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Investigating Intercultural Communication Gaps in English for Occupational Purposes: A Case Study of Tourism Agencies in Ghardaïa

Dissertation Submitted to University of Ghardaia for Obtaining the Master's Degree in Didactics

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Dedication

To Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful all praise and gratitude belong to Him alone, for every blessing, every step, and every word on these pages.

To my parents, whose sacrifices I can never fully repay this work is yours as much as it is mine.

To my wife and children, the light I come home to thank you for your patience during the long evenings and the long silences. You made this possible.

To Arsenal Football Club for finally winning the Premier League and making this the best year of my life.

And to the soul of my brother Mabrouk, who left before he could see this. I carry you in everything I do. Until we meet again, insha'a Allah, in Jannah.

Fethi MABROUKI

Dedication

To my parents the foundation of everything I am. Your love, your prayers, and your sacrifices are present in every line of this work. Words fall short, but this is yours.

To my wife my steadfast companion through every moment of doubt and every late night. Your patience and your faith in me carried me further than you know.

And to all who stood by me, near or far, with a word of encouragement, a helping hand, or a quiet prayer this work belongs to you as much as it does to me.

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To all who contributed, directly or indirectly colleagues, friends, and family your encouragement mattered more than you know.To all who contributed, directly or indirectly colleagues, friends, and family your encouragement mattered more than you know.

To all of you: thank you

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Abstract

This dissertation explores intercultural communication gaps in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) encounters between tourism agency staff and international visitors in Ghardaïa, Algeria. Drawing on Hall's accounts of high- and low-context communication, proxemics, and temporal orientation, it sets out to describe the shape of these gaps, trace their likely sources, and consider what they might mean for vocational training in the sector. The study followed a descriptive, exploratory mixed-methods case study design, drawing on questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and structured observations across 17 tourism staff members and four international tourists from the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Canada, and Malaysia. The data were read thematically and descriptively, with triangulation across the three instruments used to compare what staff reported, what tourists experienced, and what was observed in situ. Patterns in the material suggest that the communication gaps emerge from the combined weight of limited spoken English and the near absence of formal intercultural training within the agencies. Relational moves such as small talk appear under-used, even in exchanges with visitors from cultures where such markers tend to carry considerable interactional weight. Tourist satisfaction seemed to track guide adaptability and language proficiency more closely than the visitor's cultural background on its own. Taken together, the observations point toward a joint linguistic-cultural shaping of communication outcomes and indicate that integrating Hall's framework into EOP training could strengthen intercultural competence among Ghardaïa's tourism workforce.

Keywords: intercultural communication, English for Occupational Purposes, Hall's theory, high-context communication, tourism, Ghardaïa, Algeria

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form	First Occurs
APA	American Psychological Association	*Ch. 2 / References*
EAP	English for Academic Purposes	*Ch. 1 — Part Two*
EFL	English as a Foreign Language	*General Introduction*
EOP	English for Occupational Purposes	*Title / Gen. Intro.*
EPP	English for Professional Purposes	*Ch. 1 — Part Two*
ESP	English for Specific Purposes	*General Introduction*
EVP	English for Vocational Purposes	*Ch. 1 — Part Two*
H1	Hypothesis 1	*General Introduction*
H2	Hypothesis 2	*General Introduction*
HC	High-Context (communication)	*Ch. 1 — Part One*
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence	*Ch. 1 — Part One*
LC	Low-Context (communication)	*Ch. 1 — Part One*
M-time	Monochronic Time Orientation	*Ch. 1 — Part One*
N	Number of participants / responses	*Ch. 3*
O1–O4	Observation records 1 to 4	*Ch. 3*
P-time	Polychronic Time Orientation	*Ch. 1 — Part One*
RQ	Research Question	*General Introduction*
S1–S17	Staff participants 1 to 17	*Ch. 3*
T1–T4	Tourist participants 1 to 4	*Ch. 3*
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	*Ch. 1 — Part Two*
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization	*Ch. 1 — Part Two*

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Tourism is, above all, a communicative industry. A face-to-face meeting of people lies at its very center, and these are people who speak different languages, have different cultures, and follow different communication styles. In such encounters, English functions not as a tool of domination but as a bridge. A bridge, however, must be understood by people on both sides of it.

Herein lies the problem. A great many English-speaking tourism employees are able to produce grammatically correct English. They command a wide vocabulary, construct well-formed sentences, and apply grammar accurately. Yet communication continues to fail. One tourism agency member explains a local custom in supposedly clear language, and the visitor turns away puzzled. The tourist raises a question that seems simple, and the employee addresses everything except what was actually asked. These are not errors in grammar or vocabulary. They are breakdowns in intercultural communication competence.

