

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

N°:.....



DOMAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
STREAM: ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
OPTION: LINGUISTICS

UNIVERSITY OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA

**Exploring Socio-cultural Barriers in  
Communication Encountered by Master 1  
EFL Learners' Majoring in Linguistics at  
M'sila University.**

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Master's Degree

**Candidates:**

**Ms. Rayane ARIBI**

**Ms. Wafa ZAID**

**Board of Examiners**

Mr. Aboubakr Hamoudi	University of M'sila	Chairperson
Mr. Mourad Touati	University of M'sila	Supervisor
Mr. Tayeb Bouazid	University of M'sila	Examiner

**June 2024**

## **Dedications**

To my beloved parents, brothers, and sisters, who have supported me throughout this journey, and to my friends who believed in me.

I am grateful to myself for never giving up despite the challenges of studying and working. I extend my thanks to my family, to my friends, to myself, and to Allah. My success is attributed to Allah's guidance, my parents' prayers, my dedication, and hard work.

**W. ZAID**

To my parents, for their unwavering support,

Endless patience, and boundless love

To my sister, for her belief in me

To my friends, for their tremendous understanding

I dedicate this work for you, thank you!

**R. ARIBI**

## **Acknowledgement**

Many thanks to Allah for his grace and blessings that enabled us to complete this work. His strength and guidance were pivotal throughout our journey. We express our gratitude to our supervisor Dr. Mourad Touati for his unwavering support and expert guidance in completing this thesis. We are also grateful to the jury members, Dr. Tayeb Bouazid and Dr. Aboubakr Hamoudi for their evaluation and assistance in refining our work. Special thanks to our teachers, Mr. Abdelnnour Benhamimid, Mr. Mustapha Habitouch, and Ms. Rihab Maroi Gerroudj, as well as all our former teachers from the University of B.B.A. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the Head of the English Department at M'sila university. We are immensely thankful to all the participants in our research study. Without your collaboration, valuable time, experiences, and perspectives, this research would not have been possible. Your contributions are the core of this work. Deep appreciations to all our colleagues, from university of Bordj Bou Arreridj as well as university of M'sila for their motivation, encouragement, and feedback throughout the course of this study.

## **Abstract**

The present thesis, consisting of two chapters, aims to investigate the sociocultural barriers in communication encountered by Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University. The social cultural background of Master 1 EFL students holds paramount importance in this research. Therefore, these factors are examined from a sociocultural perspective to identify these elements and propose solutions for learners to improve their communication abilities. The study was conducted following a mixed method design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data to add meaning to the collected numerical data as well as to provide a wide range of insights from participants perspectives and experiences. The instrument employed to collect primary data is semi structured questionnaire. It was administered to 37 participants. This study utilized a non probability sampling technique to select the participating students based on their representativeness, relevance, and accessibility. The findings of this study confirm that Master 1 EFL learners encounter sociocultural barriers while communicating such as reduced social interactions, exposure, and practice, as well as, diminished problem solving skills, less motivation, and limited progress.

**Key words:** Sociocultural barriers, communication, communicative competence, EFL learners

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL: English as a Foreign Language**

**CLA: Communicative Language Ability**

**WTC: Willingness to Communicate**

**L2: Second Language**

**L1: First Language**

**CLT: Communicative Language Teaching**

**ICC: Intercultural Communication Competence**

**IC: Intercultural Communication**

**NT: Negative Transfer**

**PT: Positive Transfer**

## List of Tables

<b>Table 2.1</b> English as a first choice.....	43
<b>Table 2.3</b> The participants’ responses about their fathers’ educational background .....	44
<b>Table 2.4</b> The participants’ responses about their mothers’ educational background .....	46
<b>Table 2.6</b> The participants’ responses about whether they master the English grammatical system.....	48
<b>Table 2.7</b> The participants’ ability to use language appropriately.....	49
<b>Table 2.8</b> Participants’ main purposes behind learning English at University .....	51
<b>Table 2.9</b> Respondents’ opinions about the effectiveness of university teaching methods in communicating within authentic setting.....	53
<b>Table 2.10</b> Respondents’ points of view on the key elements to develop communicative competence .....	54
<b>Table 2.11</b> Respondents’ answers about their language environment within their family .....	56
<b>Table 2.12</b> Participants beliefs about the impact of parents’ educational background on communicative competence .....	57
<b>Table 2.13</b> Participants’ comfort levels communicating English within their community .....	59
<b>Table 2.14</b> Respondents’ answers about the encountered barriers while communicating in English within their peers .....	60
<b>Table 2.15</b> Respondents’ answers about the main barriers they faced when developing communication skills .....	62
<b>Table 2.16</b> Participants beliefs about the impact of language proficiency on effective communication .....	63
<b>Table 2.17</b> Participants’ experiences of feeling misunderstood .....	64
<b>Table 2.18</b> Respondents’ answers about their confidence level in expressing themselves in English.....	66
<b>Table 2.19</b> Respondents’ experience with certain challenges while communicating in English .....	68

<b>Table 2.20</b> Participants' engagement rates in activities to improve their English language skills .....	69
<b>Table 2.21</b> Participants' frequency of seeking assistance to improve their English language skills .....	70
<b>Table 2.22</b> Respondents' beliefs about how societal norms and expectations in Algeria influence English language communication .....	72

## List of figures:

<b>Figure 2.1</b> English as a first choice.....	43
<b>Figure 2.3</b> The participants fathers' educational background.....	45
<b>Figure 2.4</b> The distribution of the participants' responses about their mothers' educational background.....	46
<b>Figure 2.6</b> The distribution of the participants' responses about whether they master the English grammatical system or not.....	48
<b>Figure 2.7</b> The participants' ability to use language appropriately.....	49
<b>Figure 2.8</b> Participants' main purposes behind learning English at university.....	51
<b>Figure 2.9</b> Respondents' opinions about the effectiveness of university teaching methods in communicating within authentic setting.....	53
<b>Figure 2.10</b> Respondents' point of view on the key elements to develop communicative competence.....	55
<b>Figure 2.11</b> Respondents' answers about their language environment within their family.....	56
<b>Figure 2.12</b> Participants' beliefs about the impact of parents' educational background on communicative competence.....	57
<b>Figure 2.13</b> Participants' comfort levels communicating English within their community.....	59
<b>Figure 2.14</b> Respondents' answers about the encountered barriers while communicating in English with their peers.....	61
<b>Figure 2.15</b> Respondents' answers about the main barriers they faced when developing communication skills.....	62
<b>Figure 2.16</b> Participants' beliefs about the impact of language proficiency on effective communication.....	63
<b>Figure 2.17</b> Participants' experiences of feeling misunderstood.....	65
<b>Figure 2.18</b> Respondents' answers about their confidence level in expressing themselves in English.....	67
<b>Figure 2.19</b> Respondents' experience with certain challenges while communicating in English.....	68

**Figure 2.20** Participants' engagement rates in activities to improve their English language skills.....69

**Figure 2.21** Participants' frequency of seeking assistance to improve their English language skills.....71

**Figure 2.22** Respondent' beliefs about how societal norms and expectations in Algeria influence English language communication.....72

## Table of contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	II
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	III
<b>Abstract</b> .....	IV
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	V
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	VI
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	VII
<b>Table of Content</b> .....	VIII
<b>General introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1. Background of the Study .....	2
2. Statement of the Problem .....	3
3. Research Questions .....	4
4. Research Hypotheses.....	4
5. Research Objectives.....	5
6. The Significance of the Study.....	5
7. Research Design and Methodology.....	5
8. Data Gathering Instrument .....	6
9. Sample and Population.....	6
10.The structure of the Study .....	6

## Chapter one: Theoretical Framework

1. Definition of Language.....	9
1.1.The nature of English Language.....	9

2. Definition of communication.....	9
2.1. Effective Communication.....	10
2.2.Types of Communication.....	11
2.2.1. Verbal Communication.....	11
2.2.2. Non-verbal Communication.....	11
2.2.3. Visual Communication.....	11
2.2.4. Written Communication.....	12
3. Communicative Competence and its Historical Background.....	12
3.1. Models of communicative competence.....	14
3.1.1. Dell Hymes Communicative competence.....	14
3.1.2. Canale and Swain (1980) and (1983).....	15
3.1.2.1. Grammatical competence.....	16
3.1.2.2.Sociolinguistic competence.....	16
3.1.2.3. Discourse competence.....	17
3.1.2.4.Strategic competence.....	17
3.1.3. Bachman s model (1990) of communicative competence.....	17
3.1.3.1. Language Knowledge.....	18
3.1.3.1.1. Organizational competence.....	18
a. Grammatical Knowledge.....	18
b. Textual Knowledge.....	18
3.1.3.1.2. Pragmatic Competence.....	18
a. Functional Knowledge.....	19
b. Sociolinguistic Knowledge.....	19
3.1.3.2.Strategic Competence and Psycho physiological mechanisms .....	19
3.1.4. Littlewood s interpretation pf communicative competence.....	20
3.1.4.1. Linguistic Competence.....	20
3.1.4.2.Discourse competence.....	20
3.1.4.3.Pragmatic Competence.....	20
3.1.4.4.Sociolinguistic Competence .....	20
3.1.4.5.Sociocultural Competence.....	20
3.2. Widdowson’s concept of Communicative Language Teaching.....	21
3.3. Willingness to Communicate.....	22
3.4.Applications of communicative Competence to Language Teaching and Learning.....	23

4. Definition of Culture.....	24
4.1.Elements of Culture.....	24
4.2.Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC).....	25
4.2.1. Attitudes.....	27
4.2.2. Knowledge.....	27
4.2.3. Skills.....	27
4.3. Acculturation Theory.....	28
4.3.1. Assimilation.....	29
4.3.2. Integration .....	29
4.3.3. Marginalization.....	29
4.3.4. Separation.....	29
4.3.5. Acculturative Stress.....	29
5. Identity Struggle Among EFL Learners.....	30
6. Cultural Misunderstandings.....	30
7. The Relationship between Language and Culture.....	32
7.1.Teaching Language with or without Culture.....	32
7.2.Culture as a Fifth Skill.....	33
8. Interlanguage.....	33
8.1.Influence of L1 on L2.....	34
8.1.1. Negative Transfer.....	34
8.1.2. Positive Transfer.....	34
9. Vygotsky s Sociocultural Theory.....	34
9.1. Self-Regulation.....	36
9.2. Private Speech.....	36
9.3. Zone of Proximal Development.....	36
9.4.Scaffolding.....	37
9.5.Cooperative Learning.....	37
10. The sociocultural Effects on Master 1 Learners Communication.....	37
10.1. The sociological context .....	37
10.2. The Relations.....	38
a. Family.....	38
b. Society, customs, and norms.....	38
c. Lack of competent Teachers.....	38
d. Parents and Teachers role.....	38

Conclusion .....39

## Chapter Two: Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction.....41

1. Research Methodology and Design.....41

1.1.Setting, participants, and procedures.....41

1.2.Research Instrument.....42

2. Questionnaire Analysis and Data Interpretation.....43

3. Results and discussions.....73

4. Limitations.....77

5. Pedagogical implications.....77

6. Recommendations for Future Research.....78

7. Conclusion.....79

General Conclusion.....78

List of References.....82

Appendix.....86

90.....الملخص

## **General introduction**

1. Background of the study.
2. Problem statement.
3. Research questions.
4. Research hypotheses.
5. Research objectives.
6. The significance of the study.
7. Research design and methodology.
8. Data gathering instrument.
9. Sample and population.
10. The structure of the study

## **1. Background of the study**

English is widely recognized as the lingua Franca and serves a multitude of social functions on a global scale. It plays a significant role in various areas including economics, science, technology, and education. As a result, numerous countries prioritize enhancing their English proficiency level, among them; Algeria. Nonetheless, English teaching and learning may be perceived as a demanding pursuit that often encounters a wide range of obstacles. To mitigate such challenges, renowned scholars have transmitted their concerns from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness allowing students to take responsibility and accountability for their own learning. This fosters self-reliance, autonomy, and active participation in the teaching process rather than passive receipt of language input as learners build knowledge through synthesizing information and integrating this information with skills like communication, inquiry, and critical thinking (Baldauf & Moni, 2006).

Forthcomingly, communicative competence has emerged as a pivotal component of foreign language teaching and learning. Hence, EFL learners are no longer bound to solely produce well-formed sentences, but rather, to possess the ample aptitude and requisite skills to perform language appropriately and effectively to meet different social and cultural requirements. Besides, it provides learners with opportunities to experience the target language in authentic contexts beyond mere memorization of grammatical and lexical patterns isolatedly.

Individuals have varying learning abilities as they co-exist in a mixed-ability world where there are differences among people” (Fisher,2001). Although some students may find it easier and quicker to learn a new language, others may confront a variety of constraints that impede them from reaching communication skills. Meaning that learners' potential is influenced by inevitable factors, which can be labeled as internal and external. The former arises from the students themselves and may comprise age, personality traits, learning preferences, and motivation. The latter, on the other

hand, pertains to the learning environment and may include social background and cultural values and expectations. Therefore, the language learning process, mainly in the EFL context, is a multifaceted process impacted by a myriad of factors including socio-cultural barriers that pose crucial challenges endured by EFL learners. Thus, EFL learners must employ all of their existing cognitive and social skills to become successful and proficient language users.

In the context of Master 1 EFL learners at M'sila University, the importance of English proficiency has seen a rise owing to its globalization seeking to improve their English language competencies. Conversely, despite the prominence given to linguistic development, these learners often undergo socio-cultural barriers that hinder their effective communication in English. Since communication is a form of social interaction, the role of social factors on language acquisition and learning should not be disregarded. These factors incorporate a spectrum of impediments entrenched in cultural differences, social norms, lack of exposure and interaction, and intercultural communication dynamics. They manifest as linguistic anxiety, cultural stereotypes, communication apprehension, and pragmatic misunderstandings. That being so, learners' confidence and proficiency levels in English communication will be increasingly impacted.

In second language acquisition and development, EFL learners face challenges in several areas including age, affective factors, speaking proficiency. However, this research study aims to examine the impact of socio-cultural factors on communication abilities. Therefore, fathoming and addressing these sociocultural barriers are of paramount importance for educators, policymakers, and language learners. By unraveling the intricacies of these barriers, educators can develop pedagogical approaches to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for Master's level learners. Moreover, insights gained from this study can enlighten curriculum design, teacher training programs, and cross-cultural communication initiatives, thereby enriching the overall quality of English language education at the Master's level.

## **2. Problem statement**

Teaching and learning EFL in various Algerian educational grades is getting steadily more challenging with each passing day. Although teaching the receptive and productive skills; reading, listening, speaking, and writing, in tandem with the hierarchical sub-systems that constitute a language, namely phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, receive wide interest and significant improvements, there is a growing demand for more proficient English speakers in the virtue of the evolving social and cultural contexts. In light of this, our observation in the English Department at the University of M'sila has demonstrated that although EFL learners represent a considerably high linguistic competence, they still exhibit a lack of communicative competence and sociocultural communication skills, resulting in unprepared graduates entering the job market and the practical and daily life. The latter necessitates learners who are capable and adaptable enough to communicate appropriately and efficiently with individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, utilizing English as a medium of communication.

## **3. Research questions**

- What are the main sociocultural factors that hinder effective communication among Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila university?
- How do sociocultural factors influence (or manifest as challenges) the verbal and written communication skills of Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila university?
- What are the perceptions of Master 1 learners regarding the influence of sociocultural factors on their academic achievements?

## **4. Research hypotheses**

- The main sociocultural factors hindering Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila university are Cultural differences and norms, fear and anxiety, limited exposure and

authentic interaction, socioeconomic status and social hierarchy, educational backgrounds and opportunities, and the role of the parents.

- These sociocultural factors influence learners' communication apprehension leading to misunderstandings, violation of cultural norms and societal expectations, and inability to express themselves both orally and in writing.
- Master 1 EFL learners attribute their academic achievements or struggles primarily to these sociocultural barriers.

## **5. Research objectives**

- To identify and analyze the main sociocultural factors that hinder Master 1 EFL learners' ability to communicate at M'sila university.
- To examine the influence of sociocultural factors on Master 1 EFL learners' verbal and written communication skills.
- To explore learners' perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of sociocultural factors on their overall academic achievements.

## **6. The significance of the study**

The following research study is of the utmost importance for the field of learning and teaching since it uncovers the crucial role that sociocultural factors have on effective communication. Both students and teachers who have a profound understanding of these barriers may pursue to overcome the latter and minimize their impact on the potential learning outcomes. To address this issue, the present research paper seeks to identify the sociocultural factors that affect learners' abilities to develop the desired levels of communication skills together with assessing the extent to which these barriers may lead to serious impacts, particularly in the context of Master 1 Linguistics major students. This research paper focuses on boosting EFL learners' awareness and equipping them with relevant strategies to surpass these obstacles.

## **7. Research design and methodology**

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter through a mixed design gathering quantitative and qualitative data collection. The data collection tool used is a semi structured questionnaire, which is given to Master's students studying English at Msila University. The research would be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure reliable and objective results. However, due to the nature of the data, the emphasis may lean towards quantitative analysis.

## **8. Data gathering instrument**

As part of this research project, a questionnaire has been distributed to a targeted sample of master's level Linguistics students at M'sila University. The questionnaire includes both close-ended and open-ended questions with the aim of exploring socio-cultural barriers and gathering both quantitative and qualitative insights on the topic at hand allowing for more in-depth analysis of the subject matter.

## **9. Sample and population**

To investigate the above-mentioned hypotheses, the current study is conducted on Master 1 learners majoring in Linguistics at Msila University, that demonstrates a population of approximately a total of 56 students. 37 students have been purposefully selected as samples from this population since they are expected to have an adequate communicative ability having been exposed to English for four years as well as to ensure validity and reliability. The purposive sampling method was adopted to select the participants and assure that the results are reliable and objective.

