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MOSTAGANEM

**The Influence of Socio-cultural Backgrounds on Language
Learning**

Case of study: Minorities in Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University of Mostaganem

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Master
Degree in English language and Communication

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Abstract

Ethnographic research is used as an observational tool to study and understand social science related topics. In order to investigate culture-related practices, the present research aims to shed light at a set of social experiences that a group of minorities are facing in their educational journey as foreign language learners with different cultural backgrounds. In fact, little attention is given to those of different backgrounds in terms of way of communication or interaction combined with a lack of knowledge of the common cultural attributes and concepts. To underline those experiences and to highlight the importance of culture-related concepts, important culture related concepts are presented in the theoretical part, and as far as the practical part of this research is concerned ,a set of conversational interviews was conducted with twenty students belonging to various cultural minority backgrounds to demonstrate and show what they have been experiencing as minorities and to underline the main obstacles found in cross-cultural encounters . The major findings showed that those of different backgrounds are facing unpleasant experiences and are exposed to misunderstanding when socializing . In the light of those results , different suggestions and recommendations are presented to raise awareness regarding overcoming such incidences .

Key words : culture, minorities , cross-cultural encounter , communication , interaction

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother and my sisters for their endless love and support , To my dear uncle Nair Fouad , to my dearest friends : Benaouda AbdelKarim , Bkihal Abdelmalek , Arbaoui Imad , Ammari Samir , khenatla Ismail , Ouali Nedjma Sabah , Djabou Abdallah chiama , Barka Abdelahak , Ghamour Riadh . For supporting me throughout this journey and helping me to complete my work . Thank you all for being there no words can express enough my gratitude and appreciation . Endless thanks goes to my participants for sharing what could be personnel and sensitive information without you this research work would not be done .

May God bless you all and repay you with infinite happiness and joy .

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Social cultural or sociocultural study is related to anthropology, and it is concerned with the study of the human life and the diversity in the human behavior. This field is mainly ethnographic ; it is based on observation and interaction, and it deals with the differences and similarities within and between the human population . Learning as a social activity is an area that urges for attention, and understanding learners' cultural background is a one step for enhancing the system of education .

The present work is an observational study that investigates cultural minorities and their social interactions in Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University . Bounded by social interaction, individuals from different background are confronted and do encounter people with different beliefs, values and ways of living . Such cross-cultural encounters are impeded and not taken into consideration, and this is what may make those of different backgrounds (cultural, religious and social) in crucial situations experiencing unexpected treatment . The goal of the present research is to highlight what minorities are facing in their educational milieu and in their social experiences , while discussing the importance of considering diversities specially in terms of cross-cultural communication . The main questions proposed are :

- How can EFL learners' cultural background as minorities affect their education experience ?
- To what extent building cultural awareness in cross-cultural communication could be of importance ?

As hypotheses , we assume that learners' cultural background could be of influence when facing any social experience, by which it could affect their educational experience in terms of cultural clashes and misconceptions . Also , we presume that cultural awareness could be of significance specially in times of globalization .

Even though studying foreign languages is about acquiring languages of different cultures , a little attention is given to the application of theories and disciplines of intercultural communication. As such new methods should be adopted in order to build a cultural awareness and a sense of openness to diversities that should be considered by teachers and to prepare learners for confronting those of different background .

General Introduction

The present research adopted a qualitative method to collect data. The case of study is minorities in Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with students of different cultural backgrounds, in which ten questions were delivered to highlight what they are experiencing as minorities and simultaneously observe their interaction.

In order to answer the questions proposed, the present research dissertation is divided into three chapters: the first chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework in which pervious theories and concepts related to cross-cultural terms are presented. The second chapter deals with the practical part of the research including the methodology adopted , participants' selection , research design, research materials and data analysis .The third chapter includes a discussion of the results found and a presentation of the limitations encountered , in addition to the recommendations of the research .

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Chapter One begins with laying out the main theoretical dimensions of the research , and focuses on presenting the importance of ethnic identity and sociocultural background at the level of education. Other essential points will be discussed such as the importance of intracultural competence in cross-cultural communication , while presenting terms such as cultural shocks , ethnocentrism , cultural awareness and barriers of communication .

1.1 Cross-cultural communication in education

As a result of globalization schools are becoming more culturally diverse .Therefore, effective communication is becoming a crucial need . Since education relies on effective communication , it is crucial to consider diversities and manage such situations carefully. Hence, this would lead to potential conflicts and unanticipated outcomes . In order to avoid academic failure, both teachers and students have to hold knowledge and build an awareness of specific culture-related concepts , and maintain a focus not only on language proficiency but in building a cultural competence . Foreign language learning is one of the most educational specialties exposed to diversity , simply because it is built on learning other languages and cultures . As such , different cultural aspects should be taken into consideration and to be included in the curriculum for both learning a new language or culture and for understanding one's own and engaging in cross cultural encounters objectively . Furthermore , it is crucial to build knowledge and understanding of ethnicity and cultural background , then to master practical culture-related skills as they encompass a great significance in cross-cultural communication and education .

1.2 Sociocultural background : culture and ethnic identity

An individual's social and cultural background refers to the gender , class , religion , race, family and aspects which are learned and shared within his/her environment . Cultures are considered as 'the souls' of the communities, and the world is a set of heterogeneous societies with different cultures and identities .

1.2.1 Culture

The concept of culture is a bit complex and wide to give a specific definition . The general term refers to people's way of living which includes the norms ,believes ,values, language and interactions. Edward Burnett Tylor, an English anthropologist, provides a classical definition of culture, in his book *Primitive Culture*. He says: “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge ,beliefs, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (1991,p.874 cited in Bennoukh,2018). Some anthropologists and linguists maintain that it is a communication system, while others see it as a system of symbols and meanings. It is also viewed as a social phenomenon and as a learned behavior .