The Sahara region of Algeria in general and Ghardaïa in particular have witnessed rapid growth in international tourism in recent years. Ghardaïa is recognized for its Mozabite zone a UNESCO World Heritage site, its location at the intersection of desert trade routes, and its cultural authenticity, all of which attract visitors from Europe, North America, Asia, and more recently the Middle East. Through their cultural backgrounds, visitors bring expectations about hospitality, time, directness, formality, and personal space. What works in a hotel in Paris may not work in Ghardaïa. What counts as polite attention in Tokyo may be received as intrusion in Berlin. Tourism workers guides, agency staff, booking agents operate at the intersection of cultures, communicating in English yet often lacking the deeper cross-cultural understanding needed to navigate the invisible rules of intercultural interaction.

This situation is not new, and it is not accidental. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has long maintained that English should be taught through context. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) the branch concerned with the language needed for work goes further still. Yet EOP, like most language education, has focused primarily on functional language: booking a room, answering customer questions, giving directions. These are necessary competences, but they are not sufficient, as this research demonstrates. Intercultural communication theory, developed over several decades by scholars including Hofstede (2001), Hall (1976), Byram (1997), and Scollon and Scollon (2001), shows that communication is not only about words. Meaning is constructed through the interaction of differing cultural assumptions. When those assumptions diverge, communication gaps emerge not as theoretical abstractions but as lived experiences of frustration,

misunderstanding, embarrassment, lost business, and missed opportunities for genuine human connection.

2. Statement of the Problem

English language proficiency is widely recognized as essential for international tourism, yet many EFL professionals in emerging tourism destinations continue to face intercultural communication problems that persist and remain underexplored in the academic literature, particularly in North African contexts. The nature of this problem can be understood through several concrete patterns. Even when exchanges in English are grammatically flawless, staff members still struggle to identify what clients actually want. Clients, in turn, misread staff beh avior as rude, cold, or unhelpful when the staff member was simply following cultural norms the y considered appropriate. Language proficiency alone cannot resolve this: a highly fluent English speaker may simultaneously maintain a communication style perceived as too direct, too indirect, too formal, too casual, or too dependent on shared contextual knowledge. Staff are frequently at a loss when confronted with unspoken or implied expectations. Guests from high-context cultures expect staff to intuit their needs; guests from low-context cultures expect detailed explicit information. Cultural awareness alongside language ability is required to meet both expectations. Power relations are perceived and enacted differently across cultures. Polite indirectness, normal in one cultural context, reads as evasiveness in another. Time, punctuality, and urgency are not un iversal. What constitutes 'on time' or 'soon' varies dramatically across cultural contexts, generatin g frustration on both sides of service interactions. Humor, compliments, and personal questions carry different meanings and risks across cultures. A warmly intended compliment may be received as intrusive; humor meant to ease tension may cause offence. Non-verbal communication eye contact, physical distance, touch, silence is filtered through cultural lenses. Staff operating from one cultural norm may inadvertently convey disinterest, suspicion, or disrespect through body language alone. Intercultural communication theory is well established in the Western acad emic domain, yet empirical studies of communication gaps in non-Western tourism settings re main scarce. English language teaching literature in North Africa focuses primarily on linguistic competence or pedagogy rather than on the intercultural dynamics of the workplace (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Byram, 1997). This absence has left staff development programs, training institutions, and tourism businesses without evidence-based tools for addressing the specific inter cultural communication challenges they face.

3. Research Questions

RQ1: What types of intercultural communication gaps do tourism agency staff in Ghardaïa eperience in their English-language interactions with international visitors?

RQ2: Which cultural orientation, high-context or low-context, do staff encounter most frequently among their international guests?

4. Research Objectives

Primary objective: To investigate the causes and what comes out of communication problems between cultures. This is specifically for people who use English in their jobs, focusing on those working in tourism agencies, down in Ghardaïa, Algeria. We want to get results that are clear and have evidence, so they can help us understand the theory better and also give us some practical solutions.

Part of this means finding out exactly what kind of intercultural communication issues staff and the guests they serve run into when they are speaking English. We also need to examine the things that are behind these gaps. This includes how good someone's English is, what they know about different cultures, the kind of environment the organization provides, and any past experiences they have had with people from other cultures.