## **10. The structure of the study**

The study is structured into two main chapters, each comprising several sections. The first chapter covers the theoretical background and literature review. The first section explores effective

communicative, its various types, communicative competence, its historical context, its different models, willingness to communicate, and the application of communicative competence in language teaching and learning. The subsequent section focuses on the sociocultural aspects in communication, emphasizing intercultural communicative competence, the process of acculturation, and addressing cultural misunderstandings. The second chapter consists of three sections; the first section outlines the methodology employed in the study, the second section details the data analysis, and the final section encompasses the study's results, limitations and recommendations.

# **Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework**

## **1. Definition of language**

According to Ramous-Mattoussi, et al (2016) «Language is the primary way in which people communicate, and this communication typically takes place within a social context. People use language to interact socially and emotionally and to express friendliness, love, anger and pain. Language enables ideas to be communicated and tasks to be accomplished ». To clarify, language is a means of communication in a social context. Human beings use language to express their thoughts, ideas, information and feelings on both the personal and the professional levels. The human's language encompasses many aspects as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. In Encyclopedia Britannica, language is defined as “a system of conventional, spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, communicate.” As cited in (Arora,2017). Another definition of language as follows: «Language is a communicative practice mediated by a linguistic system or systems » (Eckert &McConnell-Ginet 2003:52) As cited in (Daniel ,2018)

### **1.1.The nature of English language**

Devasis Chekma (2022) states that English is a varied language that has absorbed vocabulary from many languages of the world. English is the most dynamic language of the world. Also, he mentioned some of its features like being receptive, heterogeneous, systematic, unique, dynamic, creative, productive, symbolic, modifiable, and grammatical.

## **2. Definition of communication**

Informasi & Unsyiah (2016) defined communication as: « The process of generating meaning by sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs that are influenced by multiple contexts». That is to say, it is a linguistic and a social process in which individuals share or exchange information, ideas, and feelings. It encompasses all four language skills; listening, speaking, reading,

and writing. Additionally, Giffin and Patten (1976) mentioned that « Communication is the process of creating meaning as well as ascribing it. It is the exchange of ideas and interactions among group members ». As cited in (Fatimayin ,2018)

## **2.1. Effective communication**

Nicole Pare defined effective communication as « communication between two or more persons wherein the intended message is successfully delivered, received, and understood».

To clarify, it is the process of delivering information, thoughts, and feelings in a clear way in which the speaker and the listener understand each other without any ambiguity. Daniel (2016) added that « Effective communication is the one that lacks any kind of noise in the communication process. It is effective because the communication process results in what the communicator wants or intended. It generates the desired effect, serving the purpose for which it was planned » as cited in (Fatimayin,2018).

According to the 7 C's, stated by Ramakrishnan (2018), of communication, an effective communication should cover seven elements: clarity, correctness, completeness, concreteness, conciseness, courtesy, and consideration. Ramakrishnan (2018)

- Clear: The speaker should provide clear language and information to avoid misleading the receiver.
- Correct: Both language and information should be accurate.
- Complete: It should include enough information covering the who, what, when, where, why and how.
- Concrete: The speaker should be specific, providing enough examples without being overly detailed.
- Concise: It refers to being direct to the point.
- Courteous: The speaker should be polite and respectful.

- Considerate or coherent: It is about having a logical flow of ideas. The speaker should link their ideas smoothly.

## **2.2. Types of communication**

It is acknowledged that individuals communicate with each other in various ways. They can use words, body language, gestures, signs, tone of voice, images, and typography. There are four main types of communication: verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written communication.

### **2.2.1. Verbal communication**

It is a linguistic process in which the speaker uses language to deliver a particular message. It is utilized for both personal and professional purposes. As Aarti (2011) stated « Verbal communication, as the name implies, is communicating using words. This includes sounds, words, language, and speaking». As cited in (Fatimayin ,2018).

### **2.2.2. Non-verbal communication**

Daniel (2016) declared that « Non-verbal communication is the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. It covers all information, messages and ideas we convey without using words; making use of physical communication such as tone of voice, touch, smell, and body motion. Non-verbal communication includes music, dance, painting, drama, and sculpture. Symbols and sign language are also included». As cited in (Fatimayin,2018). To elucidate, nonverbal communication relies on body language, facial expressions, gestures, and position instead of oral language.

### **2.2.3. Visual communication**

Visual communication involves the use of visual aids such as images, drawing, typography, signs, animation, and television to deliver the message. Aarti (2011) defined it as « a visual display of information such as typography, photography, signs, traffic codes, symbols, and designs.

Television and video clips are the electronic form of visual communication. » as cited in (Fatimayin, 2018).

#### **2.2.4. Written communication**

It is an old method of communication wherein messages are conveyed in writing. Written communication includes letters, faxes, reports and research papers. It can be formal or informal depending on its use. It is utilized in schools, colleges, and work places. According to Fatimayin (2018): « This means communicating with other people through written words ».

### **3. Communicative competence and its historical background**

Language is essential for genuine communication within societies. However, traditional language teaching methods have often failed to reach the linguistic demands of real-life communication while concurrently recognizing the social and cultural rules that influence language use and regulate the linguistic behaviors of the members of any speech community. This gap has led to the need for a contemporary pedagogical framework to language education. In light of this, “Communicative competence” has emerged as an individual’s aptitude to communicate effectively and meaningfully through diverse tools, including speech, writing, and nonverbal means of communication.

Therefore, language proficiency necessitates not only a comprehension of the knowledge of a language but also the ability to perform it effectively in practical situations to satisfy communicative requirements. Language is widely recognized as a tool for communication, Canale and Swain (1980) validate that: “Communicative competence involves the ability to use language for a range of communicative purposes, in a range of contexts, and with a range of interlocutors”. It is important to note that learning grammatical rules alone is inadequate to develop productive and receptive language skills. It involves mastering the ability to communicate in diverse situations with different people, using language as a tool to achieve specific goals and attain proficiency

The notion of communicative competence has its roots in Chomsky's conceptual distinction between competence and performance. In Chomsky's framework, competence refers to the shared knowledge of the ideal speaker-listener set, which is embedded within a completely homogeneous speech community. This knowledge is fundamental in enabling a language user to generate and comprehend an infinite set of sentences from a finite set of rules. It refers to the subconscious understanding of language rules and structures that allows speakers to produce meaningful utterances. In contrast, performance represents the active use of the tacit knowledge in real-life situations. This is commonly recognized as encoding and decoding (Hymes, 1972, as cited in Ohno, n.d, pp. 25-26).

Nevertheless, Hymes (1972) refutes the use of performance as a measure of linguistic competence since it demands ideal circumstances where both, the speaker and listener, possess flawless language skills without committing any errors. He claims that it is an unreliable source for gathering linguistic data for descriptive linguists studying language patterns given that the accuracy of data may be influenced by certain factors including memory limitations, external and internal distractions, span of attention and interest. According to Hymes (1972), the most significant implication of performance is « that of the imperfect manifestation of underlying system. ». The latter emphasizes the imperfect nature of language manifestation in actual performance since language used in real-life situations does not fully reflect individuals underlying linguistic competence due to the influence of external factors.

Subsequently, Dell Hymes, in response to Chomsky's idealized view of linguistic competence, has introduced the concept of communicative competence and has stressed the importance of considering sociocultural and contextual factors in language use beyond formal grammatical rules. He supports the notion that linguistic theory must deal with a heterogeneous speech community, differential competence, and the role of sociocultural features. Additionally, Hymes (1972) distinguishes two kinds of competence: linguistic competence and communicative competence, with

the latter being more context-specific. Thus, Hymes has defined it as « the knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and social meaning of language. » (As cited in Ohno, n.d, p. 26).

### **3.1. Models of communicative competence**

Effective communication in a language necessitates a profound understanding of its linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural facets. The ability to use the right language in a specific situation with a clear objective the distinctive attribute of a good communicator. By having this understanding, people can effectively interact with others. In his work, Chomsky has delved into the concept of linguistic competence, which mainly focuses on an individual's inherent knowledge of language structure while largely disregarding socio-cultural significance as it was argued by Hymes that Chomsky's concept was "concerned with the tacit knowledge of language structure" but "omits almost everything of socio-cultural, significance" (Hymes, 1972, pp. 270- 280). However, Hymes (1972) developed this idea by introducing the term "communicative competence." It refers to the level of language acquisition that enables individuals to communicate effectively and appropriately with others and comprehend messages from others in specific contexts. Additionally, it advocates that language learners should be able to implement what they learn in the classroom to real-world scenarios. During the 1970s and 1980s, many linguists, anthropologists, and researchers made important contributions to the theory of communicative competence. In this text, we will focus on a few individuals who have had the greatest influence on the concept of communicative competence.

#### **3.1.1. Dell Hymes' communicative competence**

Linguistic and communicative competence mutually support each other; both competencies are indispensable for genuine communication to maintain grammatical accuracy and appropriateness

of language use. Widdowson (1972) adverts to the inseparability of these competencies as he makes a difference between linguistic competence (knowledge of rules) and communicative competence (ability to use rules effectively). According to Gunterman and Phillips (1980), both competencies are required for effective communication, while Canale and Swain (1979) stress the integration of linguistic with communicative competence for language's proper use. Accordingly, a combination of both language abilities is essential in effective language use by considering that linguistic ability ensures grammatical correctness while communicative ability helps people employ language fittingly into their day-to-day lives. The interdependence, complementary nature, and integration of these competencies underscore the need for a combined proficiency of both competencies for effective language use.

Back in 1972, Dell Hymes, a renowned linguist, showed that the communicative competence of speakers does not consist merely of grammatical rules but also involves their socio-cultural knowledge. That is to say, a competent speaker knows when to speak, what to talk about, with whom, when, where, and in what manner to speak. In this regard, he identified four main parameters of Communicative Competence, namely the formal possibility, feasibility with the available means of implementation, appropriateness to the context and successful execution (Hymes, 1972, p. 281). These parameters help to select the appropriate speech act from the existing repertoire in a given context, and the speaker's ability to master them determine the level of communicative competence achieved.

### **3.1.2. Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale's (1983)**

Canale and Swain (1980) defined communicative competence as the knowledge and skills needed for effective communication. Canale and Swain posit that Hymes' sociolinguistic framework

is foundational in the development of a communicative approach to language acquisition. Their work focuses on the interplay between social context, grammar, and meaning, specifically social meaning. However, as Hymes suggests, there are aspects of grammar that are meaningless without rules of language use, and similarly, Canale and Swain argue that rules of language use are ineffective without rules of grammar. That is to say, the central argument of their model is the equal importance of « Grammatical Competence » and « Socio-Cultural Competence » since they together constitute communicative competence. They maintained that: “Just as Hymes (1972) was able to say that there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use, so we feel that there are rules of language use that would be useless without the rules of grammar” (p. 5).

Canale and Swain put forward an inclusive skillset that demonstrates the three distinct sub-competencies including grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic that are also intertwined. Canale (1983) afterwards added discourse competence as its separate component. It has become a popular model in both academic and professional contexts for understanding communication intricacies and the skills necessary to communicate effectively across various situations. The linguistic system covers grammatical and discourse competence while functional aspects include strategic and sociolinguistic competencies (as cited in Tas and Khan, 2020, p. 89).

### **3.1.2.1. Grammatical Competence**

It is the ability to know the grammar and syntax of a language by its rules, that is, how to use verb tenses properly, word order, and sentence structure so that meaning can be conveyed effectively.

### **3.1.2.2. Sociolinguistic competence**

It involves someone's skillfulness to fittingly perform language forms and patterns in various social contexts. This means knowing the cultural norms and conventions that guide and regulate language behaviors use such as appropriate register, tone as well as style.

### **3.1.2.3. Discourse competence**

It pertains to someone's ability to use language in distinct forms of discourse such as giving presentations, conversations, speeches, or writing texts. It demands a strong knowledge of the organizational structures and conventions that govern different types of discourse and the ability to use cohesive devices to relate ideas and create a coherent message.

### **3.1.2.4. Strategic competence**

It refers to a person's ability to use communication strategies to overcome communication barriers and achieve their communicative goals such as clarification requests, paraphrasing, and self-repair, and the ability to use these strategies effectively in different situations.

Effective use of these four competencies is essential for effective communication, allowing speakers to convey complex ideas and information clearly and organize their messages coherently.

## **3.1.3 Bachman's model (1990) communicative language ability**

The concept of communicative language ability refers to « knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing or executing that competence in appropriate contextualized communicative language use » (Bachman, 1990, p.84), signifying that it involves acquiring both knowledge and skills required for communication in a particular language. Bachman confirmed that the primary goal of CLA is to enhance learners' communication abilities, equipping them with the necessary skills to navigate different situations in the target language as well as to understand when and where to use this language appropriately within society. Bachman's model attempts to describe « the processes by which the various components interact with each other and with the context in which language use occurs. » (Bachman, 1990, p.81) as well as to distinguish between the concepts of knowledge and skills. As outlined in his 1990 study, CLA model combines language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms into a holistic framework. Language

competence, the ability to apply these concepts in communication, and psychological factors, mental processes that influence the actual application of these concepts, are all combined in this paradigm.

### **3.1.3.1. Language knowledge**

According to Bachman, language knowledge is a type of information memory that enables language users to produce and comprehend discourse. He divided language knowledge into two categories: pragmatic knowledge and organizational knowledge.

Bachman's paradigm integrates abstract knowledge and performance under the umbrella of communicative language ability, in contrast to other models that divide them. This ability, which is made possible by the interactions between all the elements in this framework, includes both knowing and doing. Bachman classified language competence into two main categories, Organizational Competence and Pragmatic Competence.

#### **3.1.3.1.1. Organizational Competence**

It includes the abilities needed to produce and understand the formal structures of language, such as grammar, propositional content, and coherent text arrangement. (Bachman, 1990, p.87). It has two subcategories :

##### **a. Grammatical Competence**

It includes knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, phonology, and syntax which are essential to govern the formal structure of language

##### **b. Textual Competence**

It pertains to conventions for combining sentences to form a cohesive text that follows rules of cohesion, coherence, and rhetorical organization.

#### **3.1.3.1.2. Pragmatic Competence**

It signifies the ability for effective language use to attain specific goals in either speech or writing. It is comprised of two major components: functional and socio-linguistic.

### **a. Functional knowledge**

Also referred to as Illocutionary competence, includes understanding different speech acts' functions in communication. Meaning that a given sentence may give a warning, or make a request, depending on the context and the people involved. (Bachman, 1990, p. 89-90).

### **b. Socio-linguistic knowledge**

It involves producing and understanding language appropriately in specific contexts. This means knowing how to use the right language conventions for a particular situation. It includes understanding different styles of language, dialects, natural expressions, cultural references, and figures of speech. (Bachman, 1990, p. 95-98).

### **3.1.3.2. Strategic competence and Psycho physiological mechanisms**

The following component involves the mental ability to use language appropriately in a given situation while Psycho physiological mechanisms refer to the neurological and psychological processes involved in the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon (Bachman,1990, p.84). In his paradigm, Bachman claimed that the strategic competence described by Canale and Swain (1980) did not adequately describe the mechanism by which it functions. He therefore favored the psychological theory of strategic competence since it takes this mechanism into account. For Bachman, strategic competence involves metacognitive strategies that help individuals use language effectively by setting goals, assessing, planning, and executing them.

### **3.1.4 Littlewood's interpretation of communicative competence (2011)**

Littlewood (2011) has developed a model for communicative competence. This is the latest framework. It builds on the inaugural model provided by Canale and Swain (1980), also by Canale (1983). The model of Littlewood integrates a fifth constituent and adjusts the terminology. The goal is to expand and refine understanding of communicative competence. As claimed by Tas and Khan (2020), the components of communicative competence in Littlewood's model are as follows:

**3.1.4.1. Linguistic competence:** which comprises the knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, semantics, and phonology, and has been traditionally emphasized in second language learning.

**3.1.4.2. Discourse competence:** it allows language users to partake in constant discourse through connecting thoughts in longer written pieces, holding extended speaking turns, and facilitating interaction. It permits opening and closing conversations.

**3.1.4.3. Pragmatic competence:** it assists second-language speakers in using their linguistic backgrounds to convey and interpret meanings in real scenarios, even in situations where they encounter difficulties due to gaps in knowledge.

**3.1.4.4. Sociolinguistic competence:** which primarily comprises knowledge of how to use language appropriately in social situations, conveying suitable degrees of formality, directness, and other relevant factors.

**3.1.4.5. Sociocultural competence:** which includes an awareness of cultural knowledge and assumptions that affect the exchange of meanings and may lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication.

Littlewood's model not only expand on the Canale and Swain's framework but also introduces psycholinguistic aspects of second language proficiency that are fundamental to

communicative language use. Littlewood also regards sociocultural competence as a distinct from Sociolinguistic competence rather than being a compound unit (Tas and Khan, 2020, pp. 91-92).

### **3.2. Widdowson's concept of communicative language teaching**

It is posited by Widdowson (1978) that language learning encompasses not only the acquisition of grammatical rules but also the development of the ability to use language proficiently for communication. He states that language learning entails more than mere comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing of sentences. Instead, it is imperative to learn the effective usage of sentences to realize communicative objectives. He claims: « When we acquire a language we do not only learn how to compose and comprehend correct sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence; we also learn how to use sentences appropriately to achieve a communicative purpose. We are not just walking grammars ».

In his estimation, the belief that once competence is gained, performance will naturally ensue is erroneous. It is further contended that six or more years of instruction in English do not guarantee normal language communication. The acquisition of communicative abilities must proceed alongside the acquisition of linguistic skills, or else the mere acquisition of the latter may impede the former's development (as cited in Ohno, n.d., p. 27).

According to Ohno, Widdowson's postulates appear to be influenced by Hymes' conception that children acquire not only knowledge of grammar but also knowledge of appropriateness. Hymes notes that children acquire knowledge of sociocultural norms such as when to speak, when not to speak, what to talk about with whom and in what manner concurrently with knowledge of grammatical rules. In light of this, Widdowson strongly advocates for the teaching of communicative competence alongside linguistic competence.