The multiplicity in these perspectives can only underline the difficulty in understanding and analyzing the term . Most experts like (Knorr Cetina 2001 ; Meyer and Molyneux-Hodgson2009) agree on that culture is learned that is to say we are not born with culture in our genes . Culture is shared ; there must be others who share the same view as we have, and it is dynamic ; whatever definition we give, it keeps in changing , and it is described in different ways according to the discipline it is regarded from . When talking about culture, it is crucial to consider important views ; the “big C” or humanistic view which embodies “cultural heritage” including the works of literature , arts, music, history, science, economy, sport and geography. The second view referred to the “small C” , and it is concerned with the overall way of life including attitude, believes, values of a certain society. All human beings belongs to a certain culture and within each culture it may include subcultures. (Mahadi, 2012) claims that “every society has its own culture ; and different is within a society may have their own distinctive subculture” (p. 233) . Michael (2014) also claims that “The further the distance from the norms of society a subculture is, the more important the role of distinctive identity formation and maintenance”. That is to say , the more we have diversities; the more there are differences in identities, for it is important for people to express their individuality and identity the use of language as a means of communication.

Language and culture are interrelated , as Brown argues: “*a language is part of culture, and a culture is part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture*” (2000, p.177) (cited in Bennoukh,2018) . And according to Kramsch (1998 p.3) , it is through language that the cultural

reality can be expressed; in other words, language gives people the access to the systematic knowledge (words ,nouns, expressions , verbs ...etc.) whereby we can express our feeling , reality and state easily . Using language (symbols , jargons or slang) a group of people who share a different customs, attitudes and values could express their identity and ethnicity in the society they live in .

Even though culture and language are interrelated, this does not mean that language can fully prepare for cultural encounter since communication is a wider concept including gestures, non-verbal communication and speech habits. In fact, fluency would not be enough to be fully ready to understand diversity. In this perspective, schools should consider preparing foreign language learners to universal and particular cultural attributes while preparing for cultural shocks and training individual to be more flexible and open minded when encountering people from different backgrounds.

1.2.2 Ethnic Identity

The term “ethnic” is derived from an ancient Greek word, “ethnos” meaning a number of ‘distinct’ people living and acting together (Isajiw, 1999a, p413 cited in Khudgir Agha,2015). Ethnic identity is based on the perception that one shares a common ethno -cultural heritage with a particular group. It seems to play an important role in the lives of ethnic minority youth. Furthermore ethnic identity functions as the basis for ethnic group behavior and coordinated action (Turner, 1999). One’s cultural background is a hindrance when socializing. Hence their beliefs and norms shape their way of perceiving things.

Every person has an accent. One’s accent carries the story of who they are—who first held them and talked to them when they are a child, where they have lived, their age, the schools they attended, the languages they know, their ethnicity, whom they admire, their loyalties, their profession, their class position: traces of their life and identity are woven into their pronunciation, their phrasing, their choice of words. Their self is inseparable from their accent. Someone who tells you they don’t like the way you speak is quite likely telling you that they don’t like you . (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1329). At the same time , ethnic identity is ponded by social interaction ; Heller (1984) argues that ethnicity is not fixed but is instead socially negotiable; identity cannot be separated from the context of the social interaction in which it originate of .

Ethnic identity is usually compiled with a sense of community pride; this means that individuals with ethnic identities share a level of appreciation to their own culture. Anthropologists refer to such attitudes as “ethnocentrism”. This later is based on judging another culture based on how it compares to one’s own cultural norms. As sociologist Graham Sumner (1906) described the term as what involves a belief or attitude that one’s own culture is better than all others (Mahdi 2012) When comparing between cultures, we can say that almost everyone is a bit ethnocentric; this what can lead to a dislike for other culture, causing misunderstanding and conflict .

Ethnocentrism is associated with serious discomfort and frustration ; specially when confronting all the differences of a new culture; this is what we call “ Culture shock” ; experiencing unanticipated differences from one’s culture is what generates hesitation and discomfort when interacting .Even though , cultural shocks are discomfoting, yet they are considered the first step towards “ Cultural relativism” . This later is the practice of assessing a culture by its own cultural standers rather than viewing it through the lens of one’s culture. It requires an open mind and willingness to consider and even adapt to new values and norms (Little, 2013) .

Cultural shock is often associated with traveling abroad though it can happen in one’s own culture. This means that cultural shocks are bounded by intercultural encounters.

1.3 Cross-cultural communication and ICC

Cross-cultural communication refers to the process of exchanging, negotiating and mediating cultural differences using language; verbal or non-verbal (body language). Where people express and interact with individuals from different cultures, race , ethnic , gender and class background (Dara 2018). Cross-cultural communication argues for openness and awareness to people of different backgrounds ; especially since most of societies are open to each other in matters of business, education and tourism where cultural interaction is inevitable . In order to cope with these differences ; ICC model was the main interest of most of the linguists who considered the topic of intercultural encounter .

1. 3.1 Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

ICC models of intercultural communicative competence were introduced by Byram in 90's as a reaction to Van EK's model of socio and socio-cultural competence. Byram gave a definition to ICC in components which put emphasis on the social context and where the conversation took place.

1.3.1.1 Knowledge (*savoir*)

It is based on the awareness of the one's culture and the other including the differences and the similarities while having knowledge of the processes of interaction at the individual and social level . such information is the base for intercultural understanding (Byram 1997 cited in Dara 2018).

1. 3.1.2 Attitude (*savoir être*)

This includes the wiliness and the openness when exchanging ideas with others. In other words, by being a representative of a group of people one should accept critics when questioning about their beliefs and attitudes . Such awareness would make an end to prejudgments and stereotypes .

1.3.1.3 Skills

Byram divided skills into two categories ; skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) including the ability to interpret and relate a document or event of one's own through comparison to make it accessible , and skills of discovery and interaction (*savior apprendre / faire*) that refers to the ability of acquiring knowledge from the target culture and interpreting those attitudes and behaviors in a new and a better way (Byram 1997 cited in Dara 2018).

1.3.1.4 Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)

Developing critical cultural awareness refers to the ability to evaluate critically one's and others' culture, such as: beliefs , practices and perspectives .

