answers were captured. Despite this, the overall competence of the participants enabled substantial interaction, although some subtleties can be lost through accent-based misunderstandings.

3.4.2 Difficulties with Specific Participants' Communication

Another shortcoming was communication challenges with specific participants. One of the participants stuttered very severely, and it became harder to understand his responses fully. Maxwell (2013) illustrates how speech disfluency when conducting interviews can extend data collection and affect conversation flow. Another participant had limited English-speaking skills, which influenced the depth of their responses. Poor language skills, as cited by Bryman (2016), can restrict the extent of qualitative data, and in this case, some responses were not lengthy or less detailed.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

3.4.3 Recruitment Challenges

The recruitment process also imposed limitations. Initially, not many students were willing to participate in the study upon invitation. As Bourke (2014) points out, participant recruitment for qualitative studies is often difficult, with low response rates and extended periods of participant recruitment. The researcher used Snowball sampling to expand the sample size. While this approach still resulted in a small sample size, it may limit the generalizability of results to a larger population of international students. Moreover, there was a gender imbalance in the sample, with only one female student among the six participants. This uneven gender distribution may affect the generalizability of the findings across gender groups, as female and male international students' situations and problems may differ.

3.4.4 Time Constraints

Time limitations also affected the data collection process. Bryman (2016) points out that time limitations are standard in qualitative research, particularly with busy participants. Interviews were carried out asynchronously via WhatsApp due to students' class timetables, and follow-up questions were postponed, making the data collection process take longer. While this method remained susceptible to flexibility, it might have limited the depth and immediacy of responses since the participants always failed to receive sufficient time to think and respond immediately.

3.4.5 Sample Size and Generalizability

One of the most substantial limitations of this study is the relatively low number of participants. The study was based on a small number of participants, i.e., a small number of international students and a limited number of local students in classroom observations. The use of a small sample size has restricted the generalizability of the findings to the population of international students in Algeria or other cultures. Although the participants provided rich

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

qualitative data, the findings may not necessarily reflect the heterogeneity of experience of all international students, particularly international students from other regions, educational backgrounds, or language ability levels (Cohen et al., 2007). A larger sample would provide a more accurate representation of the diversity of communication problems and coping strategies experienced by international students. Despite the challenges faced in the research process, the research was conducted to completion. The methodological difficulties, such as language differences, communication issues with specific participants, difficulties related to recruitment (gender mismatch and limited sample size), and time pressure, were overcome with flexible data collection routines, such as asynchronous interviews via WhatsApp.

Although the sample size was limited due to recruitment constraints, snowball sampling facilitated diversity in participation. These limitations did not discourage the research from providing valuable information regarding the challenges international students experience in cross-cultural communication and how this impacts mental health. The findings reflect the reality of conducting research under such limitations but provide valuable data.

3.5 Implications of The Study

Based on this research, several recommendations are made to improve international students' experiences in Algeria, such as addressing communication problems, enhancing mental health services, and creating more effective coping mechanisms. All these recommendations are made to higher education institutions, academic staff, and support service providers to make the environment more supportive and inclusive for international students.

3.5.1 Enhancing Language Support Programs

Language differences were identified as the most important communication issue for international students. To counter these, universities ought to offer comprehensive language

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

support courses in addition to the mandatory language requirements. These should comprise university language development along with informal language practice sessions.

- Adopt pre-departure language courses to help overseas students prepare for language challenges before they travel to Algeria (Zhou et al., 2008).
- Provide ongoing language support through workshops, tutoring, and language exchange opportunities throughout the academic year (Glass & Westmont, 2014).
- Offer advanced language training in academic writing, reading, and presentation techniques (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

3.5.2 Cultural Orientation and Integration Initiatives

Cultural differences play an important role in communication, and cultural integration is essential. International students may find it challenging to adapt to local culture, educational levels, and classroom environments. Universities must create thorough cultural orientation programs to make this transition easier.

- Offer orientation sessions at the beginning of each semester to familiarize international students with Algerian culture, academic expectations, and classroom settings (Perry & Southwell, 2011).
- Host cultural exchange activities and seminars during the academic year to foster mutual integration and understanding (Sutton, 2007).
- Set peer mentorship programs, providing counseling services to local or older international students to help new arrivals transition into academic and social life (Hofstede, 2001).