To clarify the discussion of teaching both linguistic and communicative competency, Widdowson distinguishes between two aspects of performance: "usage" and "use." He elucidates

that “usage” reveals the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules, while “use” demonstrates the extent to which the language user applies his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication. Additionally, he identifies two aspects of meaning: “significance” and “value.” Significance denotes the meaning that sentences have in isolation from the specific context in which the sentence is produced. Value refers to the meaning that sentences assume when they are employed for communication (as cited in Ohno, n.d., pp. 27-28).

### **3.3. Willingness to communicate**

The notion of WTC has emerged as a concept to account for individuals’ communication in both their first language and second language. WTC is defined as “a learner’s readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using a L2” (MacIntyre et al, 1998). Prior research has identified L1WTC as a personality-based, trait-like predisposition (McCroskey and Baer, 1985; McCroskey and McCroskey, 1986) that remains stable across situations (McCroskey and Richmond, 1991 as cited in Bukhari, Cheng, & Khan, 2015, p. 39).

However, according to Bukhari et al. (2015), MacIntyre et al. (1998) postulate that L2WTC ought to be perceived as a situational variable that can change across situations. The desire to start a conversation is a significant individual difference that can be influenced by a range of factors, including affective, psychological, social, linguistic, and situational factors. This concept was originally developed to explain how native language speakers approach or avoid interpersonal situations. Hence, the concept of WTC has since expanded beyond the context of L1 communication and has been applied to the context of L2 learning. MacIntyre et al.’s (1998) work was the first to adapt the WTC construct to the context of L2 learning in an attempt to understand why some students seek opportunities for L2 communication while others avoid it. Similarly, Bukhari et al. (2015) stated that Kang, in 2005, observed that an individual’s readiness to communicate in a second language is influenced by their immediate surroundings and can change during a conversation.

Consequently, a new definition of WTC as a situational variable has emerged. This definition states that WTC refers to a person's voluntary inclination to actively participate in communication within a specific scenario, which can be affected by factors such as the interlocutor(s), the topic of discussion, and the conversation's context (Kang, 2005). Certain researchers, MacIntyre and colleagues for example (1998, 2003), advocate for key goal in second language learning which is to encourage WTC among learners. This is to say that learners should be motivated to seek communication opportunities and to use language genuinely. Research suggests that higher WTC among learners leads to increased opportunities for practice in a second language and greater authentic usage of that language (MacIntyre et al., 2001, as cited in Bukhari et al., 2015, p. 29-40).

### **3.4. Applications of communicative competence to language teaching and learning**

In recent times, language teachers, researchers, and individuals with interest in foreign and second language teaching and learning have observed that the earlier approaches that concentrated primarily on the form of language learning have failed to develop learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Consequently, their focus has been transitioned from expanding a mechanical learning process. It moved towards enhancing the ability to communicate effectively and fluently through developing a new approach known as communicative language teaching. The latter prioritizes effective communication in authentic scenarios. Such a shift promoted CLT development.

This approach underlines learners' capacity to interact competently. The CLT approach is considered an international method of teaching foreign languages in various learning contexts. It generally deals with the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in terms of communication. The approach aims at making learners active participants in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of knowledge. It is a set of principles that focuses more on developing learners' communicative competence, accuracy, and appropriate use of language to facilitate

effective communication (Brown, 1994a, p. 245, as cited in Atamenia, 2017). Moreover, CLT methodically adheres to functional and communicative perspectives as highlighted by Littlewood (1981). Therefore, CLT approach is beneficial to refine learners' communication skills

Furthermore, according to Stern (1981), language teaching should involve an objective and analytical approach towards language learning. This can be accomplished by studying and practicing structural, functional, and sociocultural aspects of language. Language teaching, also, should equip learners with valuable opportunities to experience the language firsthand through direct contact with the target language community (as cited in Ohno, n.d., pp. 29-30).

#### **4. Definition of culture**

Many scholars defined culture in different ways. According to Mitrulescu (2023) « Culture comprises of essential presumptions, values, examples of conduct, mentalities, and convictions of a specific group, typically limited to a specific region ». To elucidate, culture is a set of morals, beliefs and values that are shared by members of a community. Taylor (1972) confirms that « Culture in a complex definition includes beliefs, arts, skills, moralities, laws, traditions and behaviors that an individual, as a member of a society, gets from his own society». As cited in (Mahadi, 2012).

##### **4.1. Elements of culture**

Culture comprises a set of components like language, rituals, clothes, science, beliefs, and values. (Roohul -Amini, 1989) as cited in (Mahadi, 2012).

- Language: is a means of communication in which people deliver meaning. Each culture has its unique language. There are about 7000 spoken languages in the world.
- Rituals: are a set of traditions that are shared by a community like Ramadan and Christmas rituals.
- Clothes: clothing might symbolize culture and identity.

- Science: Culture and science are connected to each other because the latter influences the former.
- Beliefs: are standards which guide the interaction among people and between themselves and their god.
- Values: are concepts that determine what is good and bad for a particular society. These concepts are passed down from a generation to another. They shape a person's identity and character. Thus, values play a pivotal role in human's life.

#### **4.2. Intercultural communication competence (ICC)**

The process of communication exceeds the mere transfer of information. It is the communal creation of meaning. Meaning that information may achieve significance when it is intended and interpreted by the interlocutors. Additionally, the language exchange between them does not necessarily occur under ideal circumstances. Typically, according to Bennett(n.d.), the listener's interpretation may influence the intended meaning by the speaker due to either the listener generally failing to assign precisely the same meaning to words and concepts as the speaker does or because the listener is likely to project their emotions and background knowledge about similar events onto the speaker's description. Therefore, users' intentions and interpretations cooperate to navigate a mutually agreeable match. The final meaning of the communication event is not only the speaker's intention, nor just the listener's interpretation. It is the mutual creation of an acceptable position between them (Bennett, n.d., para.2).

Culture is a concept that entails how members of any recognized speech community coordinate meaning and action among themselves. This is achievable through religious and political institutions and economic systems along with familial structures regulate individuals' language behaviors and their interpretations (Bennett, n.d., para.4). "Intercultural communication is a

symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process, in which people from different cultures create shared meanings.” (Lustig & Koester, 2007).

That is to say, since communication is the mutual creation of meaning shared between interlocutors and that culture represents the way members of a society coordinate actions, as a result, IC is the mutual creation of meaning across cultures (Bennett, n.d., para.10). This sort of communication encourages the perception and understanding of one another for people of different groups. Bennett (n.d.) affirms that effective IC necessitates individuals who show an extreme willingness to comprehend each other’s intentions in a non-evaluative manner, in other words, social groups are not considered interculturally competent unless they are inclined to claim significant and intelligent interaction, as validated by Chen & Starosta (1998): “Intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from two different cultures.” Therefore, IC aims to encourage mutual understanding and acceptance when communicating with individuals outside of one’s own group.

Intercultural interactions have become a natural process and a requirement in today’s global community. The world has undergone an unprecedented rise in migration, globalization, the advancement of information technologies, international employment, study exchange programs, foreign travel, and political alliances that have brought together people of different cultures and religions (ILIE, 2019, p.265). In this regard, ICC is an indispensable component to guarantee universal peace, to ameliorate relationships between countries, and to promote values such as tolerance and diversity. Therefore, ILIE (2019) endorses that the foremost barrier in IC is the dissimilarities between cultures since multiple cultures around the world are characterized by different languages, values, behaviors, and attitudes. Language is culturally determined. Both Culture and language are interrelated. To put it another way, ILIE (2019) argues that linguistic competence solely is insufficient to be a natural language competent, cultural awareness is highly needed to developing the attitudes and the communication skills required for multicultural exchange,

in everyday life and within organizations. Learning about other cultures and developing ICC and skills can help facilitate the multicultural encounter and can lead to more openness, conscious understanding, and tolerance (ILIE, 2019, p. 265).

ICC pertains to the ability of individuals to effectively communicate with people from different cultures. According to ILIE (2019), there are three fundamental attributes that constitute effective ICC which are as follows:

**4.2.1. Attitudes:** To achieve efficient intercultural communication, key attitudes such as respect, openness, and curiosity/discovery are required. It is important to show consideration for others, actively listen and demonstrate that they are valued to establish lasting relationships with people who have different beliefs and values.

**4.2.2. Knowledge:** Knowledge is comprised of cultural awareness in which individuals are conscious of the different beliefs, values, and customs of a particular group of people that affect their communication patterns. Other crucial dimensions of knowledge may be considered, including sociolinguistic awareness, cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, and deep cultural knowledge.

**4.2.3. Skills:** Skills such as observing, listening, analyzing, evaluating, interpreting, and relating are essential for processing the acquired knowledge and developing intercultural competence. Additionally, critical self-reflection is fundamental in ICC development.

Ideally, if individuals acquire the key attitudes, knowledge, and skills, they will accomplish internal consequences such as empathy, flexibility, and adaptability. As a result, they can treat and respond to the other person according to their expectations, leading to external outcomes such as effective intercultural communicative behaviors far away from any cultural misconceptions. The acquisition of effective ICC and skills necessitates not only linguistic competence and familiarity

with diverse cultures, but also boosting convenient attitudes, as well as honing the necessary skills (ILIE, 2019, p. 266).

### **4.3. Acculturation theory**

In 1880, American anthropologists have coined the term “acculturation” to outline the cultural changes that happen when two discrete cultural groups interact. It considers the issue of how groups and individuals may change as a result of continuous intercultural contact (Lakey, 2003, p. 104). In 1936, Redfield et al. defined acculturation as: “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149).

Acculturation is process of learning and adopting the values, behaviors, and traditions of another group or society. On an individual level, such as when someone moves to a new country and adopts the customs of their new home. On a larger scale, such as when a country is colonized by another country and adopts its customs (Fort et al., 2015, as cited in Nickerson, 2024, para. 3).

Nickerson (2024) explains that acculturation can be an advantageous experience that paves the way for understanding and tolerance of different cultures. It may also be a disadvantageous experience such as prejudice and discrimination.

Moreover, Berry’s model of acculturation (1992) has been widely used to understand the acculturation experiences. He proposed two dimensional aspects of acculturation which are; preservation of an individual’s mother culture and adaptation to the host society and new culture (as cited in Nickerson, 2024, para.4). The model introduces four ideal strategies for acculturation which are as follows:

**4.3.1. Assimilation** it is when individuals or groups adopt the dominant culture and lose their own culture, resulting in loss of cultural identity.

**4.3.2. Integration:** it is a strategy that reflects a desire to maintain key features of one's culture while there is an interest in adopting elements of the host culture. Integration is the maintenance of one's own culture while also participating in the dominant culture.

**4.3.3. Marginalization:** it pertains to the rejection of both cultures. Individuals feel a sense of isolation from both the dominant and home cultures.

**4.3.4. Separation:** it is the rejection of the dominant culture and preservation of one's own cultural identity. Social members maintain their own cultural values, traditions, and attitudes while keeping a distance from the host culture. They may view the dominant culture as a threat to their own cultural values and traditions.

**4.3.5. Acculturative stress:** it stems from a multitude of sources such as language barriers, loss of social support, perceived discrimination, perceived cultural incompatibilities, and identity conflicts. People's exposure to a new culture often results in psychological distress and ineffective communication in the new culture's Language. This distress can lead to language anxiety and depression (Nickerson, 2024, "what is acculturative stress").

Therefore, Nickerson (2024) agrees that a successful acculturation is an outcome where individuals can manage and regulate their new lives efficiently. Berry (2000) indicated that this can only be achieved through supportive relationships with both cultures along with an effective social support system (as cited in Nickerson, 2024).

## **5. Identity struggle among EFL learners**

It is the difficulties that are faced by EFL learners to speak the L2 in terms of their cultural background and personal identities. According to Teng (2019) « In EFL education, the EFL learning community may affect the formation of the learner identity. Learners who construct a positive identity are more willing to exert more effort into EFL learning, whereas those who construct a negative identity may make less efforts in their EFL learning. » Meaning that the learner's identity has a strong impact on his learning. It might be a positive or a negative influence. According to Robinson and Clardy (2012) « when learners experience feelings of anxiety in a language learning environment, they may not be able to achieve outstanding academic performance. In addition, learners may have an identity loss. Hence, identity and language learning go hand in hand » .as cited in (Teng,2019).

## **6. Cultural misunderstandings**

Nowadays, intercultural encounters have become a regular occurrence in today's world owing to the rapid technological advancements. However, the Implicit Personality Theory (Pedersen 1965) assumes that most people believe that others think, behave, and perceive the world around them like they do. This assumption can lead to possible misunderstandings and pseudo-conflicts or unintentional conflicts (Bruner & Tagiuri 1954; Krippendorff & Bermejo 2009) as it leads to misconceptions about how others think or feel (as cited in Hinner, 2017, p. 885). Thus, the intended meaning of a message may be different from the meaning linked to it by the recipient, which may evoke misunderstandings and conflicts. Hinner (2017) confirms that culture is among the notable rationales for such misunderstandings and conflicts. Namely, culture influences to a greater extent people's perceptions, their interpretations to the world around them, the meaning they attach to things, and the ways they react to those perceptions.

According to Hinner (2017), Adler et al. (2013), Ogden and Richard (1923), and Ruhly (1982) confirm that meanings reside in people, not in words. Klopf (1998) divides the concept of meaning into four classifications: denotative, connotative, contextual, and figurative. While connotative, contextual, and figurative meanings are subjective and variable, the denotative meaning is regarded as constant and literal, or dictionary-based. The meaning of a word remains fixed and context-independent across varied contexts (Adler et al. 2013 and Klopf 1998). This is the case in conventional English as a foreign language teaching, in which students are expected to memorize vocabulary lists presuming that the meaning of a word in the target language equals the meaning of the word when applied in another situation. Yet, despite this principle, misunderstandings and conflicts still occur. Hence, ICC incorporates more than memorizing words and using grammatically well-formed sentences (Hinner, 2017, p. 887).

Klopf (1998) stated that in IC, one word might not entail identical denotative meaning across cultures (as cited in Hinner, 2017, p. 887). He agrees that the denotative meaning may differ increasingly from two different languages, from one dialect of English to another, especially when the situation involves non-native speakers considering that they might transfer the denotative meaning of the word or concept from their native language into English leading to more complicated misunderstandings. Moreover, culture and language are closely intertwined. Such relationship reflects how language carries culture through time and how culture shapes people's linguistic behaviors. Additionally, language is used as a tool to exchange thoughts and ideas either orally or in writing as confirmed by R. Scollon, and S.K. Scollon 2001: " Other barriers that contribute to miscommunication would be the type of words chosen in conversation do to different cultures there are different meaning in vocabulary chosen, this allows for a message between the sender and receiver to be misconstrued." (As cited in Hinner, 2017, pp. 888-889).

Hinner (2017) also explains that various cultural backgrounds around the globe lead to miscommunication since certain words might have different meanings. As a result,

misunderstandings between the two parties, the sender and the receiver, may arise. Perception is influenced by culture, and it affects the selection, organization, and interpretation process. H. Tajfel (1996), validates that: "Culture also has a great effect on the perception process. Human perception is usually thought of as a three-step process of selection, organization, and interpretation. Each of these steps is affected by culture." Therefore, language is not solely communication technique, but also a process of directing speakers' perceptions regarding their surroundings.

## **7. The relationship between language and culture**

It is a knowledgeable that there are two main views regarding the relationship between language and culture. Firstly, language and culture are interconnected. There is no language without culture. Secondly, language and culture are independent from each other. Each one stands alone.

However, the most common view nowadays states that the relationship between language and culture is inevitable. Sagatova (2022) confirms the strong relationship between the two in which he mentions that « language and culture are interconnected so that they complement each other. Language is described as a primary vehicle by which a culture emanates its beliefs, values and norms. Similarly, language is influenced by culture – “If there is no culture, language will be like water without a source or a tree without roots”. Thus, the connection between language and culture must be considered in foreign language teaching because the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to learn the customs and traditions of the speech community, and to become competent for communication with speakers of the foreign language ».

### **7.1. Teaching language with or without culture**

It is a debatable concept; the scholars who believe that language and culture are inseparable like Sagatova (2022) and Hong (2008). They encourage the idea of teaching language with culture. Sagotova (2022) states that « the connection between language and culture must be considered in foreign language teaching because the main purpose of learning a foreign language is to learn the

customs and traditions of the speech community, and to become competent for communication with speakers of the foreign language. ». That is to say, when a person learns a language, he will not only learn its syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology but he will acquire its culture as well. Because culture is a part of language. And in this way the learner will grasp the language, the context and social aspects. Thus, he will develop both of linguistics and culture competences. Hong (2008) confirms this view and mentions that: « teachers should focus on developing both linguistic and cultural competencies while teaching a foreign language because this allows learners to use the target language appropriately. » As cited in (Mitrulescu ,2023).

## **7.2. Culture as a fifth skill**

Mitrulescu (2023) validate culture as the fifth language skills in which she states that « language and culture need to be tackled together to create competent learners in a second language. It is necessary to impart the cultural knowledge associated with English, especially since educators ought to manage it as the fifth skill. This happens mainly because the English language has an internal role, and it has become a core communicative skill ». To elucidate, learning a language extends to understanding its cultural norms and customs. In the same sense she also states that “culture as a fifth language skills helps students to appreciate the distinctive characteristics of other cultures and more importantly, to acknowledge and accept differences, as well as to become tolerant of practices that are unlike their own”.

## **8. Interlanguage**

It is a theory that was developed by Larry Slinker who is a professor in Applied linguistics. According to Al-Mulhim (2012) « Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second language learners who are in the process of learning language. It refers to a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native language and the target language». Thus, the one can safely say that this theory can be defined as a linguistic process that is created by learners of

second language; it is a continuum between L1 and target language. Learners use it as an attempt to communicate in the target language. It is influenced by the mother tongue and its system.

## **8.1. Influence of L1 on L2**

It is about the linguistic background of the mother tongue that influences the learning of L2. This interference is called language transfer. The latter can be either negative or positive.