1.4 Hindrances in cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural hindrances encompasses all acts that generates obstacles in the intercultural encounter such as: Ethnocentrism , stereotypes and lack of knowledge of different cultural

attributes such as; silence , body language , gagsters , eye contact ,etc. LaRay M. Barna (1997) developed a list of six barriers: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language. His categories of barriers will be used when discussing problems that can arise in intercultural encounters .

1.4.1 Stereotypes

Stereotypes are ones of the main barriers in intercultural communication . Negative or positive stereotypes are judgments held by some individuals on the basis of their group membership Fred (E. Janet 2013) . They are formed upon pieces of information about a certain matter people relate to over a period of time, in order to understand the people and the situations they encounter . stereotyping may seem helpful in understanding the surroundings , yet it is considered harmful in many ways ; simply because it is overgeneralized, oversimplified and exaggerated . Other negative aspects of stereotyping concern the way it constructs a false belief and a false interpretation which leads to false understanding and also misconception . It can be said the stereotypes are unfair and intolerant illusion that comes in the way of intercultural communication.

1.4.2 Ethnocentrism

Another obstacle in intercultural communication is Ethnocentrism ; as stated earlier it refers to judging another culture by the standers of one's own . In sorts of denial ethnocentrism is a sense of superiority one generates as a personal view and by which one sees the world from. At this rate encountering diversities would be more about categorization, rather than mutual understanding and interaction .

1.4.3 Assuming similarity

Each culture is unique, but when caught in a lack of knowledge about the target culture one assumes that it is similar to one's own . This act of assuming similarities could put the individual in unpleasant situations which may lead to misconception . For instance, one should consider differences and show awareness instead of generalizing the truth .

1.4.4 Anxiety

Being anxious not knowing what to do puts the person in awkward situations. Still, it is inevitable to face new challenges, and to be afraid of the unknown is a natural behavior. However, one should be ready and equipped in such situations in order to overcome such barrier in intercultural communication.

1.4.5 Language

Language diversity is a crucial barrier in cross-cultural communication specially since it is the logical tool of communication. And since language and culture are interrelated, one's behavior is bounded by one's language and vocabulary. Also, not having an equivalent of the used vocabulary is a serious obstacle when considering language. People who do not know the target language or feel they do not master it are likely to find problems in communicating. In addition, since most languages of the world are influenced by their local idioms, it is hard sometimes to explain or to be simplified such cultural attributes that does not have an equivalent. Moreover, in language articulation there are important points to consider in communication, such as the tune and the pitch of the voice, which may have different interpretations according the target culture.

1.4.6 Non- verbal communication

Non-verbal communication can be an obstacle for intercultural communication in many ways. It refers to communication without words, and instead the meaning of the message is delivered through gestures, personal space, body movement, eye contact and silence. It is considered a barrier because the meaning of the message is at risk of misinterpretation in which such cultural attributes defers from culture to another; for example body language; including facial expressions, posture and body movement. knowing such diverse elements of the target culture should prevent misunderstanding.

Also, personal space in which distance is considered crucial for other and it defers according to one's priority. In addition, the use of time; whether in speaking, listening or interacting; where for some cultures it indicates respect to keep silence; in other cultures it is considered rude. There are also other reactions in non-verbal communication, such as eye contact and turn taking that should be take into account.

1.4.7 High-context and Low-context

Context is a crucial cultural dimension. The anthropologist Edward Hall introduced the concept in which he included two main sections in cultures : high and low context . He refers to context as an environment or a surrounding . Hall states that low-context cultures assume that the individuals know very little about what they are being told , therefore must be given a background information. However, High-context cultures assume the individual to be knowledgeable about the subject and has to be given little background information .

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, an emphasis was put on the main theories and concepts which discuss the importance of the cultural background in education and cross-cultural communication . We also presented a synthesis, definitions and examples of culture and communication-related terms and concepts in addition to potential barriers faced in intercultural encounters . The discussed concepts and ideas in this theoretical body will be put into a test and application in the next chapters.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The previous chapter was dedicated to the theoretical background of the present research. Hence the second chapter will give a detailed description of the research design and investigation process. The main purpose of this study is to highlight the effects of the sociocultural background on EFL learners and the problems that ethnic minorities in Mostaganem University are facing in order to help them overcome stereotypes and racial differences and to promote for studying diversities. Also, in this chapter the research question will be answered by the adaptation of an ethnographic research design . The data will be interpreted as collected via semi-structured interviews conducted with a group of students from different ethnic backgrounds in Mosataganem University .

2.1 Research design

The present study is mainly observational and it aims at highlighting social problems that a specific group of people are facing . As such , an ethnographic research method is adopted to fulfill the selected goals .

2.1.2. Why Ethnography

Ethnography and qualitative research do have a clear cut in the context of education since the 1970s . Creating a distinction between the ethnography of education –work undertaken by anthropologists and sociologists –and ethnography of education –work undertaken by educators to address educational issues –had its share of rejection at first. Hence some qualitative researchers argued for the need to include and represent the voices of the people in their research. Ethnographic research takes a cultural lens to the study of people’s lives within their community (Hammersley, 2006) s. As such ethnographers main aim is to observe and analyze how people interact with each other and with their environment in order to understand their culture, establishing a good connection between the researcher and the case of study (participants) is a necessity and applying the ethnographic methodology such as participant observation and face-to-face interviews wish is very useful when dealing with ethnicity . The use of the ethnographic design is for the purpose of exploring a group of minorities social interaction while observing how can identity and cultural background be an influence on the educational experience .

2.2. Participants' selection

In order to explore different cultures and different perspectives, the present research dealt with students from different ethnic backgrounds ; Algerians such as (kabyle and shawi) and non-Algerians from different nationalities representing their country –Mali, Mozambique, Zimbabwe ,Ivory coast, Ghana, Kenya and Mauretania –. The participants were twenty students from Mostaganem University : males and females.