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

3.5.3 Psychological and Emotional Support Services

Mental health issues such as anxiety, stress, and loneliness are prevalent among foreign students, which are often compounded by language problems. Rendering specific psychological assistance services is significant in enabling students to cope with these issues.

- Offer counseling services tailored explicitly for overseas students who are struggling with concerns such as language anxiety and acculturation (Ward et al., 2001).
- Provide stress management, coping skills, and emotional resilience training to help students deal with the psychological impact of communication failure (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).
- Raise awareness among international students about available mental health services through outreach initiatives (Mori, 2000).
- Establish peer support groups to offer emotional support and reduce isolation (Baker, 2008).

3.5.4 Encouraging Active Participation in Classrooms

The study confirmed that overseas students tend to be passive in the classroom due to fear and unfamiliar academic requirements. Staff members should apply inclusive pedagogies to provoke greater participation from all students.

- Staff must be trained to recognize and deal with international students' emotional and psychological issues, such as language anxiety (Hyun et al., 2007).
- Conduct a supportive classroom by applying inclusive teaching practices like small group work, pair work, and non-verbal contribution choices (Li & Gasser, 2005).
- Talk anonymously and anonymously invite students to bring forward their ideas in other modes, such as written reflection or small group discussion, to minimize pressure to talk to the whole class (Varnum & Kitayama, 2011).

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

- Embracing mistakes is integral to the learning process to reduce the danger of judging and encourage participation (Searle & Ward, 1990).

3.5.5 Developing Independent Coping Strategies

Passive coping mechanisms, such as avoidance, are primarily employed by international students in dealing with communication issues. The universities must help the students develop more active and autonomous styles of coping that allow them to cope better with language and culture-related problems.

- Provide workshops on self-regulation skills such as mindfulness, relaxation, and self-reflection exercises to help students deal with anxiety and build confidence in their language abilities (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000).
- Guide students in setting personal language objectives and provide them with tools, such as language learning applications and study groups (Lee, 2017).
- Offer opportunities for informal language practice in the form of cultural events or conversation clubs, where students can relax and practice their language skills (Andrade, 2006).

3.5.6 Strengthening Institutional Support and Engagement

Institutional support is crucial in enabling international students to overcome the barriers they face. Universities must implement a proactive approach to developing an enabling culture by maximizing student support services and interdepartmental collaboration.

- Develop a student support center that provides access to academic advising, language support, counseling, and career services with a special focus on international students (Zhang & Zhong, 2012).

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

- Establish periodic feedback mechanisms, i.e., questionnaires or focus groups, to assess the needs and experience of international students and make support services accordingly change (Bourke, 2014).
- Promote inter-unit interdisciplinary collaboration between academic departments, student affairs, and staff to ensure that all the aspects of the needs of international students are addressed comprehensively (Bryman, 2016).

3.5.7 Fostering Peer and Faculty Collaboration

International students benefit from close friendships with their peers and teachers, which are supportive and productive for learning. Universities must promote collaborative opportunities between international and local students and enhance faculty-student relationships.

- Provide opportunities for collaborative academic projects among international and local students to provide avenues for language practice and cross-cultural exchange (Searle & Ward, 1990).
- Provide university staff with professional training in cross-cultural communication and effective strategies for international student support (Sutton, 2007).
- Hold casual networking sessions and social gatherings to facilitate international students in establishing relationships with fellow students and instructors (Glass & Westmont, 2014).

3.5.8 Promoting Further Research and Continuous Improvement

Although this study is enlightening, more research is needed to understand international students' issues better and develop targeted interventions. Universities must be committed to ongoing research to customize their support services and improve international students' overall experience.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

- Carrying out longitudinal studies to track the growth of international students significantly shows how their language ability, coping strategies, and emotional status evolve (Gibson & Han, 2016).
- Examine how different support programs affect students' academic performance, psychological adjustment, and social integration (Chen & Starosta, 2000).
- Broaden research to include a more representative sample of international students, including the experiences of students from various regions, educational backgrounds, and language proficiency levels (Cohen et al., 2007).