### **8.1.1. Negative transfer**

Harlig and Sprouse (2018) state that « when the influence of the native language leads to errors in the acquisition or use of a target language, we say that negative transfer or interference occurs». That is to say negative transfer is the errors that are made by learners due to the differences between the mother tongue and the target language on the level of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. In this case the learner's mother tongue interferes negatively in learning the second or foreign language.

### **8.1.2. Positive transfer**

Harlig and Sprouse (2018) mentions that « When the influence of the native language leads to immediate or rapid acquisition or use of the target language, we speak of positive transfer or facilitation». In other words, the PT happens when the learner benefits from the prior knowledge of his mother tongue while learning the second language. Therefore, the similarities between the two languages assist learners in mastering the L2. For example, English and French have many similarities in grammar and written forms. These similarities influence positively in learning the second language.

## **9. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory**

Lev Vygotsky is best known for his revolutionary sociocultural theory of cognitive development. It highlights the crucial role that social interaction and cultural context play in shaping

an individual's cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, the social dimension of consciousness takes precedence in both time and significance over the individual dimension (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 30, as cited in Scott & Palincsar, n.d.). He argues that an individual's mental functioning is not solely derived from social interaction but is fundamentally shaped by it. This perspective challenges the traditional view that exclusively emphasizes individual cognition, highlighting instead the interconnectedness of social interactions and cognitive development.

According to Scott & Palincsar (n.d), Wertsch (1991) identified certain fundamental themes in Vygotsky's theory that elucidate the intricate relationship between individual and social processes in learning and development:

The first theme highlights Vygotsky's belief that cognitive development in individuals is inextricably linked to their social experiences and the broader cultural milieu in which they exist. This implies that the mental processes do not develop in isolation, but are profoundly influenced by the collaborative and social interactions individuals participate in, as well as the cultural context in which these interactions occur. It is important to note that Vygotsky was not solely focused on what more knowledgeable others brought to these interactions. He also emphasized the active role of the child in the learning process (as cited in Scott & Palincsar, n.d).

The second theme in Vygotsky work highlighted the importance of semiotics in human action, both on an individual and social level. According to Vygotsky, human action is mediated by various semiotic means, such as language, counting systems, mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbols, works of art, writing, diagrams, maps, mechanical drawings, and even modern tools such as computers and calculators. (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 137). These semiotic means serve as tools that facilitate the co-construction of knowledge during social interactions and are also internalized by individuals to aid future independent problem-solving activities. In simpler terms, Vygotsky emphasizes that, just as physical tools and labor activities allow humans to change the world,

symbolic tools or signs developed by human cultures are equally crucial in regulating and mediating our relationships with others and ourselves.

Lantolf (2000) asserts that while Piaget's theory proposes that development precedes learning, meaning that certain cognitive structures must develop before specific types of learning can be realized, Vygotsky's theory suggests that cognitive development and the ability to use thought to regulate our own actions require mastery of cultural communication systems and learning to use these systems to control our own thought processes. Vygotsky proposed several steps to achieve this:

**9.1. Self-regulation:** At this stage, children become self-regulating, and the sign system is internalized. The initial step in developing self-regulation and independent thinking is learning that actions and sounds have meaning. The second step in the development of internal structures and self-regulation involves practice. Preschoolers will enter into conversations with others to master language. The final step involves using signs to think and solve problems without the help of others.

**9.2. Private Speech:** Vygotsky proposed that children incorporate the speech of others and then use that speech to help themselves solve problems. Later, private speech becomes silent but remains very significant.

**9.3. Zone of Proximal Development:** Vygotsky believed that learning occurs when children work within their zone of proximal development. Tasks within the zone of proximal development are ones that a child cannot yet do alone but could do with the assistance of more competent peers or adults. The zone of proximal development describes tasks that a child has not yet learned but is capable of learning at a given time.

**9.4. Scaffolding:** it refers to providing a child with a considerable amount of support during the early stages of learning and then diminishing support and having the child take on increasing responsibility as soon as he or she is capable. A related concept is cognitive apprenticeship, which

describes the entire process of modeling, coaching, scaffolding, and evaluation that is usually observed whenever one-to-one instruction takes place.

**9.5. Cooperative Learning:** Vygotsky's theories support the use of cooperative learning strategies in which children work together to help each other learn. Since peers are usually operating within each other's zones of proximal development, they provide models for each other of slightly more advanced thinking. In addition, cooperative learning makes children's inner speech available to others, so they can gain insight into one another's reasoning process. Vygotsky himself recognized the value of peer interaction in moving children forward in their thinking.

## **10. The sociocultural effects on EFL learners' communication**

Kakita and Palukuri (2020b) confirm that speaking skill is widely acknowledged as a indispensable component of effective communication that necessitates heightened focus in ESL/ EFL classes. Although the latter has placed a significant emphasis on fostering the communicative abilities of their learners, there persists a prevailing issue among those who do not possess the required English communicative abilities due to limited exposure, interaction, and practice, along with the cultural and social hindrances that restrict the speaking opportunities. As a result, their proficiency decreases leading to dissatisfying language performance or speech. According to Kakita and Palukuri (2020b), such factors include:

### **10.1. The sociological context:**

The sociological context indicates the surrounding social environment in which members of a society live together following certain cultural norms, laws, and social guidelines that influence their language usage and shape their daily interactions. Individuals conform to implicit regulations concerning the way they navigate conversations, interpret their interactions, and switch topics.

Therefore, such language adaptability is dependent upon academics, skilled professionals, personal relationships, and civic contexts.

## **10.2. The relations :**

### **a. Family :**

Students' educational achievements may be influenced to a considerable level by financial background of their parents. On one hand, students who reside in rural areas and belong to impoverished households often have limited access to educational resources at home. On the other hand, students from urban and more affluent backgrounds have the opportunity to discover the latest academic developments.

### **b. Society, customs, and norms :**

The meaning of words is context based. That is to say, the words used for communicative purposes are affected by society and culture and they are dependent on the setting in which they are employed. Moreover, language usage is also affected by gender. It is widely recognized that men and women use language differently while communicating.

### **c. Lack of competent teachers :**

Students living in rural areas have limited exposure to technological resources. Additionally, rural schools often lack well trained teachers and skillful educators who can effectively use appropriate teaching methods, causing less engaging learning experience. The scarcity of trainers and teachers in rural schools directly affects the advancement of students.

### **d. Parents and teachers' role :**

At home, parents can contribute significantly to learners' communicative competence by providing immense support and encouragement. While in the school environment, teachers play a fundamental role in the learning process. They can enhance students' communication skills by

engaging their students in speaking activities to help them gain confidence. A positive rapport between students and teachers promote students' performance and confidence. Such inclusive and constructive feedback are essential strategies to develop learners' communication skills.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework regarding the literature review that contributes with valuable insights to the influence of sociocultural barriers in communication among Master 1 EFL learners at M'sila university. Throughout this chapter, exploring effective communication, specifying its types, and discussing the pivotal models of communicative competence have affirmed the compulsion of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences so that EFL learners accomplish communicative skills in various contexts. The discussion, also, highlighted the significance of sociocultural challenges through furnishing this chapter with a multitude of crucial theories that emphasized the inevitable role culture and society play in English language learning and development. Thus, social pressures and cultural considerations can determine EFL learners' communication abilities. In this regard, being aware of these sociocultural factors fosters a more supportive learning environments either inside or outside of schools.

# **Chapter 2: Data Collection and Analysis**

## **Introduction**

The first chapter dealt with the theoretical background and related research on the sociocultural barriers in communication encountered by Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at Msila University; establishing a foundation to the second chapter. This chapter outlines the methodology utilized to tackle the research questions posed in this study. It consists of three sections. The first section describes the research methodology including methods, setting, population, and tools. Along with the data collection and analysis tools. The second section encompasses data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the findings. The third section presents the limitation, pedagogical implication of this study and recommendation for further research.

### **1. Research Methodology and design**

This study is conducted based on mixed method design that encompasses a quantitative approach together with qualitative data collection. It makes use of a semi structured questionnaire, consisting of a combination of closed-ended and open-ended items, as the tool used for gathering primary data and follows a non-probability sampling technique to achieve the objectives set for the inquiry.

#### **1.1. Setting, participants, and procedures**

This study was conducted at the Department of letters and English language, University of Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila. It took place in the academic year of 2023/2024 specifically during the second semester as the final requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Linguistics. The population under concern in this research is Master 1 students at the department of literature and English language, University of Mohamed Boudiaf, M'sila totaling 37 participants. However, only 32 participants completed the study by responding to the questionnaire. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select the participating students. Group 2 Linguistics students were

selected to answer the questionnaire based on their suitable time planning and availability. Both males and females participated were included without specifying their age or personality features. The participants were selected because of their representativeness, relevance and accessibility.

## **1.2. Research instrument**

In order to accomplish the established objectives for this study and capture a comprehensive set of primary data, the research instrument used is a semi structured questionnaire that comprises of a combination of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire titled: Exploring socio-cultural barriers in communication encountered by Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University is designed to explore the several socio-cultural obstacles that hinder Master 1 learners' ability to communicate effectively and meaningfully in diverse contexts. Closed-ended questions that include Likert-scale and multiple choice questions provide a uniform set of responses that every participant can choose from, ensuring that the data collected is consistent across all respondents. They help measuring learners' perceptions regarding the impact of cultural factors on their communication skills as well as highlighting the severity of the most common barriers among EFL learners. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, boost the research with in-depth qualitative insights offering a deeper understanding of learners' experiences and perceptions along with identifying nuanced and unpredictable obstacles that face Master 1 EFL learners.

The following questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section is dedicated to pinpoint some demographic questions and general questions about participants' portfolios. The second section includes 6 questions designed to explore the participants' perceptions regarding communicative competence. The final section contains 13 questions devoted to collecting insights on the socio-cultural factors that play a major role on respondents' communicative skills and competences.

## 2. Questionnaire Analysis and data interpretation

After obtaining the desired firsthand data, the researchers use Microsoft Excel as the primary digital platform to calculate, interpret, and illustrate the required data using pie charts and bar graphs as figures.

### Section 1

#### 2.1. Item 1: Was English your first choice?

Table2.1

English as a first choice

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Yes	24	75%
No	8	25%
Total	32	100%

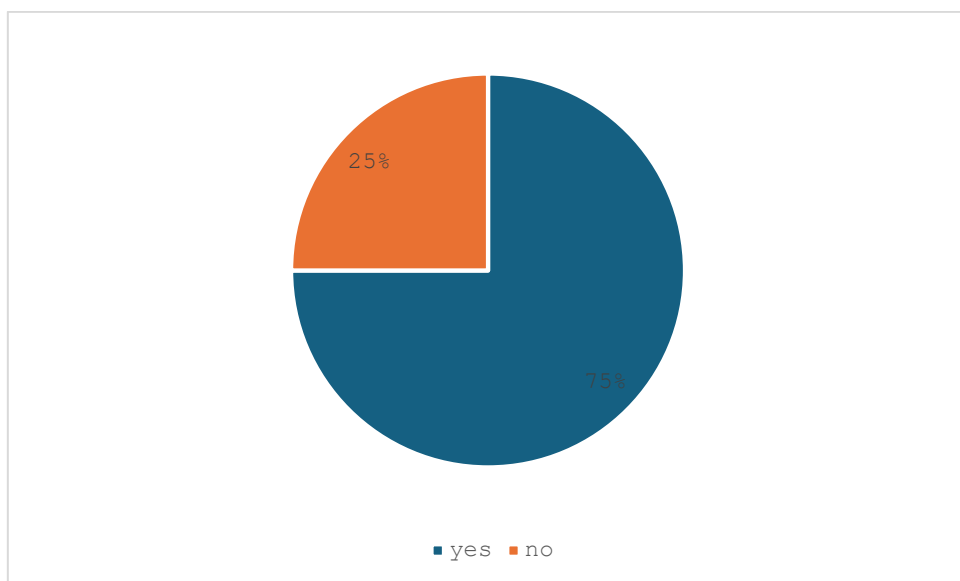


Figure2.1 English as a first choice

This item was designed to gather information about the participants' language preferences or choices. The data revealed that within 32 participants, 75% of them chose English as their first choice and 25% of them did not. Thus, it is evident that the majority of participants selected English as their language choice. While there is a small portion who did not opt for it as their first choice. This demonstrates a clear preference for English among participants.

**2.2. Item 2: how many years have you been studying English?**

This item was designed to confirm that the sample is homogeneous in terms of English language exposure inside of schools.

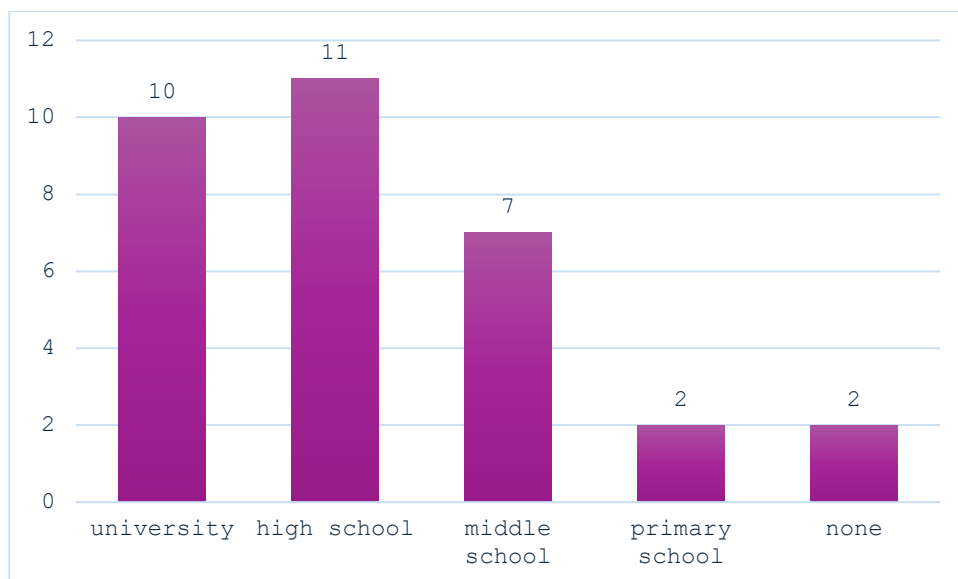
Therefore, the participants in this study, comprising 32 individuals, reported having studied English for 11 years. This is attributed to the Algerian standardized educational system, where English has been a consistent subject from middle school through high school. This assures that all respondents have received the same English educational curriculum as well as they are likely to have achieved a considerable level proficiency given the span of 11 years without interruption.

**2.3. Item 3: what is your father's educational background?**

**Table 2.3**

The participants fathers' educational background.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
University	10	31.25%
High school	11	34.37%
Middle school	7	21.87%
Primary school	2	6.25%
None	2	6.25%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.3 The participants fathers’ educational background.**

This item was designed to check the overall socioeconomic status of the respondents' fathers, as well as their capacity to access resources and educational opportunities outside of school and provide assistance to boost their children's language acquisition and communication skills.

**Table2.3 and Figure2.3** illustrate the educational attainment levels of the participants’ fathers. The data reveals that 34.37% of the participants have completed high school. Following closely, 31.25% earned university degree, demonstrating higher education. On the other hand, approximately 21.78% have completed middle school while a small percentage have either completed primary school or have no formal education.

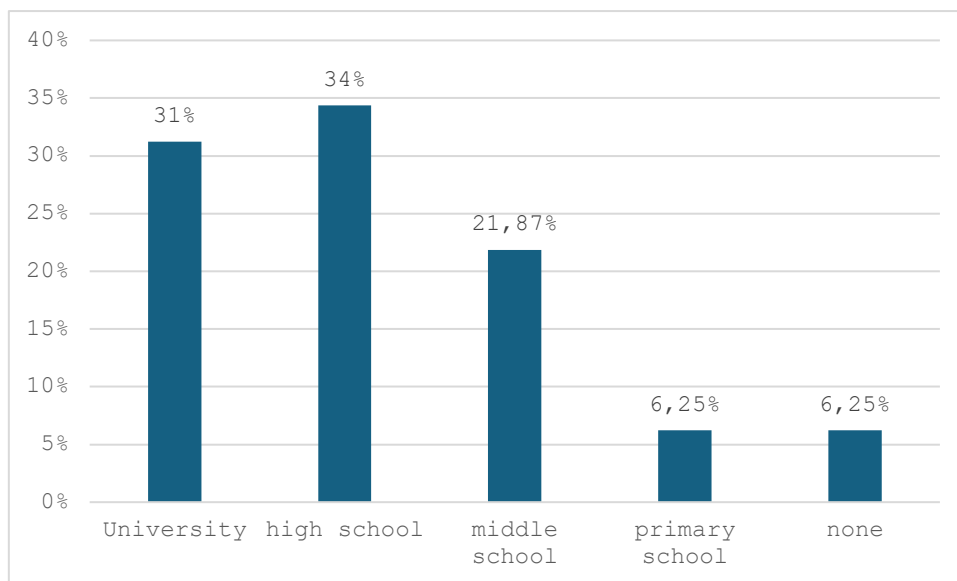
The data suggests that the majority of the participants fathers have relatively high educational attainment which implies that education is prioritized in the Algerian families. Furthermore, fathers with high educational degrees signifies the presence of higher socioeconomic status that can increase opportunities of learning exposure and resources among EFL learners.

**2.4. Item 4: What is your mother’s educational background?**

**Table2.4**

The distribution of the participants responses about their mothers' educational background.

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
University	10	31.25%
High school	11	34.375%
Middle school	7	21.875%
Primary school	2	6.25%
None	2	6.25%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.4 The distribution of the participants responses about their mothers' educational background.**

This item was designed to collect data about the educational level of the participants' mothers in order to understand the influence of parental education on individuals. It assists researchers to analyze the potential impact of a mother's education background on academic achievement and career choices.

**Table 2.4** revealed that 31.2% have university level, 34.3% have high school degree, 21.8% have middle school degree, 6.25% have primary school degree and 6.25% do not have any degree. This, this distribution shows a diverse educational profile of mothers of the participants.