Table 2.2.1. : Personal information about the participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Origin
1	23	Female	Kabylia (Algeria)
2	22	Male	Mali
3	22	Male	Zimbabwe
4	23	Male	Ivory Cost
5	24	Male	Mali
6	26	Male	Mozambique
7	19	Female	Mali
8	21	Male	Mauritania
9	20	Male	Kenya
10	22	Male	Mozambique
11	23	Male	Mali
12	21	Male	Chawi (Algerian)
13	26	Male	Ivory Cost
14	23	Male	Mali
15	21	Male	Mozambique

16	22	Male	Kabylia (Algerian)
17	20	Female	Shawi (Algerian)
18	23	Female	Kabylia (Algerian)
19	24	Male	Kenya
20	22	Male	Shawi (Algerian)

2.3. Research Materials

This research adopted semi-structured interviews as the main tool to collect data . The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants . The participants were informed about the topic and its aims . After that, the recording process was via a software called “otter”¹ . The latter is used mainly by journalists and ethnographers .

The interviews included ten (10) open-ended questions delivered in English . The questions were designed to get personal information about the problems that Moastaganem University minorities are facing and to highlight their personal experiences and share their opinions about their situation . The participants were not obliged to answer all questions mainly because the interviews were conversational and the study is mainly observational .

Table 2.3.1: Interviews Questions and Aims

Questions	Aims of the questions
Q 01 : Can you tell me more about yourself (country of origins, your ethnic background, the kind of studies you have undertaken back home ? how did it happen for you to choose this particular field of study ?	The purpose of this question is to know the participant’s background as an initiation of the conversation.

¹ « OTTER .AI » : is an application that records, transcribes and takes meeting notes in real time .

<p>Q 02 : Are you facing any cultural shock ? How is this affecting you as a learner ?</p>	<p>The aim of this question is to highlight any social experiences which had an effect on the participant .</p>
<p>Q 03 : Do you face any misunderstanding when communicating with different individuals ?</p>	<p>This question aims at knowing if there is any possibility to misinterpretations or misunderstanding to accrue between the participant and other people.</p>
<p>Q 04 : Are you satisfied with the way that you are treated ? (as being considered one of the minorities)</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to see to what extent the participant is effected by others' behaviour</p>
<p>Q 05 : Does this treatment affects your studies and your educational experience ?</p>	<p>This question has an objective of knowing if social interaction has an influence on the educational experience .</p>
<p>Q 06 : : How do you deal with misconception ex: when someone misunderstands you ?</p>	<p>This question was asked to know how the participant handles what could be of a misunderstanding .</p>
<p>Q 07: Do you consider yourself different from others? What is your definition of diversity ?</p>	<p>The aim of this question is to explore the participant's perspectives to otherness and to the concept of diversity .</p>
<p>Q 08: what is your reaction when the teacher is explaining via a tailored speech that you cannot relate to ?</p>	<p>This question aims at knowing how teachers are dealing with the participant as a minority and how the participant faces that .</p>
<p>Q 09 : Are you usually asked about your background ? Does this bother you ?</p>	<p>This question aims at knowing if the participant's identity is creating any obstacle for him/ her .</p>

<p>Q 10: Do you have friends from other cultures ?</p>	<p>The purpose of this question is to see if the participant is having problems in socialization .</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2.4 Data collection

The interviews were conducted and recorded according to the participants' availability and after having their permission .The students showed interest to present research and declared that this study is quite significant and hoped that the highlighted findings could help in changing their situation . Another point to mention, and that it could be considered one of the limitations the present study, is that some students were intimidated and showed insecurity when answering some questions. The reasons for that could be the fact that their speech is being recorded or due to a fear of being compromised in a way that could affect their educational experience .

2.5 Data Analysis

Question 01: Background information about the student: (Can you tell me more about yourself (country of origins, your ethnic background, the kind of studies you have undertaken back home ? how did it happen to you to choose this particular field of study ?)

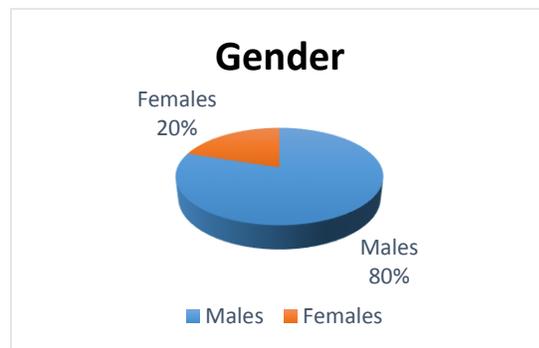
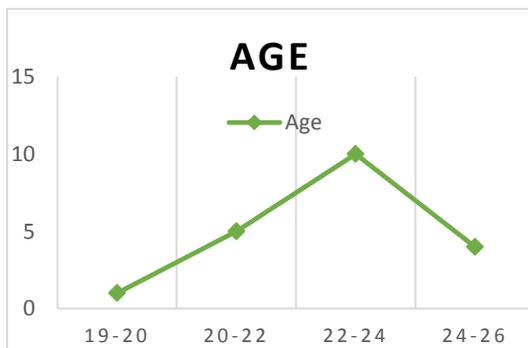


Figure 01: Age of Participants .

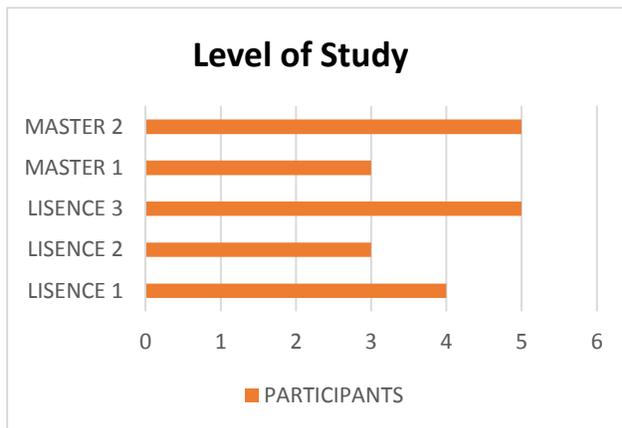


Figure 02: Gender of the participants

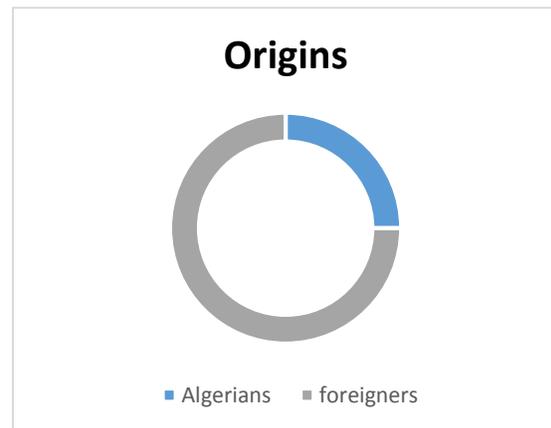


Figure 03: Level of the Participants .