By adhering to these recommendations, Algerian (and international) universities can improve international students' experiences, academic success, mental well-being, and inclusion in general university life. These recommendations offer a comprehensive solution to international students' language, psychological, and cultural problems, rendering the setting more friendly and supportive, where students can grow personally and academically.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has presented the main findings of the study on the communication problems, mental health impact, and coping mechanisms of international students in Algeria. The study found language issues, cultural differences, and new academic demands to be significant challenges that hinder international students' academic and social integration. There are also emotional distresses added to these difficulties, including stress, anxiety, and loneliness, with severe implications for the mental well-being of students. Data analysis also highlighted that international students engage in passive coping styles, such as avoidance, when dealing with communication issues. This reflects a lack of developing active, self-regulated coping abilities. It also highlights the necessity for a supportive and inclusive

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Research Conclusion

environment where students and staff are equipped to deal with international students' linguistic, cultural, and emotional challenges.

Through the triangulation of interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observation data, this chapter has achieved an in-depth understanding of international students lived experiences and underscored the imperative of targeted interventions addressing their difficulties' linguistic and psychological dimensions. The recommendations offered practical solutions on how to enhance language support, cultural adjustment, psychological support, and coping skills development for international students towards constructing a more hospitable and inclusive learning environment. While the study's limitations, such as the small sample, recruitment challenges, and time constraints, must be acknowledged, the results provide a valuable contribution to exploring the intersection of communication barriers and mental health within the context of international student experiences. Future research is needed to understand the issues and develop more effective solutions to help international students manage their academic and social problems.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The overall purpose of the present study was to examine the impact of cross-cultural communication issues on the psychological well-being of international EFL learners at the University of Ain Temouchent. Drawing on theories of cross-cultural communication as well as theories of psychology, i.e., Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory and the U Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation, the study attempted to investigate to what degree language problems, cultural differences, and unfamiliar interactional norms affect learners' psychological and emotional well-being during their learning life. In doing this, the research aimed to raise consciousness of the often-overlooked psychosocial issues of international students and underscore the imperatives of pedagogical and institutional intervention. To this end, the research was guided by three broad research questions underpinned by three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that international EFL students face significant cross cultural communication challenges in adjusting to a new educational environment. This hypothesis was confirmed by all three data collection tools questionnaire, interview, and observation. The students reported persistent difficulty understanding implicit cultural standards, adjusting to different communication styles, and being understood socially and educationally. These were most hyperbolic during the early adjustment periods, which coincided with the "honeymoon" and "crisis" phases of the U-Curve Theory. The second hypothesis required such issues of communication to negatively affect the mental health of students by leading to emotional problems such as anxiety, tension, and social withdrawal. This hypothesis also received support from the study findings. The qualitative data collected through interviews and observations in the classrooms recorded a variety of affective reactions ranging from homesickness and confusion to more intense feelings of isolation and depression. Students reacted emotionally to the inability to communicate with teachers and colleagues and the frustration resulting from unfamiliarity with the culture. This was also confirmed with

General Conclusion

quantitative responses in the questionnaire, which showed a high rate of stress-related symptoms. The third hypothesis was that international EFL students use various coping strategies to deal with the effects of these challenges. This hypothesis was, to some degree, supported. The study found that although students applied adaptive long-term coping mechanisms such as seeking social support, monitoring local communication habits, and self-monitoring, others struggled with unsuccessful strategies.

The success of these coping processes differed with individual circumstances such as personality, past cross-cultural experience, and institutional support networks. Of particular note was that students with experience in university counseling facilities or peer groups appeared to cope better.

By positioning theoretical models against participants' everyday lives, the research provides an enriched account of how communication, culture, and emotional well-being are interwoven. The research points out that problems of cross-cultural communication are not so much academic or linguistic issues but affective ones having implications on students' confidence level, sense of belonging, and overall well-being. In conclusion, the research requires higher education institutions and universities to intervene and address international students' emotional adjustment. The welcoming and inclusive environments need not be limited to language assistance but also encompass cultural orientation and counseling. The findings of this study may be employed as a starting point for building more effective support structures sensitive to the complex realities of international students.