## **Section 2**

### **2.5. Item 1: what does the term communicative competence mean for you?**

The following item is designed to gather qualitative insights that can demonstrate the ways master 1 EFL learners perceive the concept of communicative competence according to their daily communication practices.

In this regard, all participants had similar perspectives on communicative competence, defining it as the ability to communicate and use language effectively and meaningfully in different contexts to fulfill real-life objectives while adhering to social and cultural norms. They also stated that a proficient language user should have linguistic, social, and cultural competences to skillfully navigate day-to-day conversations.

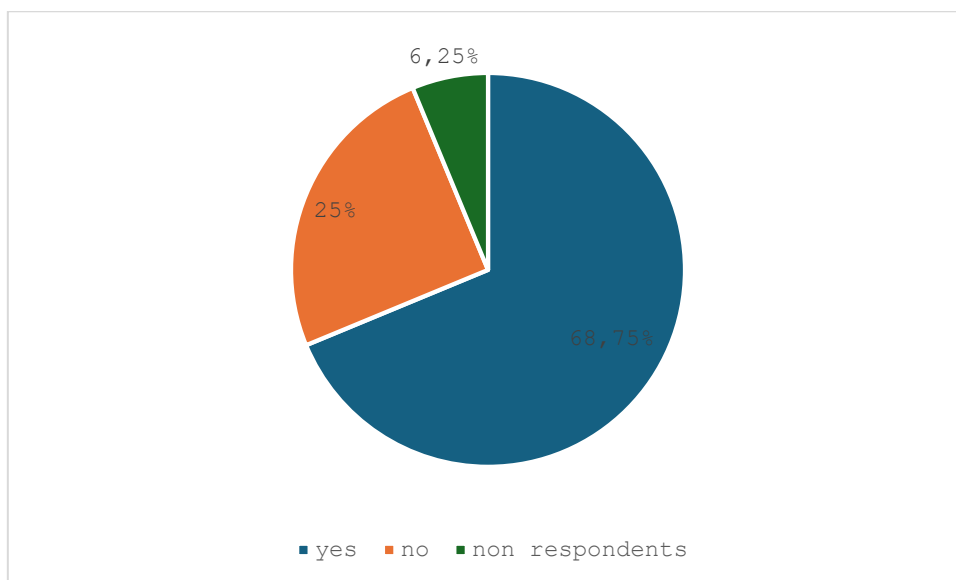
The answers suggest that the total sample consisting of 32 participants have a mutual and consistent understanding of the term communicative competence. Likewise, they all recognize that communicative competence exceeds mere linguistic ability; it encompasses social and cultural competences. Thus, such a holistic view of communicative competence among EFL learners reflects their degrees of awareness in communication.

### **2.6. Item 2: Do you think that you master the grammatical system of the English language?**

**Table2.6**

The distribution of the participants responses about whether they master the English grammatical system.

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Yes	22	68.75%
No	8	25%
Non respondents	2	6.25%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.6 The distribution of the participants' responses about whether they master the English grammatical system or not.**

This item was designed to assess the participants perspective about their proficiency in English grammar. It aims to collect insights into how confident participants are in their understanding and application of the grammatical rules in the English language.

**Table2.6** revealed that 68.75% believe that they master the grammatical rules of English whereas 25% do not believe so. Thus, the majority of participants feel proficient in English grammar.

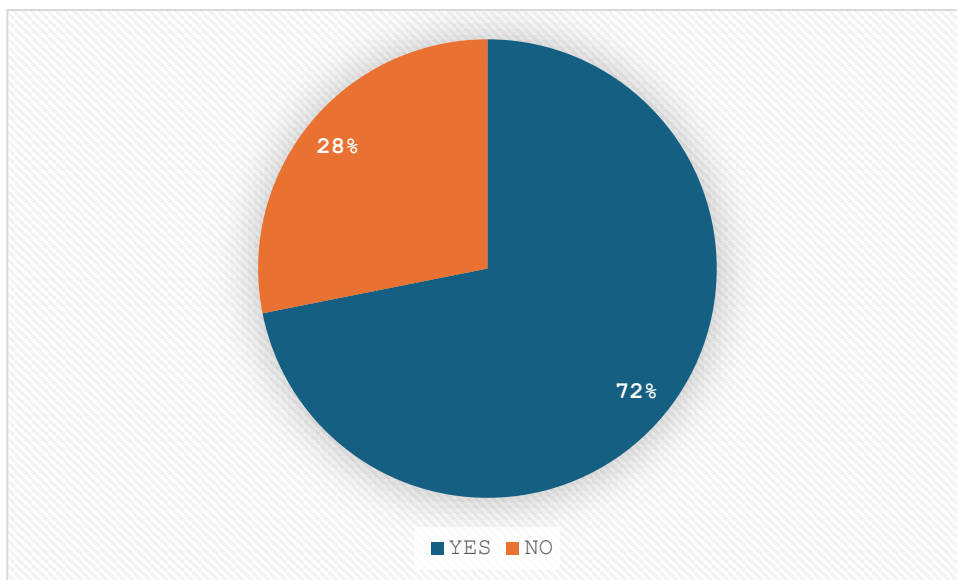
It is important to note that two participants did not respond to this item. This could be due to lack of time, forgetfulness, or personal reasons.

**2.7. Item 3: do you think that you are able to use English language appropriately in authentic contexts?**

**Table2.7**

The participants ability to use language appropriately.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	23	71.875%
No	9	28.125%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.7 The participants ability to use language appropriately.**

This item was designed to, firstly, enable learners to reflect on their own competences in using English in real-life situations based on their experiences, and secondly, to assess how well EFL

learners adjust their language use in response to the sociocultural factors that may influence their language behaviors while interacting with others.

As shown in **Table2.7 and Figure2.7**, The majority of answers (71.88%) were positive, illustrating the respondents' abilities to use the English language appropriately in authentic contexts. On the other hand, only 9 participants, or 28.125%, answered negatively.

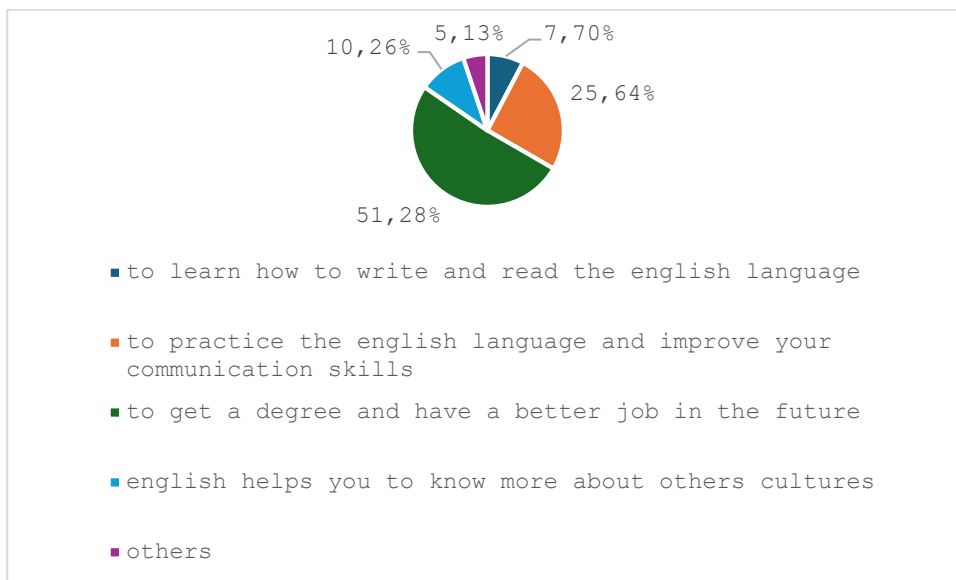
On one hand, the following distribution suggests that the majority who feel capable of using English appropriately in real life situations are likely to have a considerable level of practical proficiency outside of a controlled environment. Additionally, they might have utilized supplementary resources, practice opportunities, and personalized learning to assure effective performance of English in authentic contexts. On the other hand, the 9 participants who exhibit inability in using English appropriately need additional and supportive practical experiences that can address their concerns, raise their confidence, and enhance their abilities of using English effectively in authentic contexts.

**2.8. Item 4: what is your main purpose behind learning English at university?**

**Table2.8**

Participants’ main purposes behind learning English at university.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
To learn how to write and read the English language	3	7.70%
To practice the English language and improve your communication skills	10	25.64%
To get a degree and have a better job in the future	20	51.28%
English helps you to know more about others cultures	4	10.26%
Others	2	5.13%
Total	39	100%



**Figure2.8 Participants’ main purposes behind learning English at university.**

This item was developed to identify the motivational factors and aspirations driving EFL students to learn English. Some participants selected more than one option based on their personal interests.

The data and graph in **Table2.8** and **Figure2.8** show that the rating on this item was 51.28% in favour of getting a degree and having a better job in the future. 25.64% of the sample opted for practicing the English language and improving their communication skills. While 10.26% chose English to help them know more about others cultures, 7.70% aimed to learn how to read and write the English language. Only a small percentage of 5.13% specified other reasons including academic purposes.

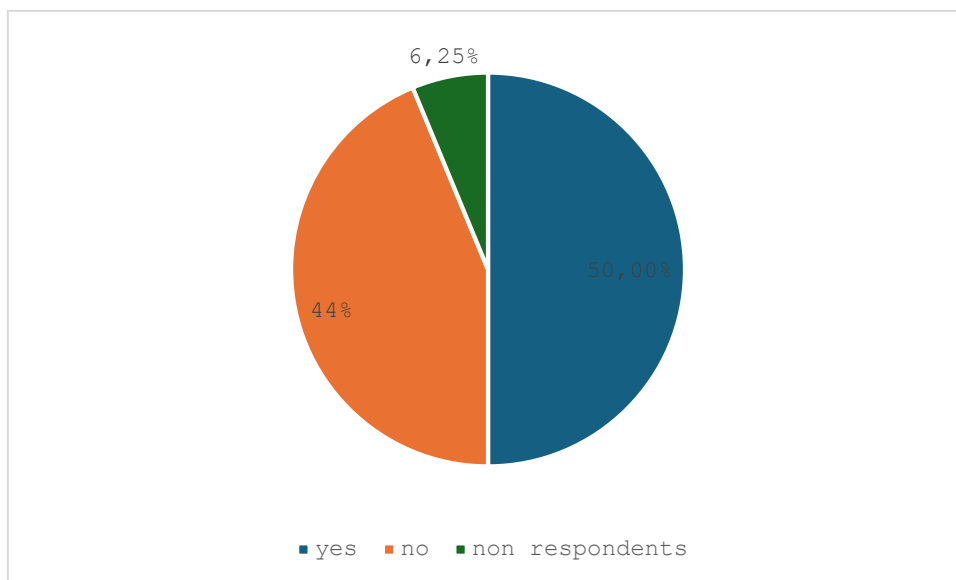
This suggests that securing better career opportunities is the primary motivation for most participants which mainly indicates that they regard English as a crucial factor for professional growth. Another significant portion of the sample studying English aimed at improving their practical language skills such as communication. This demonstrates that there exists an awareness of the importance of using English language effectively to accomplish both personal and professional objectives.

**2.9. Item 5: Do you think that the teaching methods employed at the University help to communicate effectively in authentic contexts?**

**Table2.9**

Respondents' opinions about the effectiveness of university teaching methods in communicating within authentic setting.

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Yes	16	50%
No	14	43.75%
Non respondents	2	6.25%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.9 Respondents' opinions about the effectiveness of university teaching methods in communicating within authentic setting.**

This item was designed to check the respondents' beliefs of the effectiveness of the teaching methods in real world situations. It helps researchers to know whether the methods are used to prepare students adequately for real life situations or not.

As shown in **Table2.9**, 50% believe that the teaching methods help them to communicate effectively in authentic settings whereas 43.75% do not believe so. It is important to mention that

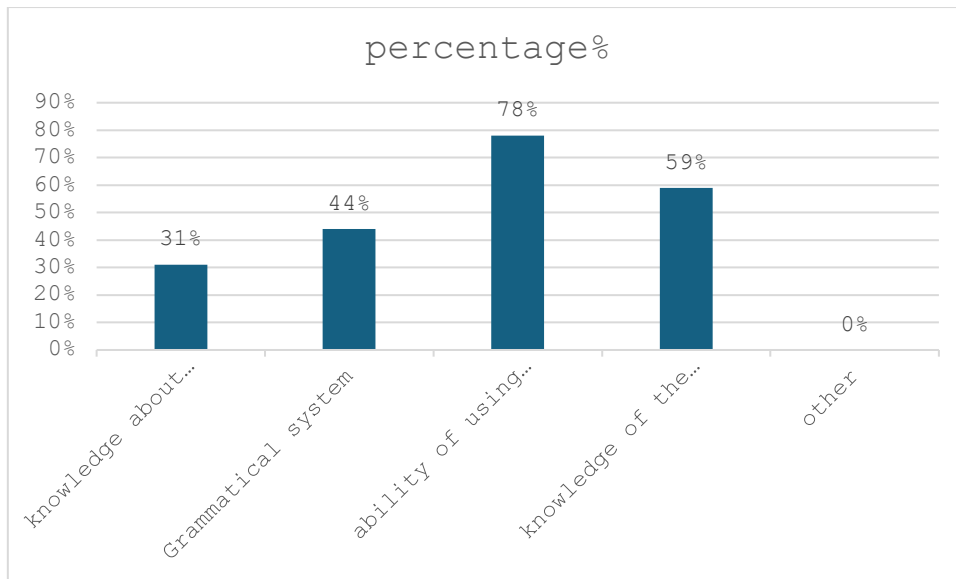
two participants did not answer. This could be attributed time constraints, lack of motivation or simply forgetfulness.

**2.1.Item 6: According to you, what are the most important elements that should be acquired to develop your communicative competence? (You can choose more than one option)**

**Table2.10**

Respondents' point of view on the key elements to develop communicative competence

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Knowledge about phonology, morphology and syntax</b>	10	31.25
<b>Grammatical system</b>	14	43.75%
<b>Ability of using English appropriately</b>	25	78.12%
<b>Knowledge of the sociocultural rules of the target language</b>	19	59.37%
<b>Other.</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	68	100%



**Figure2.10 Respondents' point of view on the key elements to develop communicative competence**

This item was designed to gather data about the key components they think are vital for improving their communicative competence. When participants are allowed to select multiple options, researchers can understand the diverse perspectives on what can help in improving their communicative competence.

As presented and illustrated in **Table2.10**, 78.1% think that the ability of using English appropriately helps in developing communicative competence, 59.37% think that knowledge of the sociocultural rules of the target language assists in enhancing the communicative competence, 43.75% believe that the grammatical system is crucial in improving the communicative competence and 31.25% see that knowledge about phonology, morphology and syntax aids in developing the communicative competence.

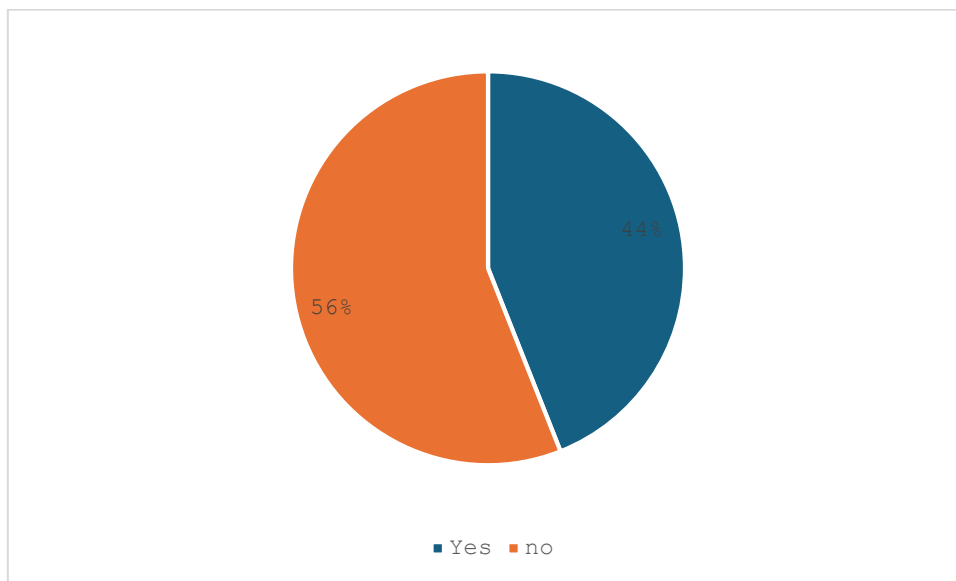
### Section 3

#### 2.2.Item1: Is there in your family who speaks English?

**Table2.11**

Respondents' answers about their language environment within their family.

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Yes	14	43.75%
No	18	56.25%
<b>Total</b>	32	100%



**Figure2.11 Respondents' answers about their language environment within their family.**

The purpose behind designing this item is to check the presence of English speakers among the respondents' families. It provides insights about the language environment and exposure to English because the latter can have an influence on language proficiency and communication skills.