Figure 04: Participant's Origins.

The interviewees are twenty students from different ethnic backgrounds :Algerians and foreigners . Their age varies from nineteen to twenty-six-years-old, and they are of both sexes: females and males from different levels as showed in the figures (1,2,3,4) .

Question 02 : Are you facing any cultural shock ? How is that affecting you as a learner?

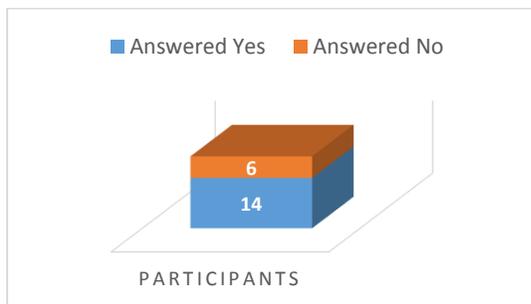


Figure 05: Cultural shock faced by the students .

Fourteen students have experienced cultural shocks (misunderstandings, annoying interactions ...etc.) and the explanation provided is that the diversity in the educational system, the language and other reasons are what may lead to clashes ; the rest did not face this shock and the majority of them were Algerians.

Question 03 : Do you face any misunderstanding when communicating with different individuals?

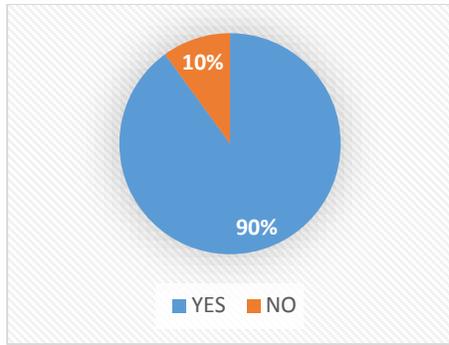


Figure 06: Misunderstandings in Communication .

As showed in the figure above, the majority of the participants have problems in communication .The main difficulties encountered where the language barriers because most of them had issues with Arabic language, and some of them had problems in pronunciation .

Q 04 : Are you satisfied with the way that you are treated ? like being considered one of the minorities

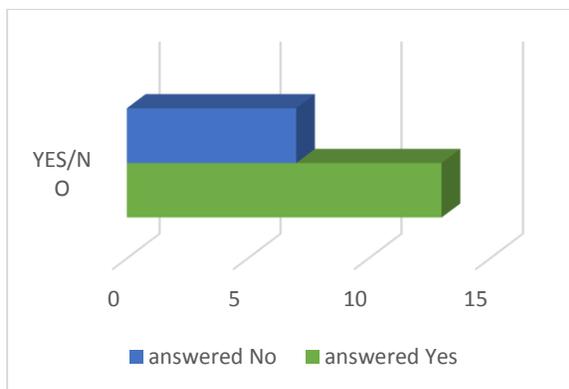


Figure 07: Mistreatment and discrimination.

Most of the participants faced at least once a sort of discrimination and they were not satisfied with the treatment, mentioning that being a minority is challenging and that they had to go through situations which affected them in many ways . On the other hand, the students who answered with a ‘yes’ mentioned that they do not have problems with being a minority .In fact, they feel proud with their identity and they consider themselves special in their own way.

Question 05 : Does this treatment that you are facing affects your studies and your educational experience ?



Figure 08: Effects of the mistreatment on education .

All the students answered ‘no’ and they confirmed that they are focusing on their education and that they are not letting any mistreatment come in the way of their goals .

Question 06 : : How do you deal with misconception ex: when someone misunderstands you ?

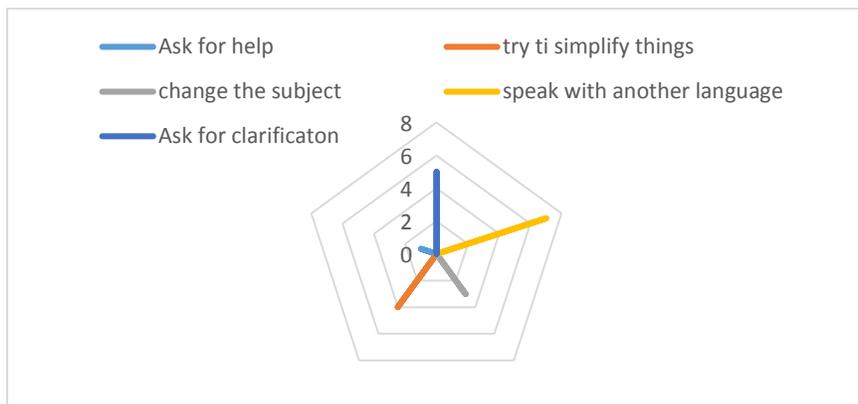


Figure 09: Handling misconception .

When dealing with misconception, five (5) techniques were mentioned by the interviewees ; most of them try to speak in another language like French whereas others ask for clarification or try to simplify things when they encounter misconception. Others also may change the subject or ask for help as showed above .

Question 07: Do you consider yourself different from others? What is your definition of Diversity?