We will also inve stigate how these communication gaps impact things like how happy customers are, what they think about the quality of the service, and ultimately, how well the business does. It is important to document the strategies that tourism professionals are using right now, whether they do it on purpose or just naturally, to try and close these intercultural communication gaps.

Finally, based on all this, we need to create solid recommendations. These recommendations should help improve how well people communicate across cultures in similar tourism situations and sectors. It is about making sure people can connect effectively.

5. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated on the basis of intercultural communication theory and preliminary observation. They serve as propositions that the data will either support or complicate.

Hypothesis 1: Intercultural communication problems between agency staff and international visitors may arise less from insufficient English proficiency than from a conflict between the staff's high-context communication style and many visitors' low-context expectations.

Hypothesis 2: Low-context tourists may experience more communication difficulties than high-context tourists, because their habit of expecting explicit, detailed communication amplifies misalignment with high-context staff.

6. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive, exploratory mixed-methods case study design to investigate intercultural communication in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies. The variables it examines are the staff's and tourists' cultural-context orientation (high- versus low-context communication style), English-speaking proficiency, and prior intercultural training, considered in relation to the communication outcomes of interest: the type and frequency of intercultural communication gaps and tourist satisfaction with the service encounter. Intercultural communication problems are social phenomena, and measuring them quantitatively cannot on its own produce a thorough understanding. A case study lets us examine the tourism agencies of Ghardaïa closely, as a bounded, real-world context. The design also matches research questions about how and why something happens when the researcher has no control over the setting (Yin, 2018).

The design combines qualitative and quantitative data collection for the purpose of methodological triangulation. Qualitative methods form the main line of analysis, while two questionnaires add a descriptive layer that helps interpret and validate the qualitative findings. Four instruments gather the data: a structured questionnaire for staff at the cooperating agencies, a structured questionnaire for the international tourists, semi-structured interviews with those tourists, and a structured observation protocol that records staff-guest interactions as they occur.

At the outset, we approached more than seven tourism agencies across Ghardaïa wilaya to identify the most suitable ones and to arrange cooperation. Most handle only domestic travel and Hajj and Umrah services and have no contact with international tourists, so they were excluded. Those that agreed to take part fully became the main sites for data collection. Participants were the entire staff of the cooperating agencies together with the international tourists who had dealt with that staff in English during their visit.

The interpretive framework draws mainly on Hall's distinction between high- and low-context communication (1976), proxemics (1966), and temporal orientation (1983), extended by

Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of culture and Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. These models work as interpretive tools, not strict taxonomies. Interview and observation data undergo thematic analysis, while questionnaire data are treated descriptively to trace patterns across the larger sample.

7. Rationale and Significance

This study carries practical, pedagogical, and social significance. In practical terms, the economy of Ghardaïa, and Algeria in general, relies on tourism to a certain extent. Having fewer intercultural communication misunderstandings can lead to higher customer satisfaction, office efficiency, and better competitive positioning of tourism products in the market. The results of such research are useful to the tourism industry, to training programmes for tourism professionals, and to staff development, the kind of knowledge usually held by the practitioners who took part rather than published in specialist journals.

Pedagogically, EOP and English language teaching programs can take the results from the research to create the curriculum which suit the specifically intercultural challenges tourism professionals are met with; they can redirect the focus from functional language to intercultural interpretation and pragmatic awareness. It is in line with modern language teaching that gives emphasis to communicative competence rather than grammatical accuracy.

Socially, tourism builds human relations across cultural boundaries. When intercultural communication breaks down, negative stereotypes get strengthened and the chances for genuine understanding are missed. On the contrary, successful communication creates unforgettable experiences and produces mutual respect. Enhancing intercultural communication in tourism is a small but significant contribution to cross-cultural encounters becoming more connected.

8. Limitations of the Study

Any research has limits. It is good to speak honestly about them.

Time: Usually, a thesis is prepared over a period of 3 to 6 months, I am afraid that the period of this research was about 1 month. Due to this short period, we were only able to conduct interviews with four foreign tourists. If there had been more time, I believe we could have observed and interviewed a greater number of participants.

Limited organizational support: Many of the agencies expected to carry out the survey did not cooperate with us. Public and government organizations in particular, were not cooperative.

Some private agencies were willing but had limited capacity. Therefore, the sample is representative only of the agencies that cooperated but may not be representative of all of the agencies involved in intercultural communication in the tourism sector in Ghardaïa.