Finally, although this study is informative, the small sample limits it, and it was carried out in only one institution. Follow-up studies can extend the participant sample to several universities, add longitudinal data, or explore the facilitative role of faculty and administration support in mediating student experience. Nonetheless, this current research represents a rich

General Conclusion

step towards knowing and improving the international EFL student experience in Algerian universities.

Bibliography

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131–154.

Baker, S. (2008). Cultural adaptation and the role of psychological support in the experiences of international students. *Journal of International Students*, 2(3), 150–165.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46(1), 5–34.

Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10(2), 141–163.

Bourke, B. (2014). Overcoming the challenges of recruitment in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13(4), 389–406.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (2000). Communication competence and cross-cultural adaptation. *Theory and Research in Intercultural Communication*, 28, 123–141.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2017). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Bibliography

Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.). Wiley.

Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2000). Positive affect and the other side of coping. *American Psychologist*, 55(6), 647–654.

George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.

Gerring, J. (2006). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Gibson, J., & Han, H. (2016). The influence of language barriers on cross-cultural communication in international research. *Journal of International Education*, 18(2), 159–173.

Glass, C. R., & Westmont, C. M. (2014). Comparative effects of international and domestic students' experiences on academic and social integration. *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), 23–41.

Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Doubleday.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Bibliography

Hsu, C. C. (2010). Language proficiency and academic performance: A study of international students at U.S. universities. *Journal of International Students*, 5(2), 58–66.

Hyun, J. K., Quinn, B. C., Madon, T., & Lustig, S. (2007). Mental health needs and help-seeking behavior among international students. *Journal of American College Health*, 56(2), 109–118.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. SAGE Publications.

Lazarus, R. S. (1993). From psychological stress to the emotions: A history of changing outlooks. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 44, 1–22.

Lee, J. J. (2017). International students' coping with adjustment difficulties in the United States: The role of self-efficacy. *Journal of International Students*, 7(1), 34–56.

Li, X., & Gasser, D. (2005). Improving oral communication skills of international students: Some practical suggestions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24(3), 331–354.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Mori, S. C. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78(2), 137–144.

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327–344.

Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 7(4), 177–182.

Bibliography

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Perry, L., & Southwell, L. (2011). Cross-cultural communication challenges and the implications for higher education. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(2), 262–271.

Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Roy, C. S. (2015). *Communication between cultures* (9th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*, 65(4), 237–251.

Searle, W., & Ward, C. (1990). The prediction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14(4), 449–464.

Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). *Communicating across cultures*. The Guilford Press.

Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. C. (2012). *Understanding intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Varnum, M. E. W., & Kitayama, S. (2011). Cultural differences in self-construal and emotional experience: Implications for social behavior. *Emotion Review*, 3(3), 273–280.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Bibliography

World Health Organization. (2018). Mental health: Strengthening our response. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K. J., & Todman, J. (2008). The international students' experience: A case study approach. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 7(1), 45–75.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview

Please answer the following questions. This information will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

1. When you first arrived in Algeria, can you describe a situation where you felt challenged in communicating with others? What made that experience difficult?
2. Think about a time when you faced a communication barrier in an academic or social setting. How did that situation make you feel in terms of your emotional well-being or stress? What thoughts or feelings did it bring up for you?
3. Can you describe a situation where you faced a challenging communication issue, and what steps did you take to cope with it? How did those actions help you manage your feelings or stress?
4. When you encounter communication challenges, can you think of a time when you sought help from someone? What led you to ask for help, and what kind of support did you receive?
5. Have you ever found yourself feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious due to communication issues, either in class or socially? Can you share a specific situation where you felt this way? What steps, if any, did you take to reduce that stress (e.g., taking a break, talking to someone, practicing English)? Did it help?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with cross-cultural communication and its impact on your mental health?

Appendix B

Questionnaire

- A. What is your age range?
- B. What is your gender ?
- C. Country of Origin:
- D. What is your current level of study?
- E. Did you experience difficulties in communicating with others when you first arrived in Algeria?
- F. Did facing communication barriers in academic or social settings ever lead to mental health challenges for you?
- G. Have you ever sought help from someone when facing communication challenges?