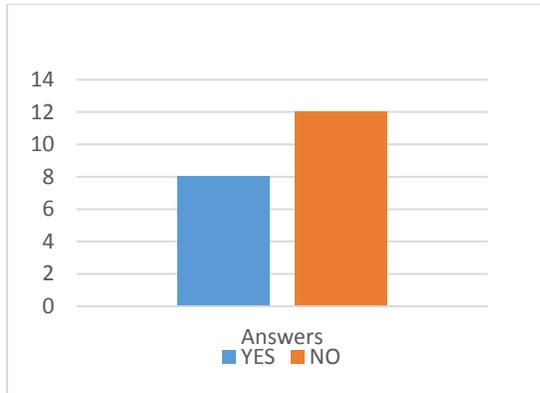


figure 10 : The concept of diversity

Each one of the students had his/her own explanation of diversity . The students who answered ‘no’ were the majority. They understood the question from the perspective of being superior and declared that all people are equal .However , the others who answered ‘yes’ took the question from another angle and they said that it is a matter of identity and personal believes.

Question 08: What is your reaction when the teacher is explaining via a tailored speech , one that you cannot relate to ?

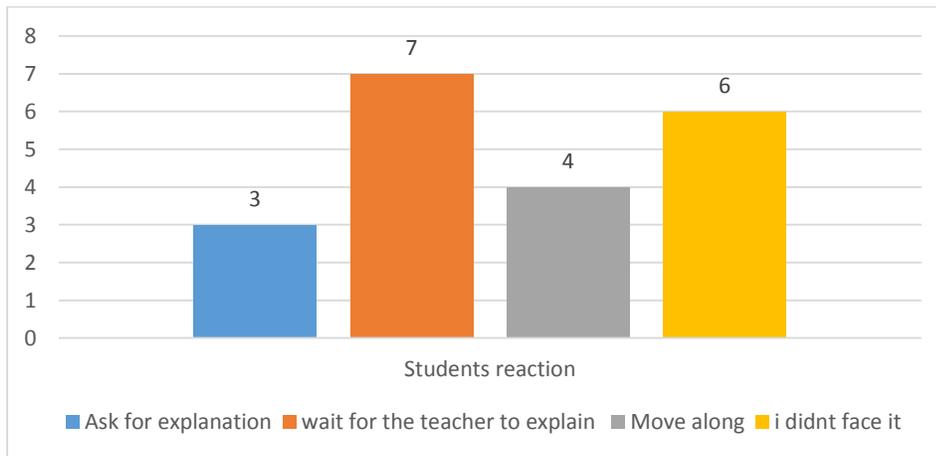


Figure 11: students reaction to tailored speech

The majority of students tend to wait for the teacher’s explanation when dealing with tailored speeches .Others try to understand and ask for explanation . Another form of dealing with this situation is to move along ; where they avoid looking for further explanation .While some students declared that they did not face such situations.

Question 09 : Are you usually asked about your background ? Does this bother you?

As figure (12) shows, nearly all students are asked about their background. The ones who were not asked are Algerian students. But, when it comes to whether it bothers them or not , a significant number of the participants showed a high level of maturity and they declared that they are proud of their identity. On another hand , those who feel bothered of asking about their identity argued that mentioning their identity each time made them feel insecure and a stranger .

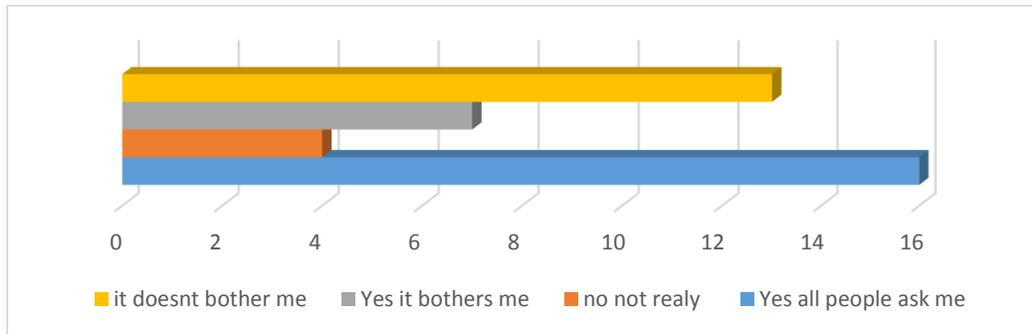


Figure 12: Asking about the background

Question 10: Do you have friends from other cultures ?



Figure 13: students socialization

The last question of the interview was aimed at showing if the participants are ethnocentric or not by asking whether they have friends from other cultures. All of them answered 'yes' as illustrated in Figure (13).

2.6 Conclusion

Through this chapter, we have given details about the research method and the methodology that we adopted in order to investigate the influence of the sociocultural background on students of minorities in Mostaganem university . We highlighted the research design in the present chapter. The interviews, questions , aims and results were illustrated in details . The data selected will be interpreted and discussed in the following chapter .

CHAPTER III

DISCCUSION OF THE FIGNDINGS

Introduction

Algeria is a multicultural society that is rich with sub-cultures, different linguistic varieties and ethnicities. Based on that, it is supposed to be a welcoming place for diversities. However, being a minority is still challenging. The previous chapters dealt with the theoretical background and data collection of the present research while the current concluding chapter is dedicated to the interpretation of the results and findings of the interview which was used as the main tool for data collection .Our research relied on qualitative method to investigate how the socio-cultural background can be an influence on ethnic minorities. In the earlier stages of our research, we hypothesized that being a minority could affect one's educational experience. This hypothesis will either be rejected or affirmed in this chapter. Furthermore, some recommendations and suggestions are presented at the aim of promoting cultural studies and considering diversities in EFL class rooms.

3.1 The interpretations of the Findings

The main aim of the questions delivered to our participants was to highlight what they are experiencing as minorities through their education and how their identity can be of influence. The interview was conducted with university students from different ethnic backgrounds and the responses obtained were different to a certain extent, in the sense that each individual has his/her own perspective and interaction when mentioning his/her identity.

3.1.1 Participants background

The first question aims at getting personal information about the participants; age , ethnic background, level and the kind of studies undertook (in the case of the foreigners). All the participants were between nineteen years old to twenty six years. All of them were bilingual: Algerians (Kabyle, Shawi) and foreigners coming from different sub-sharia countries. Among of them, there were Anglophone , Lusophone² and francophone. The fact that each one had a different mother tongue created a distinction and a variety of responses. Also, it is mandatory to mention that coming from a different country means a different way of living and a different educational

² Ethno-linguistic minority that speaks Portuguese language.

system. Since the interviews were conversational, most of the foreign participants urged at stating that they were living in a completely different social system and mentioned that the weekends and the educational system in their countries differ from the one they found in Algeria . This is what has led to cultural clashes . Reflecting on their responses, we notices that most of the foreigner students did not have a clear idea about the educational system in Algeria which may have led to such a misunderstanding .