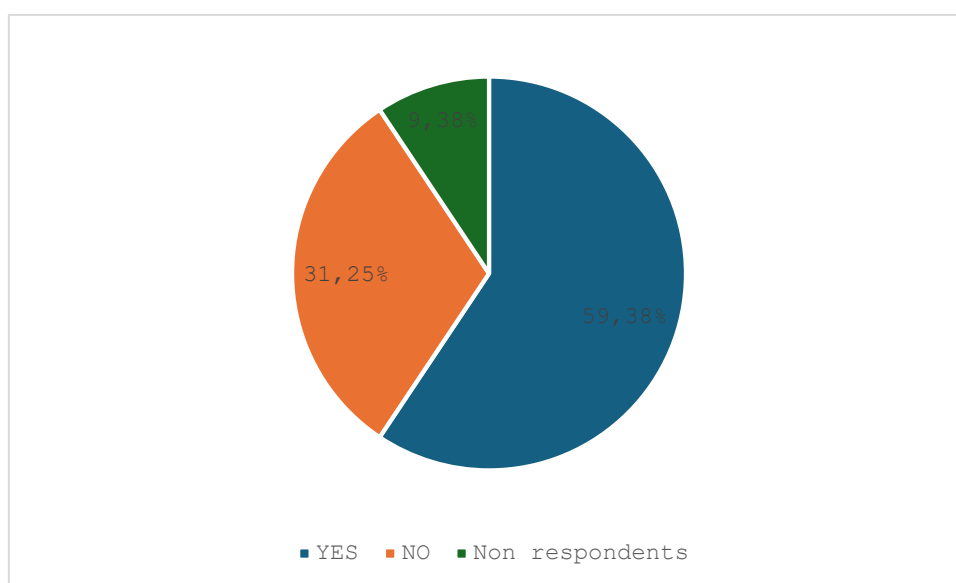
The data and pie chart in **Table2.11** and **Figure2.11** revealed that 56.2% do not have someone who speaks English in their family but 43.7% do have a person who speaks English in their family.

**2.3.Item 2 Do you think that parents educational background can have an impact on learners’ communicative competence? Explain please.**

**Table 2.12**

Participants beliefs about the impact of parents’ educational background on communicative competence

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	59.375%
No	10	31.25%
Non respondents	3	9.375%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.12 Participants beliefs about the impact of parents’ educational background on communicative competence**

This item helps gain qualitative insights into the diverse perceptions regarding the role of parents in shaping communicative competence, specifies some factors that influence participants' language acquisition, and shows how family background, socioeconomic status, and cultural standards contribute to the language proficiency of EFL learners.

The data in **Table 2.12** and **Figure 2.12** demonstrates participants' beliefs about the impact of parents' educational background on communicative competence. The distribution reveals that out of 32 participants, 19 (59.375%) strongly believe that parents' educational background has a significant impact on learners' communicative competence, while 10 (31.25%) do not share this belief. Additionally, there were 3 (9.375%) individuals who did not respond due to not having a clear opinion or feeling undecided on the matter. They might also have felt indifferent to the question, making it irrelevant to their beliefs.

The 19 participants who have affirmed the impact provided several justifications for their answers. Firstly, they elucidated that parents are the core and foremost source of motivation, providing psychological and emotional support for their children. Furthermore, they highlighted the encouraging role of parents in contributing significantly to constructing a child's cognitive competence as well as creating a promotive and conducive learning environment in which children receive essential language input. Hence, these factors collectively suggest that the 19 participants hold that the educational background of parents possesses a positive impact on learners' communicative competence.

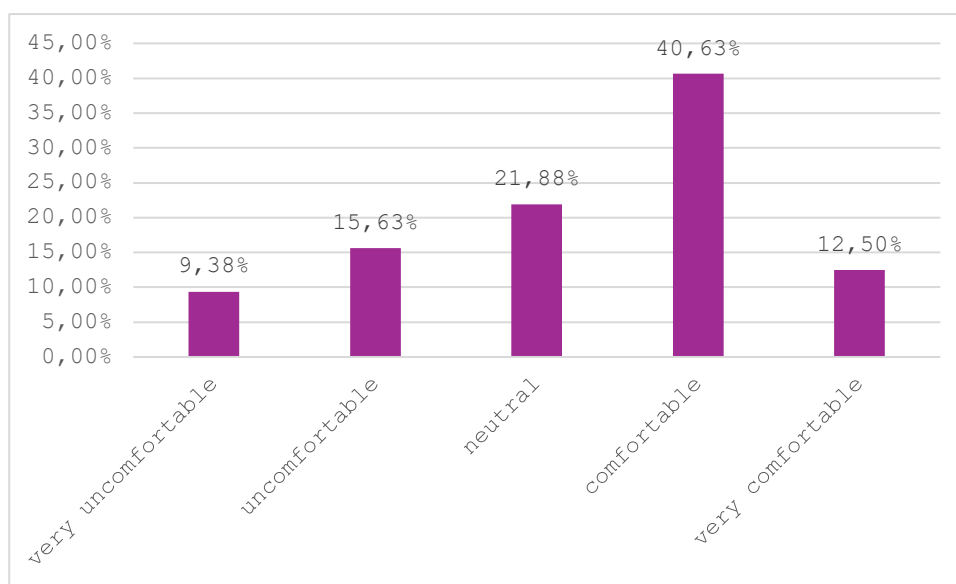
Conversely, the participants, comprised of 10 and have responded No, argued that individual learning can also be effective and lead to fruitful outcomes. They believed that learners can acquire communicative competence without the need for any external motivators, presuming that parents' educational background has no substantial effect. Besides, they contended that self-initiated endeavors and intrinsic motivation can result in increased and rewarding outcomes.

### 2.4.Item3 How comfortable do you feel communicating in English within you community?

**Table2.13**

Participants' comfort levels communicating English within their community.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very uncomfortable	3	9.375%
Uncomfortable	5	15.625%
Neutral	7	21.875%
Comfortable	13	40.625%
Very comfortable	4	12.5%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.13 Participants' comfort levels communicating English within their community.**

This item indicates the learners' self-reported comfort levels and confidence while communicating in English in real-life situations outside the classroom.

The data gathered from **Table2.13** and **Figure2.13** suggests that the majority of participants, consisting of 13 individuals (40.625%), feel comfortable, with an additional 12.5% feeling very

comfortable. A smaller percentage of participants, 9.375%, feel very uncomfortable, while 15.625% declared feeling uncomfortable. The remaining 21.875% of respondents feel neutral or undecided regarding their comfort in communication.

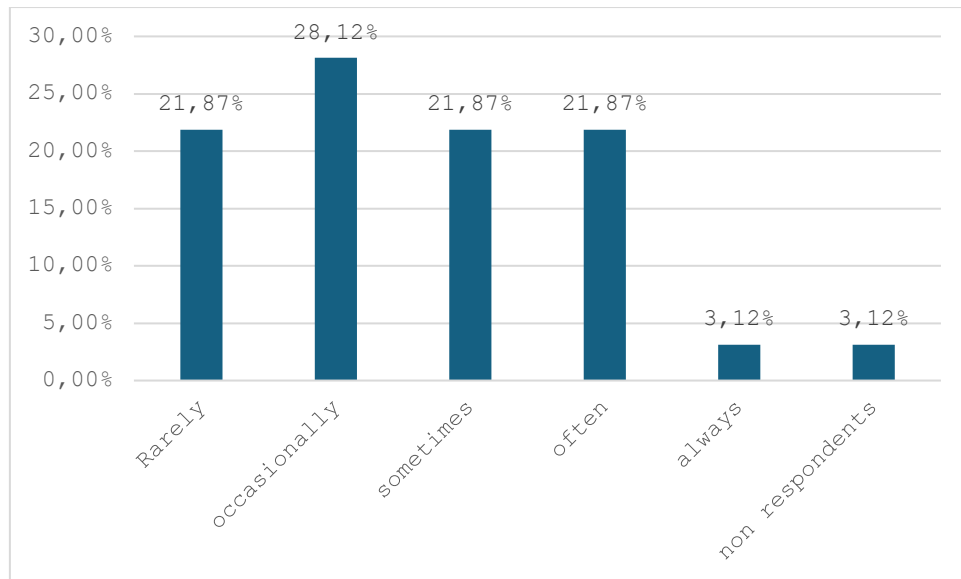
This distribution suggests that while the majority feel comfortable communicating in English within their community, a significant portion revealed experiences of discomfort or neutrality among EFL Master 1 learners in this regard. This illustrates that individuals' experiences and attitudes towards English communication are multiple and diverse.

**2.5.Item 4: How often do you encounter language barriers when communicating in English with peers within your community?**

**Table2.14**

Respondents' answers about the encountered barriers while communicating in English with their peers.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Rarely</b>	7	21.87%
<b>Occasionally</b>	9	28.12%
<b>Sometimes</b>	7	21.87%
<b>Often</b>	7	21.87%
<b>Always</b>	1	3.12%
<b>Non respondents</b>	1	3.12%
<b>Total</b>	32	100%



**Figure2.14 Respondents answers about the encountered barriers while communicating in English with their peers**

The aim behind designing this question is to understand the frequency and challenges students face while communicating in English within their local social circle.

The data and graph in **Table2.14** and **Figure2.14** show that 28.12% of the respondents occasionally come across language barriers, 22.87% of them seldom face language barriers, and 21.87%of them sometimes and often face such challenges and only 3.12% always encounter language barriers.

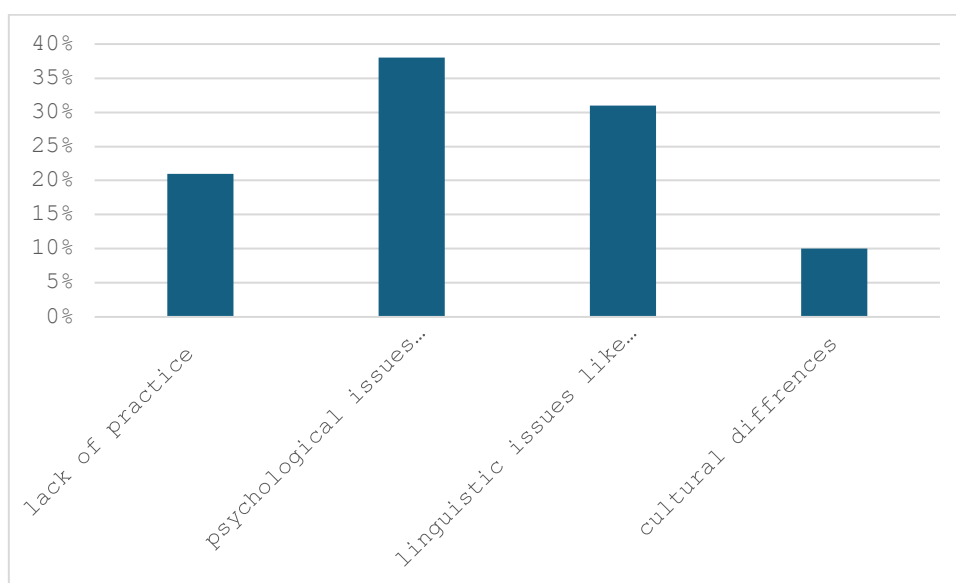
It is important to note that one participant did not answer this item. This could be due to lack of motivation, time or personal reasons.

**2.6.Item 5: What are the main barriers you have faced as you develop your communication skills?**

**Table2.15**

Respondents' answers about the main barriers they faced when developing communication skills.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Lack of practice</b>	9	21,42%
<b>Psychological issues like anxiety and shyness</b>	16	38,09%
<b>Linguistic issues like poor vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.</b>	13	30,95%
<b>Cultural differences</b>	4	9,52%
<b>Total</b>	42	100%



**Figure2.15 Respondents' answers about the main barriers they faced when developing communication skills.**

This item was designed to identify the main obstacles students encounter while enhancing their communication skills. It assists researchers to identify common barriers and areas which require improvement.

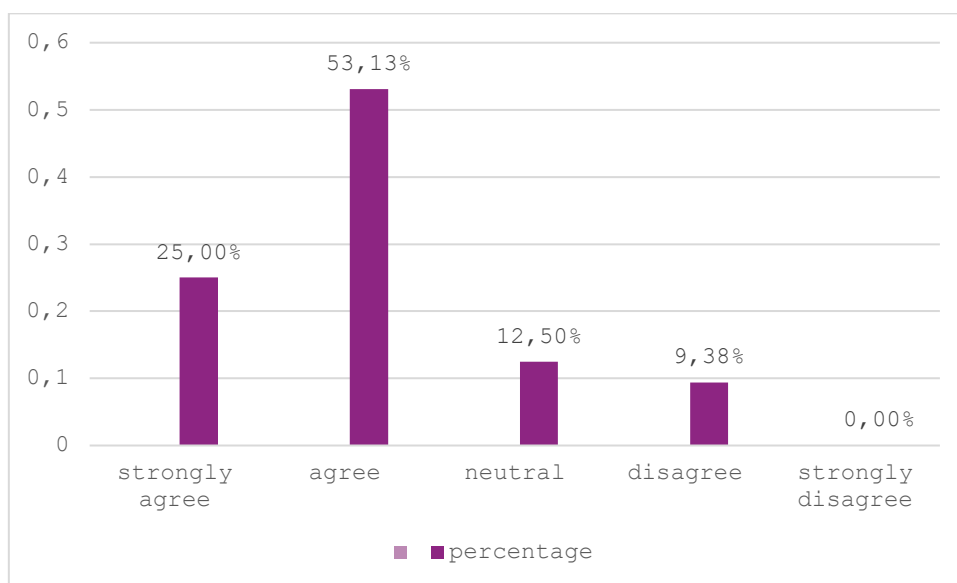
As it is presented in **Table2.15** and **Figure2.15**, 50% of the respondents face psychological issues, 40% of respondents encounter linguistic difficulties, 28% suffer from lack of practice and 12% face cultural differences.

**2.7.Item 6: Do you believe your English language proficiency affects your ability to communicate effectively?**

**Table2.16**

Participants beliefs about the impact of language proficiency on effective communication

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	8	25%
Agree	17	53.125%
Neutral	4	12.5%
Disagree	3	9.375%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.16Participants beliefs about the impact of language proficiency on effective communication.**

This item aims to provide measurable data on students’ beliefs and attitudes concerning the impact of their English language proficiency levels on their communication effectiveness, as well as to understand the extent to which students feel confident about their English language skills.

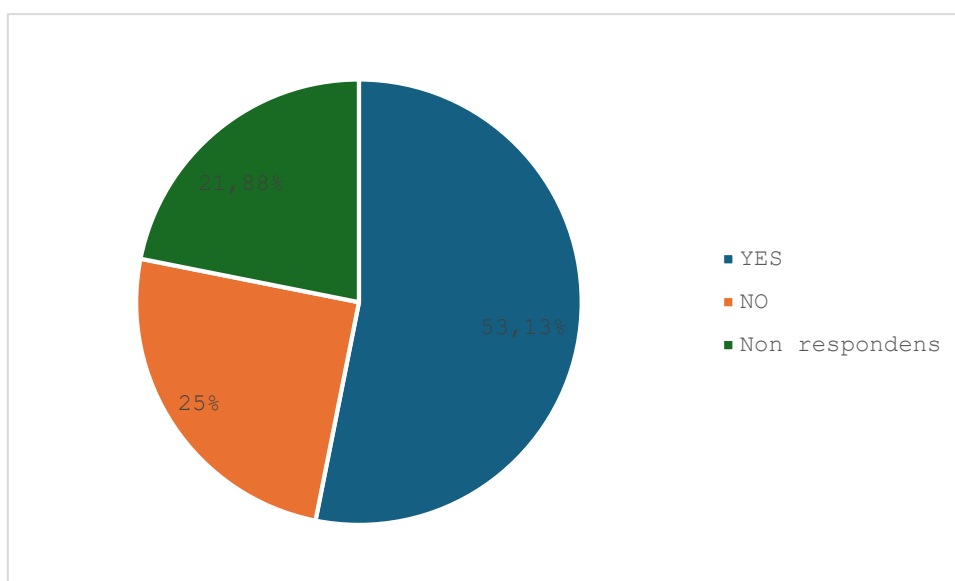
Again, rating perfectly, as illustrated in **Table2.16** and **Figure2.16**, the majority of respondents with a percentage of 53.125% agree that English language proficiency affects the ability to communicate effectively, exactly 25% of the students showing strong agreement. Only 3 disagree with this notion, and 4 participants reported having a neutral stance. Therefore, the data sheds light on participants recognition of the significant influence of English language proficiency on effective communication which may stem from their communicative experiences. They believe that there is a strong correlation between English language proficiency and ability to communicate effectively, implying that proficient EFL learners often feel confident and comfortable while expressing themselves in English. In contrast, the presence of a small percentage of neutral and disagreement responses signifies the various beliefs regarding the extent to which English language proficiency impacts effective communication.

**2.8.Item7 Have you ever felt misunderstood? Why?**

**Table2.17**

Participants experiences of feeling misunderstood

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	53.125%
No	8	25%
Non respondents	7	21.875%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.17 Participants' experiences of feeling misunderstood.**

following item provides valuable insights into the various types of challenges encountered by EFL Master 1 in communication practices so as to uncover the common barriers along with the contextual factors that may hinder effective communication among the participants.

Based on the data presented in **Table2.17** and **Figure2.17**, it is illustrated that 53.125% have experienced misunderstanding while communicating in English in their daily lives. This indicates that feeling misunderstood while using English to communicate is a shared experience among EFL learners. Conversely, 25 % of the sample have never felt misunderstood, offering insights into feasible successful and productive communication strategies and individual differences that distinguish between learners' levels of English proficiency. Surprisingly, 21.875% did not answer the question inasmuch as they lacked sufficient knowledge about the item or it could be due to their feelings of discomfort with the inclination hold within the question.