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تأثير تحديات التواصل الثقافي على الصحة النفسية للطلبة الدوليين الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة عين تموشنت، الجزائر. وتهدف إلى استكشاف العوائق اللغوية والثقافية التي يواجهها هؤلاء الطلبة، وكيف تؤثر هذه التحديات على رفاههم العاطفي وتكاملهم الأكاديمي والاجتماعي. اعتمدت الدراسة على منهج مختلط شمل مقابلات مع ستة طلاب دوليين، واستبيانًا، بالإضافة إلى ملاحظات صفية. كشفت النتائج أن الحواجز اللغوية، خصوصًا في اللغتين الفرنسية والعربية، كانت أبرز التحديات التي واجهها الطلبة، مما أدى إلى شعورهم بالقلق والتوتر والعزلة، وهو ما انعكس سلبيًا على أدائهم الأكاديمي. كما زادت الفروقات الثقافية من صعوبة التكيف مع ديناميكيات الفصول الدراسية المحلية. وأظهرت الدراسة أيضًا أن معظم الطلبة اعتمدوا على الدعم الخارجي مثل الزملاء والأساتذة بدلاً من استخدام آليات داخلية للتكيف. وقد كان الضيق النفسي أكثر وضوحًا خلال مرحلة صدمة الثقافة كما ورد في نظرية المنحنى للتكيف الثقافي. وعلى الرغم من أن بعض الطلبة أظهروا علامات التكيف، إلا أنهم غالبًا ما افتقروا إلى استراتيجيات فعالة للتنظيم الذاتي. تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على الحاجة إلى تدخلات مؤسسية مستهدفة لدعم الصحة النفسية والنجاح الأكاديمي للطلبة الدوليين أثناء انتقالهم الثقافي.

Résumé

Cette étude examine l'impact des défis de communication interculturelle sur la santé mentale des étudiants internationaux en anglais langue étrangère à l'Université d'Aïn Témouchent, en Algérie. Elle se concentre sur les barrières linguistiques et culturelles auxquelles ces étudiants sont confrontés, et sur la manière dont ces défis influencent leur bien-être émotionnel, leur engagement académique et leur intégration sociale. En adoptant une approche méthodologique mixte – comprenant des entretiens avec six étudiants internationaux, un questionnaire et des observations en classe – l'étude a révélé que les difficultés linguistiques, notamment en français et en arabe, constituent les obstacles les plus fréquents. Ces barrières ont entraîné des sentiments d'anxiété, de stress et d'isolement, nuisant à leurs performances académiques. Les différences culturelles ont également compliqué leur adaptation aux dynamiques pédagogiques locales. L'étude a aussi exploré les mécanismes d'adaptation des étudiants, montrant que la plupart s'appuient sur des soutiens externes tels que les camarades et les enseignants, plutôt que sur des stratégies internes. La détresse émotionnelle était particulièrement marquée pendant la phase de choc culturel, conformément à la théorie en U de l'adaptation culturelle. Bien que certains étudiants aient montré des signes d'adaptation, beaucoup manquaient de techniques efficaces d'autorégulation. Ces résultats soulignent la nécessité d'interventions institutionnelles ciblées pour soutenir le bien-être émotionnel et académique des étudiants internationaux confrontés à l'ajustement interculturel.

Summary :

This study investigates the impact of cross-cultural communication problems on the psychological well-being of international students studying English as a Foreign Language at the University of Ain Temouchent, Algeria. It aims to investigate the language and cultural barriers these students encounter and how those problems affect their emotional well-being, and social integration. A mixed method approach was used, including interviews with six international students, a questionnaire, and observations in the classroom. The study revealed that language issues most significantly in Arabic and French were among the most significant

challenges, leading to anxiety, stress, and loneliness, and therefore impacting their studies. Cultural differences also hindered their ability to adapt to local classroom dynamics. It also examined the students' coping mechanisms, which showed that they primarily relied on external support, such as teachers and friends, rather than internal resources. Psychological distress was most substantial during the cultural shock phase, as emphasized in the U-Curve Theory of Cultural Adaptation. Although some students showed adaptation, many lacked adequate self-regulation mechanisms. The study highlights the urgent need for collaborative institutional initiatives to promote international students' mental health and academic performance in the context of cultural adaptation.

Key words: Coping Mechanisms/ Cross Cultural Communication/ International Students/MentalHealth