3.1.2 Cultural clashes

The results of the second question show that most of the students faced at least once a cultural clash. We assume that the reasons to such an incident were due to the diversity in the educational system, language, religion and way of living . Among the informants were those who found that Algerians practically lack the cultural attributes of dealing with foreigners which refers to the absence of an inter-cultural competence. Interestingly , a couple of non-Muslim participants stated that it was hard for them to cope with a society with different beliefs where drinking wine for example is forbidden .On another conservative Muslim participants argued that they were expecting a more conservative way of living regarding the one they found . As such a variety of perspectives were expressed. These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the absence of cultural awareness.

3.1.3 Cross-cultural communication

The findings of the third question demonstrate that most of the students had problems in communication. We assume that this is due to the language barrier since most of them do not have much knowledge of Arabic language. In the case of the students from Kenya, they stated that it is not only about language but rather gestures also like (hugs , hands gestures, etc.) , and they added that their mother tongue is quite similar to Arabic but the dialect used by Algerians is different .In other words, culture and communication are related; whether in verbal or non-verbal communication, a single gesture can express a specific meaning, so if a person does not have a background knowledge about the target culture, this could create a confusion .

In the case of the Algerian participants , they also confirmed that dealing with people with a different native language is challenging mentioning that they always get confused in words choice,

and sometimes they cannot find a match of the expressions in their culture . The later responses showed a relatively correlation between culture and communication.

3.1.4 Facing Mistreatments

The results of the fourth question illustrated that questioning ethnic identity is one of the causes of mistreatment that minorities are facing. Most of the participants stated that they have gone through annoying experiences and their only fault was being different . A shocking case was that of one participant who had to become irreligious due to an experience he faced of warring a cross . Taking such a decision and measurement meant that these individuals and minorities are facing unfair and prejudicial treatment. So, being categorized as a minority is a challenge most of the participants have to face. On another hand , some of the interviewees had a different reaction about being a minority . They stated that they do not consider it as a mistreatment, adding that it is an everyday reality they had to face even in their hometowns. The variation of responses demonstrate that dealing with discrimination is one of the difficulties minorities are facing. This does not mean that it is an unchangeable truth but rather a harsh fact that needs to be changed .

3.1.5 Effects of Mistreatments on Education

The fifth question aimed at knowing whether the mistreatments are affecting the educational experience of the interviewees. By answering no, all participants stated that they will always be proud of who they are, adding that they will not let anything come across their goals. In fact, this represents a high sense of maturity and self-acceptance . We can neither affirm nor neglect their responses. However, one should show respect and appreciation for their attitudes .

3.1.6 Dealing with Misconception

The responses of the sixth question showed the main strategies used by the students when dealing with misconception. When communicating with individuals from different backgrounds, it is crucial to think critically. As a matter of fact, the speaker must simplify the speech so that it is comprehensible for the listener, and vice versa .Working on language skills such as listening and speaking often provides positive results. Another point to mention is that it is necessary for those of different backgrounds to have knowledge about their own socio-cultural behaviors towards communication, in order to reduce cross-cultural misunderstandings. Being flexible and ready to

adopt and not to rush when tacking decisions are essential ways for mastering communication between cultures .

3.1.7 Understanding Diversity

Since the present research investigated the impact of diversity on the educational performance of minorities , it was necessary to know if our participants have knowledge about the concept in general . The responses obtained varied according to the perspectives of the interviewees . The majority of the students assumed that the question is about being superior or inferior and they answered ‘no’. This may reflect their sense of equality and rightfulness. On another hand, the others who answered ‘yes’ for being different took the question from another lance and confirmed that everyone is special and different in his/her own way; that is to say that we are different in our beliefs and ways of perceiving life in general .

It is important to know that when communicating across cultures we must have insight about otherness and perceiving other people as different from us, knowing that othering³ can result in alienation and exclusion . Avoiding such actions will help in promoting for living in a culturally diverse societies .

3.1.8 Minorities reaction to Tailored Speeches

Learners’ level is a compelling element in the academic achievement of ethnic minorities . Asking about the methods used when facing tailored speeches , our participants’ response was to wait for teachers’ explanation , what resembles a sense of trust in teacher and student relation . It is the teachers’ role to sustain and backup that relation as instructors; hence the concept of diversity is crucial . Others responded that they prefer not to interrupt the course; in the sense that students from different backgrounds are not talkative .

3.1.9 Stereotypes and Discrimination

The results of question number nine illustrated that ethnic minorities’ identity is mentioned on several occasions. In fact, people tend to ask them about their origins ; this what creates a kind of insecurity as stated by some of our participants . It is important to know how to approach

³ Othering means treating one as different from ourselves .

individuals and ask them about their identities, i.e. one has to be aware of the cultural attributes when asking about sensitive topics. Therefore, when knowing that no one could predict the results, one is obliged to be careful in such matters . Some of the participants added that usually the type of questioning they receive is stereotyped. This means that most of the people they had contact with do have a stereotyped representation of foreigners before interacting with them. Stating such prejudgments can strongly influence intercultural communication and causes insecurity and anxiety for those who are being stereotyped .

Knowing that people have a certain prejudgment about the group that a person belongs to, makes ethnic minorities tend to avoid communicating with others to reduce the insecurity and anxiety . Creating such misleading information and prejudgment can only serve in constructing obstacles between people and reduce interaction between them . People need to be tolerant and open minded for differences and rise above such behaviors .