Restricted observational access: It is limiting to not have opportunity to observe the whole duration of tourist agency group, due to the security procedures of the process of tourist movements, scattered movement of tourist agencies in certain areas of Ghardaïa, the short period of this study and the confinement of our resources, we were only able to observe the factors thought to be associated with gaps in intercultural communication in specific moments and at certain places in the agency premises.

Agency specialization: Most of the tourism agencies and hotels visited were specialized only in the fields of Umrah, Hajj and domestic travel, and they do not contact foreign tourists. This limited the number of participants of the study, therefore we only were able to interview four foreign tourists, which, of course, is a small number for quantitative work, but acceptable for communication research.

9. Structure of the Dissertation

This study comprises three chapters, framed by a General Introduction and a General Conclusion.

The General Introduction provides the academic and professional orienting context to the research. The background, the problem statement, the research questions, the objectives, the hypotheses, the research design, the rationale, the limitations and the study's structure are presented.

Chapter One develops the theoretical perspective: intercultural communication, English for occupational purposes and the tourism sector as a cross-cultural service industry. The framework of Hall (1976, 1966, 1983) is substantially expounded and augmented with Hofstede (2001), Byram (1997) and Scollon and Scollon (2001).

Chapter Two fully expounds the methodological perspective: the descriptive, exploratory mixed-methods case study research design, the researcher's position, the participants, the four instruments of data collection, the procedures of data analysis, the ethical considerations as well as methodological constraints.

Chapter Three expounds and discusses the results of the study. From the four data sources to which the authors had access, a picture is drawn of the main intercultural communication gaps in the tourism agencies of Ghardaïa and an attempt is made to link them to Chapter One's theoretical perspective.

Chapter One

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Foundations of Intercultural Communication

1.1. Introduction

'To get something across' is another way of describing communication. It is, however, not simply about sending a message from one person to another: start to finish, the meaning is built between them, based on cultural assumptions, experiences and interpretations that are invisible, until the beginning is at odds with the end. The intercultural gap appears when the illusions of the speaker are at odds with the expectations of the hearer.

The framework against which we will view the empirical data of this study is developed in this chapter. After basic definitions and concepts, the theories of intercultural communication in which the assumptions of this study are embedded are presented. It is important for the analysis of the data in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies, to understand why comprehension difficulties arise in the first place.

The chapter reviews four important theoretical frameworks: Hall's high-context/low-context theory, which explains how cultures differ in how explicitly they communicate and organize space and time; Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which explains how cultures differ along measurable lines; Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence, which explains what is required to communicate successfully across cultural lines; and Scollon and Scollon's communicative frames theory, which explains why seemingly small misalignments in assumptions lead to large problems. Hall's framework is dealt with most extensively given its primacy as the key analytical lens adopted in this work and given its direct relevance to settings of service encounters in tourism contexts.

1.2. The Concept of Intercultural Communication

Before studying the theories we need to consider what intercultural communication is and what it is not. Intercultural communication is communication between people of different cultural origin in its simplest sense. However, we cannot restrict that definition because it is too broad. Not all communication between people of different origin is intercultural communication in any substantial sense of the term. Someone who grew up in Paris yet has lived in New York State for twenty years will find that he or she shares more cultural assumptions and values with American peers than with mother and father in France. Culture is more than ethnicity or nationality. It is a bundle of values, norms and patterns of behavior learned and shared, used to interpret and respond to the world around us (Hofstede, 2001).

Intercultural communication, therefore, is communication between people who bring highly different cultural frameworks to an interaction. Consistent with their everyday experience, these frameworks operate largely outside the person's awareness. One does not usually think of oneself as being high-context or low-context, individualistic or collectivistic or tolerant of a degree of uncertainty. These orientations are as completely unknown and invisible to the person as water is to a fish. They are visible only when one encounters a competing orientation and their differences coincide. That is why intercultural communication is so difficult: each culture is unware that it is making the assumptions that the other culture is having to deal with (Hall, 1976; Byram, 1997).

It is also not a question of simply being a good gentleman or lady and displaying courtesy towards others. The relationship between their cultural disposition and disposition towards other cultures determines whether they are communicating interculturally or not. A person might smile warmly, speak fluent English, and listen attentively but still frustrate a guest insofar as his/her communication style is not compatible with the guest's. Training in intercultural communication, therefore, is somewhat more than teaching one's staff the facts of etiquette.