The 19 participants who responded affirmatively introduced multiple reasons for these daily misunderstandings. Firstly, a prevalent dilemma between EFL learners is lack of proficiency, with participants stating that restricted set of vocabularies and deficient grammar knowledge hindered their aptitudes to transmit their ideas and feelings effectively. Secondly, they noted that spelling

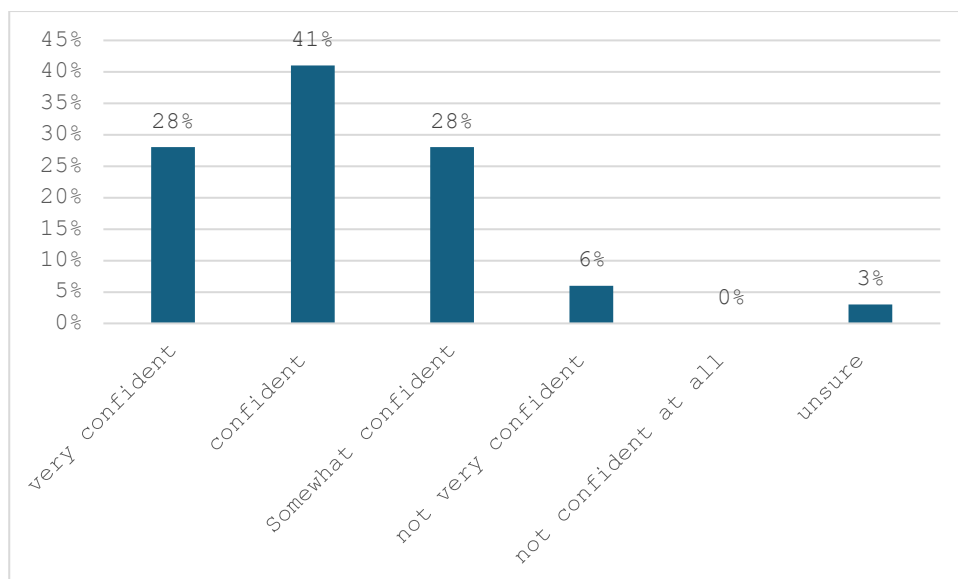
errors often caused confusion since they may change the intended meaning delivered by the speaker, leading to further misunderstandings. Thirdly, respondents demonstrated a critical distinction between the denotative and connotative meanings as one word can have different meanings when used in various contexts. Additionally, word choice posed difficulties among EFL learners. Selecting convenient lexical items that comply with the diverse social norms and cultural expectations is necessary to achieve effective communication. Lastly, cultural differences around the globe was highlighted in their answers as understanding another cultures communication norms and developing a fundamental intercultural competence are vital for ensuring clarity and avoiding misinterpretations. Hence, all these factors are faced by EFL learners while they attempt to communicate with others using English as the central tool.

**2.9.Item 8: How confident are you in your ability to express yourself in English?**

**Table2.18**

Respondents’ answers about their confidence level in expressing their selves in English.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Very confident</b>	7	28.125%
<b>Confident</b>	13	40.625%
<b>Somewhat confident</b>	9	28.125%
<b>Not very conditional</b>	2	6.25%
<b>Not confident at all</b>	0	0%
<b>Unsure</b>	1	3.125%
<b>Total</b>	32	100%



**Figure2.18 Respondents’ answers about their confidence level in expressing their selves in English.**

The aim behind designing this question is to check students’ assurance level while communicating and expressing in English. It helps the researchers understand respondents’ comfort and belief in their skills to deliver the meaning in the English language.

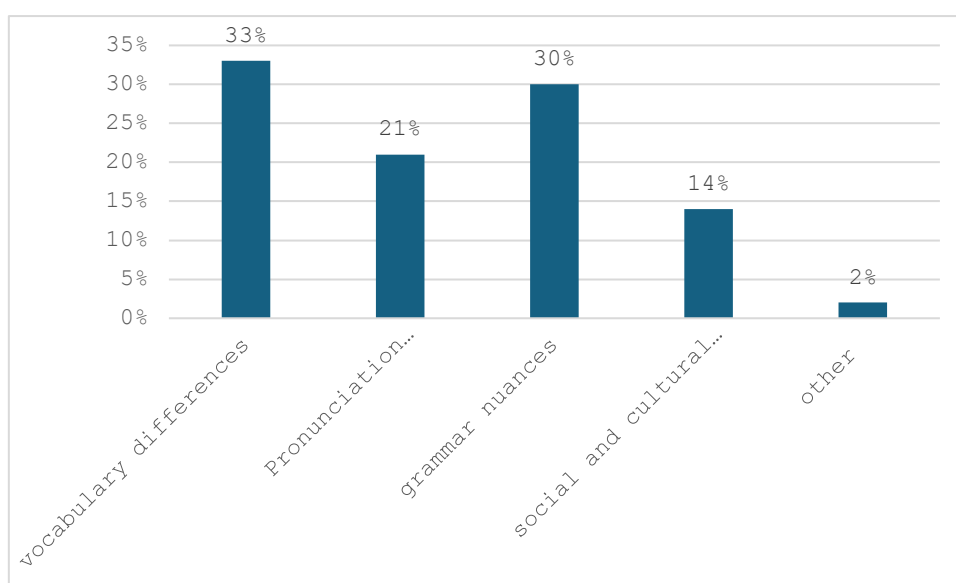
As it is demonstrated in **Table2.18**, 40% of respondents feel confident to express in English, 28% feel very confident, 28% feel somewhat confident, 6 % of them do not feel very confident, 3% of them feel unsure and no one of them do not feel confident at all.

**2.10. Item 9: Have you experienced any of these challenges when communicating in English?**

**Table2.19**

Respondents experience with certain challenges while communicating in English

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Vocabulary differences	14	32.55%
Pronunciation differences	9	20.93%
Grammar nuances confusion	13	30.23%
Social and cultural differences	6	13.95%
Other (please specify)	1	2.32%
Total	43	100%



**Figure2.19 Respondents' experience with certain challenges while communicating in English**

This item was designed to collect data about certain difficulties individuals may face when communicating in English. When researchers identify specific challenges as vocabulary differences or social cultural differences, they can provide support and suggest solutions.

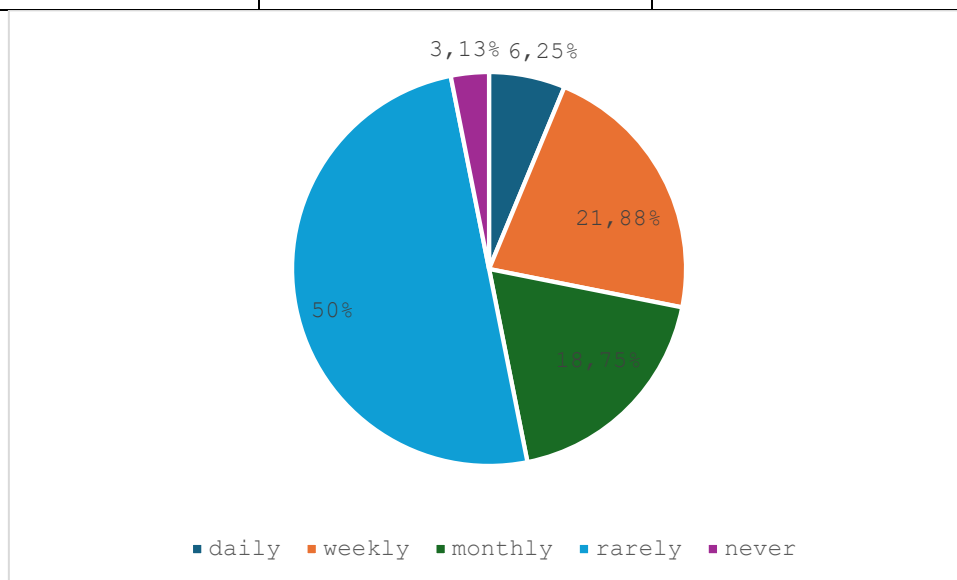
As it is demonstrated in **Table2.19**, 46% of respondents face vocabulary differences, 43% encounter grammar nuances confusion, 28% come across pronunciation differences, 20% face social and cultural differences and 3% face other unspecified challenges.

**2.11. Item10: How frequently do you engage in activities to improve your English language skills within your Algerian community?**

**Table2.20**

Participants’ engagement rates in activities to improve their English language skills.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	2	6.25%
Weekly	7	21.875%
Monthly	6	18.75%
Rarely	16	50%
Never	1	3.125%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.20 Participants’ engagement rates in activities to improve their English language skills.**

This item is designed to investigate the extent to which participants actively seek opportunities to enhance their English language skills and competences by undertaking varied

activities outside the classroom. Additionally, the item sheds light on the accessibility and availability of multifaceted resources within the local context.

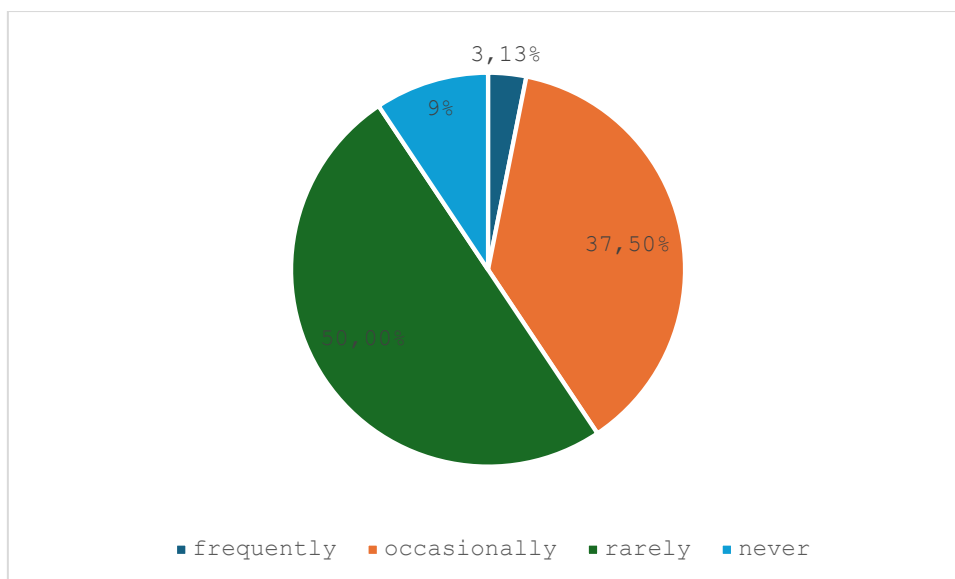
As revealed in **Table2.20** and **Figure2.20**, the rating on this item was perfectly 50% in favor of engaging rarely in activities to improve the English language skills within the Algerian community. On the other hands, the other half of the sample is divided between daily (6.25%), weekly (21.875%), and monthly with a percentage of 18.75%. However, only one participant never participates in similar activities.

**2.12. Item11 How often do you seek assistance or guidance in improving your English language skills within your Algerian community?**

**Table2.21**

Participants' frequency of seeking assistance to improve their English language skills.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	1	3.125%
Occasionally	12	37.5%
Rarely	16	50%
Never	3	9.375%
Total	32	32



**Figure2.21 Participants’ frequency of seeking assistance to improve their English language skills.**

This item outlines the existence of a support network that assist EFL Master 1 learners in developing their English language skills and competences.

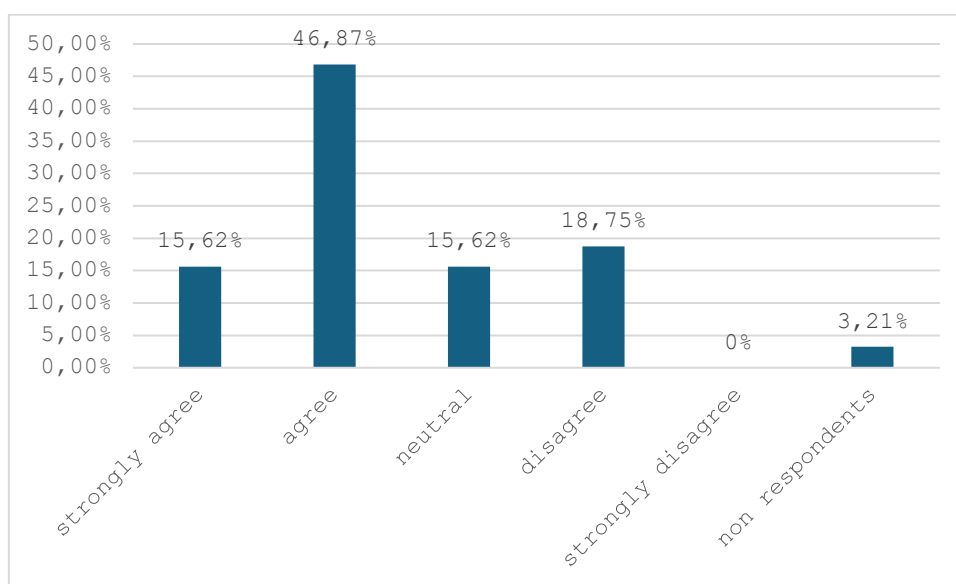
The distribution displayed in **Table2.21** and **Figure2.21** demonstrates that 16 participants (50%) rarely seek assistance from the surrounding environment, while 12 others (37.5%) occasionally ask for guidance. Moreover, 3 participants (9.375%) never seek help, and only one participant frequently seeks assistance.

**2.13. Item 12: Do you believe societal norms and expectations in Algeria affect your English language communication! within your community?**

**Table2.22**

Respondents' beliefs about how societal norms and expectations in Algeria influence English language communication.

Options	Frequencies	Percentage %
Strongly agree	5	15.62%
Agree	15	46.87%
Neutral	5	15.62%
Disagree	6	18.75%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Non respondents	1	3.21%
Total	32	100%



**Figure2.22 Respondent' beliefs about how societal norms and expectations in Algeria influence English language communication.**

The purpose behind designing this question is check the influence of cultural norms and societal expectations on individuals' English language communication in Algeria.

**Table 2.22** shows that 46.87% of respondents agree that societal norms and expectations have an impact on their English language communication, 18.75% disagree, 15.62 % strongly agree, 15.62% are neutral. It is important to mention that one participant did not answer this item. This could be due to time constraints, lack of motivation or forgetfulness.

### **3. Results and discussion**

The primary data obtained from using a comprehensive semi structured questionnaire in this study aspires to shed light on the inevitable impact of sociocultural factors on Master 1 EFL learners' ability to communicate effectively and meaningfully in diverse and authentic contexts given the global predominance of English language. This part of the methodological chapter seeks to address the thorough discussion of the findings by unraveling the sociocultural factors hindering Master 1 EFL learners communication, examining their influence, and exploring the learners' perceptions on the matter. To achieve this aim, the research study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the main sociocultural factors that hinder effective communication among Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila university?
2. How do sociocultural factors influence (or manifest as challenges) the verbal and written communication skills of Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila university?
3. What are the perceptions of Master 1 learners regarding the influence of sociocultural factors on their academic achievements?

From the data analysis section, it became apparent that Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at Msila university have demonstrated noticeably high and well-rounded understanding and familiarity with the concept of communicative competence, recognizing the fact that being a competent language user encompasses more than linguistic accuracy, it covers adaptability of language use to align with the cultural norms and social expectations which determines its

appropriateness to the context as confirmed by Hymes (1972). Moreover, as it was revealed in **Table2.7** and **Figure2.7**, The majority of respondents (71.88%) believe in their abilities to use English language appropriately in authentic contexts while in **Table2.13** and **Figure2.13** suggests that the majority of participants, consisting of 13 individuals (40.625%), feel comfortable communicating in English within their community. Thus, meaning that EFL learners employ communication strategies and practice opportunities to ameliorate their communicative competence. Besides, this efficiency is attributed to the extensive use of authentic materials inside or outside classrooms that expose them to natural language output, raise their confidence, and boost their motivation. This aligns with what investigated by Nadhim (2018) who adopted a study to explore the effect of using authentic materials on developing undergraduate EFL students' communicative competence in which the results revealed that using authentic materials in teaching and learning the communicative aspects of language is one of the best practical opportunities for English language learners who strive to perform English appropriately without fear or hesitation.

In **Table2.1** **Figure2.1**, it is shown that there is a clear preference for English among participants since the majority, 75%, chose English as a first choice. The results, also, indicate that a substantial 51.28% of the total sample study English at university for the sake of getting a degree and having a better job in the future, claiming that after university, students will be qualified to take part in the state service. However, a research study carried by Belaid and Sarnou (2019) concluded that knowledge that is introduced at university is insufficient to be used in the workplace especially for those who chose teaching as a career. Therefore, EFL students in Algerian universities need to have adequate training before and after graduation.

Additionally, it is apparent that in **Table2.3** and **2.4** and **Figure2.3** and **2.4**, the parent's educational background is good because most of them are educated. This result reflects positively on the participants' competence and confidence in English expression abilities and communication. Moreover, when participants were asked about their beliefs regarding the role of parents' educational

background on their communicative competence, 19 out of 32 respondents are convinced that parents motivate their children, provide psychological and emotional support, and construct a cooperative learning environment. This belief is strongly supported by Vygotsky's theories of both scaffolding and cooperative learning. The former entails providing support during the early stages of learning in which caregivers model, train, and evaluate. The latter pertains to the valuable peer interaction that gets children work together and help each other learn and provide models for each other. Unexpectedly, a significant portion of the sample comprised of 10 participants argued that individualized learning along with self-driven efforts are sufficient and requisite to achieve successful outcomes without the need for others help and support. This is explicitly highlighted in **Table2.21** and **Figure2.21** where half of the sample rarely seek assistance and guidance from their surrounding environment and 9.375% never seeks help while the others ask for help more frequently than others as well as the data presented in **Table18** and **Figure18** that illustrates that half of the sample rarely engage in activities to improve their English language skills.

Remarkably, these factors may lead to unsatisfactory social and cultural barriers, among them the following; firstly, EFL learners may overlook social interaction opportunities that provide feedback and cultural nuances and knowledge that assist in performing English language in real life contexts. Secondly, avoiding cooperative learning may decrease problem solving skills as well as their self-motivation and persistence on the long term since relationships and networks boot personal and professional development. Moreover, learners who learn in isolation meet difficulties in adapting to new cultural norms and social behaviors. Therefore, building intercultural communicative competence necessitates social interaction as mentioned earlier that intercultural communication refers to the communication between people from two different cultures. All these barriers manifest as challenges that hinder language proficiency. The latter affects their ability to communicate effectively. This is apparent in their responses in **Table2.16** and **Figure2.16** where the majority

believe that their levels of proficiency has a greater influence on their communication abilities and skills.

Another sociocultural barrier is lack of practicing English with the local environment. **Table2.11** and **Figure2.11** demonstrate that the bigger portion of participants, 56%, do not have someone who speaks English in their family. Thus, the majority of the population do not speak English with their families, they do not receive linguistic or social support to ameliorate their English with their small circle. The latter might influence negatively on the learner's ability to communicate since he has no one at home to practice English with.