3.1.10 Cultural Openness

The results of question number Ten showed that all participants appreciate having friends from different cultures . This can only be interpreted by the fact that ethnic minorities are often tolerant towards cultural diversities and that they may be more open minded when it comes to cross-cultural communication . This finding can help in understanding that most of our participants are not ethnocentric , that is to say they do not have problems in interacting with people . As such it is necessary to build a positive attitude toward cultural differences and perceive all ethnic minorities as ordinary human beings to help in facilitating interactions .

3.2 Limitations

During the process of seeking evidence and answers for the questions mentioned at the early stages of the present research, a number of constraints were in our path .Finding participants who are engaged and ready to answer sensitive questions about the problems they face was the main obstacle -specially female participants – In fact, all the students were unsecure about the process of sharing such personal information. Being intimidated most our participants were showing a sort of anxiety when answering some questions. Since we adopted a conversational interview as a method of data collection, the researcher could not predict the integrity of the participants nor judge them in such personal details .

Our research was also limited by time ;most of ethnographic researches take at least one year where the researcher interacts with the case of study on a daily basis . Another compelling element to mention is the participants' accent which was not supportive for recording . A great amount of time was spent in deciphering their words .

3.3 Recommendations and suggestions

In this section, several recommendations and suggestions are introduced for future studies about our research to be more efficient and targeted. This section has the purpose to generate suggestions for the readers and future researchers who are interested in cross-cultural communication and sociocultural backgrounds .

3.3.1 Building Cultural Awareness and Tolerance Towards Diversities

Since we are living in culturally diverse communities, it is crucial to understand that successful cross-cultural communication is built upon cultural awareness . In other words , one must be aware of his own cultural attributes and how much his beliefs could shape his reality and influence his interactions . However, developing such a skill is a hard task, knowing that our beliefs and principals are unconsciously obtained from the societies we are born in.

Building cultural awareness is the only way to overcome misunderstandings and to avoid cultural clashes . Therefore, learning some essential principals about other cultures would help in enhancing the relationships with different people from different cultural backgrounds. For example, having knowledge about the significance of gestures in other cultures could prevent misconception like : hugs , eye contact or handshakes ...etc.

Being tolerant towards diversities means showing acceptance when interacting with those of other backgrounds. As human being, we coexist with other people in the same societies. So, working on our communication can help in establishing good interactions . Developing listening and speaking skills is also essential ; knowing when to listen and when to speak is important . In some cultures, silence could have a lot of interpretations : whether to show respect or to express approval, one must be aware of such principals .

In addition , it is important to appreciate people's differences and to avoid imposing ourselves on others , especially when dealing with sensitive topics like religious beliefs and personal matters. Knowing that this could lead to serious misconceptions , it is better to be conscious in such interactions .

3.3.2 Considering diversities in EFL classrooms

Since the students of different backgrounds had access to different educational systems and learning materials, it is important for the university instructors to consider such matters. Providing guides and instructions about the methods and the system used are one of the issues that the present pedagogies are facing . In other words , taking into consideration the identity of the students is a must , simply because it has a significant impact on their learning outcomes .

Also, building a good relation between the teacher and student is needed in order to valorize the multiplicity of cultures in the university .Teachers should consider the proverb “Once a teacher, a parent forever” .

3.3.3 Investigating diversities and cross-cultural communication

It is important for future researchers investigating cross-cultural communication and cultural diversities to take the right measures when dealing with the case of study . Using conversational interviews can be diverted in some occasions towards other topics , which could be irrelevant . It is the researcher's role is to steer the conversations towards the main points of the topic being discussed .

In the case of the present research, some interviewees were diverting into other topics, which means that future researches are obliged to be delegate when interviewing the participants .Tackling the topic discussed from different angles is one way in investigating diversities . Also, it is recommended to use direct and indirect questions when dealing with sensitive topics such as discrimination and stereotyping.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we attempted to interpret the questions of the interview that was used as a tool for collecting data . The chapter ended with some constraints encountered during the study and some recommendations for future researches for a better understanding of the topic. The results showed that ethnic minorities are exposed to several inconvenient experiences .

Thus, it is not confirmed that their background is influencing their educational achievement; nevertheless, what was revealed is that it is crucial to consider cultural diversities and ethnic identity when it comes to cross-cultural encounters.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The purpose of the present study is to highlight the obstacles that students in Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University are experiencing as minorities , in order to overcome what could be seen a mistreatment or misunderstanding generated from the lack of cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication patterns , and to help establish an understanding of the main concepts, to consider when to interact with those of different background .

Even in times of globalization, minorities and those of different backgrounds are still facing prejudgment , mistreatment , discrimination and misunderstanding in many places around the world. Since ever, all what is different is considered absurd and dealt with a superficial manner . This is what the present research aimed to change as it also sought to promote for a successful communication which is built upon mutual understanding and openness to diversities .

Foreign language learning should not be only about linguistic proficiency, but rather about preparing learners to be successful communicators equipped with cultural awareness and a general understanding of common cultural attributes. Presenting concepts like cultural awareness, intercultural communicative competence and non-verbal communication with practice should put a limit to all negative results and misconception founded in the intercultural encounter.

Although that the assumption proposed in the earlier stages of the research was not proved regarding the influence of the cultural background on the educational achievement , it is enough to consider the influence upon the social experiences and what could be regarded as a harsh truth minorities are facing . As such, it is an honorable aim for the present research to raise awareness to such crucial subject to help overcome and change .

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APPENDIX

Interview

Question 01 : Can you tell me more about yourself (country of origins, your ethnic background, the kind of studies you have undertaken back home) ? how you happened to decide this particular field of study ?

Question 02 : Are you facing any cultural shock ? How is this affecting you as a learner ?

Question 03 : : Do you face any misunderstanding when communicating with different individuals ?

Question 04 : Are you satisfied with the way that you are treated ? (as being considered one of the minorities)?

Question 05 : Does this treatment affects your studies and your educational experience ?

Question 06 : How do you deal with misconception ex: when someone misunderstands you?

Question 07: Do you consider yourself different from others? What is your definition of diversity ?

Question 08: what is your reaction when the teacher is explaining via a tailored speech that you cannot relate to ?

Question 09 : Are you usually asked about your background ?

Does it bother you ?

Question 10: Do you have friends from other cultures ?