Edward T. Hall was a prominent and influential anthropologist whose interdisciplinary work over three decades helped to shape our understanding of the influence of culture on communication. Working from the 1950s until the 1980s, Hall developed a three-dimensional descriptive framework that captures this influence in three categories: (1) how much meaning is explicitly expressed in verbal language (high-context versus low-context), (2) how distance is considered and used in space (proxemics), and (3) how people understand time and organize activities (monochronic versus polychronic orientation). Together, these three dimensions explain why we often fail to understand people from other cultures, even when we all speak the same language fluently. We utilize Hall's work as the basis for our present research; therefore, we explore each of these dimensions in depth.1.3.1 High-Context versus Low-Context Communication

The most cited work of Hall on the intercultural context continues to be his high- and low-context distinction (Hall, 1976). Its deceptively simple question is: what proportion of meaning is embedded in the actual verbal message versus the context ? A high-context communicator assumes that being in the same classroom or office or relationship as another means different things to oneself and others can read between the lines. So much about the message is left implicit and utterances can be unspoken. There is a place for silence. What the communicator really says can be almost negligible in the face of, an unspoken tone or look. In contrast, people in low-context

cultures understand that meaning needs to be thoroughly spelled out and people cannot read context. To be concise is to be short on matters and low in mean. Germany, Scandinavia, North America, and Australia fall into this category (Hall, 1976). In high-context cultures, meaning is embedded in culture, context , situation , relationship , and the history between speakers. The conversation tends to be carried out by implication, and communication is highly efficient. The more information you can provide for less effort the more it is efficient and valuable. Japan, China, Arab countries (including Algeria), and much of Latin America and the Mediterranean are high-context communicators (Hall, 1976).

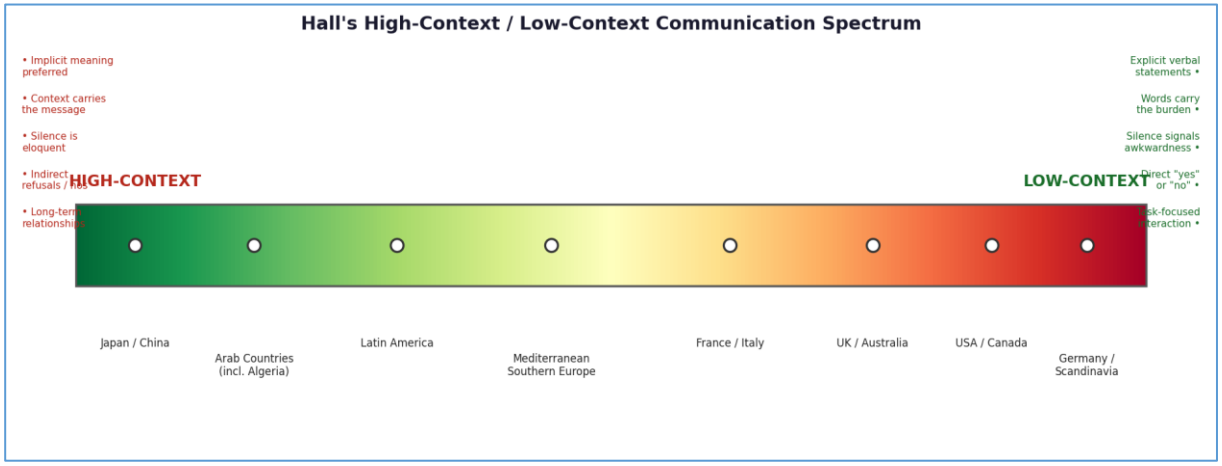

Figure 1. Hall's High-Context / Low-Context Communication Spectrum

The problem arises when high-context and low-context communicators interact. A high-context communicator may provide information they assume is obvious from context; a low-context communicator may miss these subtle cues and ask for explicit clarification. The high-context person then feels their communication is not being understood and may become frustrated or withdraw. Alternatively, a high-context communicator may avoid stating something directly because it feels rude; a low-context communicator interprets this as evasiveness or dishonesty (Hall, 1976; Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

In the context of Ghardaïa's tourism agencies, many staff members come from high-context cultural backgrounds, while many international guests come from low-context backgrounds such as Northern European or North American. This creates a predictable pattern of miscommunication: guests ask direct questions expecting direct answers; staff provide contextual information or indirect suggestions; guests feel the answers are unclear; staff feel the guests are impatient. Neither is behaving wrongly. This pattern is precisely what our first hypothesis targets.