Furthermore, **Table2.19** and **Figure2.19** show that a significant portion experience difficulties related to vocabulary differences, grammar nuances and a very small proportion face pronunciation differences and social and cultural differences while communicating in English. Kitouni and Mecharah (2018) confirm in their study that EFL students encounter vocabulary challenges while learning. Additionally, Kifli and Nasution (2023) validate grammar challenges that are encountered by learners. Also, Chadi and Benchikh (2021/2022) affirm the impact of the sociocultural factors on EFL learners' oral performance.

Besides, in **Table2.15** and **Figure2.15**, it is revealed that significant portion of participants face psychological issues, followed by linguistic difficulties, lack of practice and cultural differences. Taban Khudhur Omar (2023) proves that students have obstacles in EFL speaking classrooms like fear, shyness and limited vocabulary knowledge.

Lastly, the data in **Table2.17** and **Figure2.17** indicated that the dominant portion of the sample have experienced misunderstandings. According to their justifications, the most crucial factor that cause misinterpretations is the choice of words that sometimes do not conform to the various social and cultural norms together with the contextualized meaning of words.

#### **4. Limitations**

Although the study has yielded results that both successfully support and confirm the accuracy of the hypotheses set at the beginning of the research project and has attained the targeted objectives, it is conceivable to state that similar to most research initiatives, the current study entitled *Investigating Sociocultural Barriers in Communication Encountered by Master 1 EFL Learners Majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University* has the tendency to be prone to several limitations that may potentially affect its validity. To begin, one remarkable limitation of this study is the insufficiency of time. The timeframe allocated to conduct the methodological chapter restrained the possibility of having both a pilot study and the main study given that Master 1 students were occupied with the period of final exams, in addition, the sample was specific which includes only Master 1 EFL learners majoring in linguistics. Moreover, participants collaboration to complete the questionnaire was another challenging limitation. Although the total sample at the beginning reached 32 participants, the responses gathered by the researchers showed that some participants either disregarded some items in the questionnaires or provided incomplete, superficial, and brief answers. This may account for participants varying levels of proficiency to fully understand the questions and respond thoroughly. Therefore, such unwillingness hindered the richness of the data and the robustness of the study findings.

#### **5. Pedagogical implications**

This research study demonstrates several pedagogical implications that can predominantly foster EFL learning in higher education:

- Educators should raise learners' awareness regarding the importance of developing their communicative competences which incorporates not only linguistic competence but also social and cultural competence.
- Teachers should vary the classroom activities to improve students' everyday language skills and interests.
- Teachers ought to ensure the existence of authentic materials that exhibit different cultural standards of English-speaking countries.
- As mentioned previously in literature review, teachers should employ various approaches and methods to integrate culture as a fifth skill in the educational system.
- The inclusion of language and culture should be perceived as a separate module to give more importance among EFL learners.

## **6. Recommendations for future research**

- Reconsidering both the positive and negative impact of sociocultural factors on English communication.
- Acknowledging the role of the sociocultural factors in the learning process.
- Consulting Algerian researchers and specialists in the field of teaching English communication and taking advantage of their expertise on the subject matter.
- Introducing the significance of sociocultural factors on learning a language to both students and teachers.
- Introducing new methods and approaches of teaching and learning a foreign language that include the consideration of the sociocultural factors while learning.
- Proposing modern methods to take advantage of the positive impact of the sociocultural factors on English communication and attempting to control its negative impact.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has addressed the methodological approaches aimed to investigate the main sociocultural barriers that influence communication abilities and skills among Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University. The discussion of the results revealed the answers to the research questions designed at the beginning of the study and successfully supported the research hypotheses. Therefore, the findings demonstrated that the majority has a profound comprehension of the meaning of communicative competence, also, they believe to be competent language users in authentic contexts which drives them to choose English as a future career. Moreover, beliefs about the impact of parents' educational background are various. Although some agree that parents' educational background contributes significantly to their communicative competence, others disagree with the notion presented earlier.

Additionally, in response to research hypotheses, the main sociocultural barriers encountered by Master 1 EFL learners are the following; reduced social interactions, exposure, and practice, as well as, diminished problem solving skills, less motivation, and limited progress. Moreover, these obstacles include difficulties in adapting to new cultures and lifestyles which requires fostering intercultural communication competence. Finally, challenges faced in vocabulary differences, grammar nuances, pronunciation, social and cultural differences may lead to possible misunderstandings. The latter may impact language proficiency among English language users. Thus, communicative competence will be automatically influenced.

## **General conclusion**

English language holds utmost importance in today's world. It has been the dominant language that controls the globe in various human social spheres. There is a growing demand for using English appropriately and meaningfully to fulfill social requirements. Therefore, educational curriculum has stressed the importance of not only teaching the linguistic aspects of English but also providing learners with opportunities to develop their abilities and skills of performing the language in authentic context. This approach cultivates natural language use, flexibility, adaptability, and active participation in real-life tasks inside or outside classroom. However, there is a considerable number of social and cultural challenges that often hinder learners' abilities to communicate effectively. To address this issue, this study investigated the sociocultural barriers in communication encountered by Master 1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University so as to identify these sociocultural factors, examine their influence, and explore learners' perceptions and experiences on the matter.

In the theoretical chapter of this study, the first section highlighted the understanding of effective communication, and its types along with communicative competence, its historical background, its different models, willingness to communicate, and the applications of communicative competence to language teaching and learning. The second section introduced the sociocultural factors, the significance of intercultural communicative competence, the process of acculturation, and cultural misunderstandings. This section also discussed the relationship between language and culture, interlanguage theory, and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The study was conducted based on fixed method design incorporating both quantitative and a little inclusion qualitative data collection. It adopted a questionnaire, comprising of both close-ended and few open-

ended items. The participants were purposefully selected opting for linguistic branch due to their suitable time planning, availability, their representativeness, relevance, and accessibility.

Additionally, the results revealed some recommendations starting with reconsidering both the positive and negative impact of sociocultural factors on English communication , acknowledging the role of the sociocultural factors in the learning process, consulting Algerian researchers and specialists in the field of teaching English communication and taking advantage of their expertise on the subject matter, introducing the significance of sociocultural factors on learning a language to both students and teachers, introducing new methods and approaches of teaching and learning a foreign language that include the consideration of the sociocultural factors while learning, and proposing modern methods to take advantage of the positive impact of the sociocultural factors on English communication and attempting to control its negative impact.

## List of references

- Abdulrahman, N. C., & Abu-Ayyash, E. A. S. (2019). Linguistic competence, Communicative Competence and Interactional Competence. *International Journal of Computer and Technology*, 19, 7537–7552.
- Al-Mulhim, A. (2012). Interlanguage theory. Presented at the ملتقى جامعة الملك فيصل -مدويةconference.
- Arora, A. (2017). Nature and scope of English language in today's world. *International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH)*, 4(2), 199-207. Retrieved from [www.paperpublications.org](http://www.paperpublications.org)
- Atamenia, S. (2017). Enhancing learners' communicative competence through oral presentations: The case of third-year students at the University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma (Master's dissertation). Department of Letters and English Language, University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford University Press.
- Belaid, L., & Sarnou, H. (2019). STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN ALGERIAN UNIVERSITY AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES OF EMPLOYABILITY AFTER GRADUATION. *LLT Journal/LLT Journal*, 22(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v22i1.1647>
- Bennett, M. J. (2019, May 20). Intercultural communication. Intercultural Development Research Institute. <https://www.idrinstitute.org/resources/intercultural-communication/>
- Brown, H. D. (1994a). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Bukhari, S. F., Cheng, X., & Khan, S. A. (2015). Willingness to communicate in English as a second language: A case study of Pakistani undergraduates. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(29), 39-44.
- Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative pedagogy. In J. C. Richards, & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2–27). Longman.
- Canale, M. (1983). From Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy. In J. C. Richard, & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and Communication* (pp. 2-14). London: Longman.
- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). THEORETICAL BASES OF COMMUNICATIVE APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TESTING. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47.
- Chadi, A., & Benchikh, R. (2012). Impacts on learners' oral performance: Case study of 4th year students. University of BBA.

- Chakma, D. (2022). Nature of English language. Online Note Bank.
- Chen, G.-M., & Starosta, W. J. (1998-1999). A review of the concept of intercultural awareness. *Human Communication*, 2, 27-54. Retrieved from
- Daniel, I. O. A. (2018). *Communication and language skills*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Lady Stephenson Library.
- Fatimayin, F. (2018). What is communication? (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos.
- Fisher, R. (2001) *Teaching Children to Learn*. Retrieved from
- Gunterman, G. & Phillips, J.K. 1980 Communicative course design. Developing functional ability in all four skills. *Canadian Modern language review*. 329-343
- Harlig, K & Sprouse, R. A. (2018). Negative Versus Positive Transfer. In *Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0084>
- Hinner, M. B. (2017). INTERCULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS. *Vestnik Rossijskogo Universiteta Družby Narodov. Seriâ Lingvistika*, 21(4), 885–909.
- Hussein, N. O. (2017). The Effect of Using Authentic Materials on Developing Undergraduate EFL Students' Communicative Competence. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319007188\\_The\\_Effect\\_of\\_Using\\_Authentic\\_Materials](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319007188_The_Effect_of_Using_Authentic_Materials)
- Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J. Pride, & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-285). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Ilie, O. (2019). The intercultural competence. Developing effective intercultural communication skills. *International Conference Knowledge Based Organization*, 25(2), 264–268. <https://doi.org/10.2478/kbo-2019-0092>
- Informasi, L & Unsyiah, P (2016). *Communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies*.
- Kakita, R., & Palukuri, V. B. (2020a). Social and cultural factors influence on English speaking abilities. In *Advances in educational technologies and instructional design book series* (pp. 133–141).
- Klopf, D. W. (1998). *Intercultural encounters: The fundamentals of intercultural communication* (4th ed.). Englewood, CO: Morton Publishing Company.
- Lakey, P. N. (2003). Acculturation: A Review of the Literature. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 12, 103-118.

- Lantolf, J. P. (n.d.). *Introducing sociocultural theory*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from
- Littlewood, W. (2011). Communicative language teaching: An expanding concept for a changing world. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. II, pp. 541–557). Routledge.
- Lustig, M., & Koester, J. (2006). *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication across Cultures* (5th ed., p. 125). Boston, MA: Pearson and AB.
- Mahadi (2012). Language and culture. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(17), 231. Retrieved from [www.ijhssnet.com](http://www.ijhssnet.com)
- Mitrulescu, C. M. (2023). Using culture as the fifth language skill to enhance military students' EFL competence. *Land Forces Academy Review*
- Nickerson, C. (2024, February 13). Acculturation: Definition, theory & examples. *Simply Psychology*. Reviewed by S. McLeod, PhD, & O. Guy-Evans, MSc.
- Nonkukhetkhong, K., Baldauf Jr, R. B., & Moni, K. (2006). Learner centeredness in teaching English as a foreign language: Teachers' voices. Retrieved from Open Archives Initiative (OAI).
- Ohno, A. (2006). Communicative competence and communicative language teaching. Paper. Internal Publication of the Bunkyo Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan, 25-31.
- Ramakrishnan, G. (2018). The "7 C's of Communication" To improve teaching communication skills. *International Journal of Trend in Research and Development (IJTRD)*, Special Issue. ISSN: 2394-9333. Retrieved from [www.ijtrd.com](http://www.ijtrd.com)
- Ramous-Mattoussi, F., Barnes, A., Hall-Mills, S., Fesmire, M., & Mekonnen, D. (2016). *Introduction to language and linguistics*. University of Ethiopia.
- Sagatova, M (2022). The relationship between language and culture. *International journal on integrating Education*, 5(1). <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.
- Scott, S., & Palincsar, A. (n.d.). *Sociocultural theory*. Retrieved from
- Stern, H.H. 1981. "Communicative Language Teaching and Learning: Toward a Synthesis," in *The Second Language Classroom: Directions for the 1980's*, Alatis, Altman and Alatis, Eds.
- Tajfel, H. (1969a). Cognitive aspects of prejudice. *Journal of Biosocial Sciences*, Supplement No. 1, 173-191.

- Tajfel, H. (1969b). Social and cultural factors in perception. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 28-59). Addison-Wesley.
- Teng, M. F. (2019). Learner identity and learner's investment in EFL learning: A multiple case study. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 7(1), 43-60. Retrieved from <http://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir>
- Tunay, T., & Özlem, K. (2020). On the models of communicative competence. In *Proceedings of GLOBETS online: International Conference on Education, Technology And Science* (pp. 86-96).
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1979). Consciousness as a Problem in the Psychology of Behavior. *Soviet Psychology*, 17(4), 3-35.
- Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Harvard University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1972). The teaching of English as communication. *ELT Journal*, XXVII (1), 15-19.
- Widdowson, H.G. 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication*. London: Oxford University Press.
- <http://www.education.com/reference/article/sociocultural-theory/>
- <http://www.oup.com/elt>
- [https://books.google.co.id/books?id=14\\_K5WpKQaIC&pg=PR3&hl=id&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pa](https://books.google.co.id/books?id=14_K5WpKQaIC&pg=PR3&hl=id&source=gbs_selected_pa)
- <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/i.1.1>
- <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/xxvii.1.15>
- <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909>
- <https://doi.org/10.24297/ijct.v19i0.8505>
- <https://doi.org/10.2753/RPO1061-040517043>
- <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3464-9.ch016>
- <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED408634.pdf>
- <https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/10-Paul-N.-Lakey.pdf>
- <https://www.simplypsychology.org/acculturation-definition.html>

## Appendix

### Questionnaire.

#### Exploring socio-cultural barriers on communication encountered by M1 EFL learners majoring in Linguistics at M'sila University

Dear Students,

The following questionnaire investigates the sociocultural barriers hindering Master 1 EFL learner's ability to communicate at M'sila University. We would be glad if you could answer the following questions. All your responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Thank you for your collaboration.

#### **Section 1: Background questions**

1. Was English your first choice?
  - Yes
  - No
2. How many years have you been studying English?

.....  
.....

3. What is your father's educational background?
  - University
  - High school
  - Middle school
  - Primary school
  - None
4. What is your mother's educational background?
  - University
  - High school
  - Middle school
  - Primary school
  - None

#### **Section 2: Communication:**

1. What does the term communicative competence mean for you?

.....  
.....  
2. Do you think that you master the grammatical system of the English language?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you think that you are able to use the English language appropriately in authentic contexts?

- Yes
- No

4. What is your main purpose behind learning English at university?

- To learn how to write and read the English language.
- To practice the English language and improve your communicative skills.
- To get a degree and have a better job in the future.
- English helps you to know more about others' cultures.
- Other.

If other please specify

.....  
.....  
5. Do you think that the teaching methods employed at the university help to communicate effectively in authentic contexts?

- Yes
- No

Please justify your answer

.....  
.....  
6. According to you, what are the most important elements that should be acquired to develop your communicative competence? (You can choose more than one option)

- Knowledge about phonology, morphology and syntax.
- Grammatical system of the English language.
- Ability of using English appropriately.
- Knowledge of the sociocultural rules of the target language.
- Other.

If other, please specify

.....  
.....  
**Section 3: Socio-cultural factors:**

1. Is there in your family who speaks English?
  - Yes
  - No
2. Do you think that parents' educational background can have an impact on learners' communicative competence? Explain please.

.....  
.....

3. How comfortable do you feel communicating in English within your community?
  - Very uncomfortable
  - Uncomfortable
  - Neutral
  - Comfortable
  - Very comfortable
4. How often do you encounter language barriers when communicating in English with peers within your community?
  - Rarely
  - Occasionally
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always

5. What are the main barriers you have faced as you develop your communication skills?

.....  
.....

6. Do you believe your English language proficiency affects your ability to communicate effectively?
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

7. Have you ever felt misunderstood? Why ?
  - Yes
  - No

.....  
.....

8. How confident are you in your ability to express yourself in English?
  - Very confident
  - Confident
  - Somewhat confident

- Not very confident
  - Not confident at all
  - Unsure
9. Have you experienced any of these challenges when communicating in English?
- Vocabulary differences
  - Pronunciation difficulties
  - Grammar nuances confusion
  - Social and cultural differences
  - Other (please specify)
10. How frequently do you engage in activities to improve your English language skills within your Algerian community?
- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Rarely
  - Never
11. How often do you seek assistance or guidance in improving your English language skills within your Algerian community?
- Frequently
  - Occasionally
  - Rarely
  - Never
12. Do you believe societal norms and expectations in Algeria affect your English language communication within your community?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
13. Can you share any experiences where you felt a cultural mismatch between English language norms and societal norms in Algeria?
- .....
- .....

## ملخص

تتكون الأطروحة الحالية من فصلين، تهدف إلى التحقيق في العوائق الإجتماعية والثقافية في التواصل التي يواجهها طلاب الماجستير 1 في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بتخصص علم اللغة في جامعة مسيلة. تعتبر الخلفية الإجتماعية والثقافية لطلاب الماجستير 1 في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ذات أهمية بالغة في هذا البحث. لذلك، تم فحص هذه العوامل من منظور إجتماعي وثقافي لتحديد هذه العناصر واقتراح حلول للطلاب لتحسين قدراتهم في التواصل. تم إجراء الدراسة بإستخدام تصميم طريقة ثابتة، يشمل كل من البيانات الكمية والنوعية. تم إستخدام إستبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات الأولية، وتم توزيعه على 37 مشاركاً. إستخدمت هذه الدراسة طريقة هادفة لإختيار الطلاب المشاركين بناءً على تمثيلهم وصلوحياتهم وإمكانية الوصول إليهم. تؤكد نتائج هذه الدراسة أن طلاب الماجستير 1 في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية يواجهون عوائق إجتماعية وثقافية أثناء التواصل مثل قلة التفاعلات الاجتماعية والتعرض والممارسة، وكذلك قلة مهارات حل المشكلات وقلة الدافع وتقدم محدود