1.2.1. Proxemics: The Cultural Organization of Space

Hall's second major contribution is proxemics the study of how humans use and interpret physical space in communication (Hall, 1966). Different cultures have different norms about appropriate interpersonal distance, and violating these norms creates discomfort even when neither party can articulate why. Hall identified four proxemic zones: intimate distance (0 to 45 cm), reserved for close relationships; personal distance (45 cm to 1.2 meters), used with friends and family; social distance (1.2 to 3.6 meters), appropriate for professional encounters and service interactions; and public distance (beyond 3.6 meters), used for lectures and formal speeches (Hall, 1966).

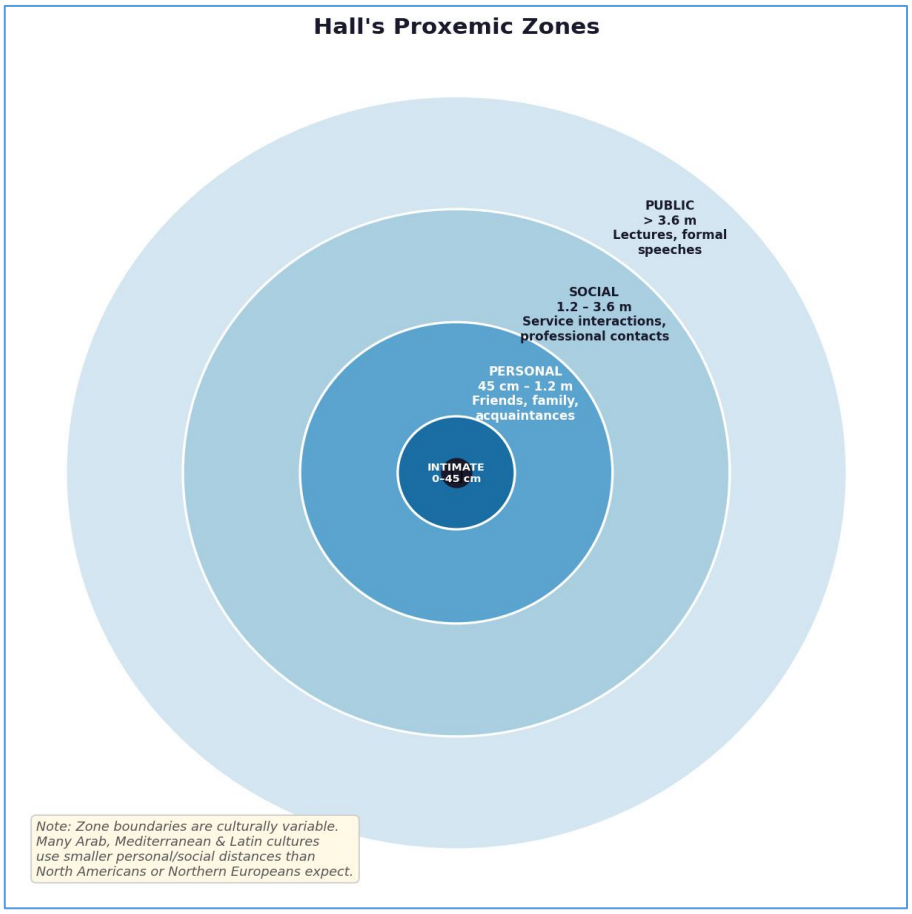

Figure 2. Hall's Proxemic Zones

The boundaries between these zones are culturally variable. Many Arab, Mediterranean, and Latin American cultures use smaller personal and social distances than North Americans or Northern Europeans expect. What feels like appropriate conversational distance to an Algerian tou r guide may feel uncomfortably close to a German or Scandinavian tourist. Conversely, what fee ls like polite professional distance to a British guest may feel cold and standoffish to a local staff member (Hall, 1966). In our observation data, we pay particular attention to these proxemic signals

because they tend to register as emotional impressions discomfort, coldness, intrusiveness rather than as cultural observations, making them easy to misattribute.

1.2.2. Monochronic versus

Polychronic Time Hall's third major framework concerns cultural orientations toward time (Hall, 1983). He distinguishes between monochronic time (M-time) and polychronic time (P-time). Monochronic cultures treat time as linear, segmented, and scheduled. People do one thing at a time. Appointments are fixed commitments; lateness is disrespectful. Tasks take priority over relationships. This orientation dominates in Germany, Scandinavia, the United States, and other industrialized Western cultures (Hall, 1983). Polychronic cultures treat time as flexible, fluid, and relational. Appointments are approximate starting points; relationships trump schedules. Interruptions signal interest and involvement. Relationship maintenance takes priority over task completion. This orientation is common in the Arab world (including Algeria), Mediterranean cou ntries, Latin America, and much of Asia (Hall, 1983).

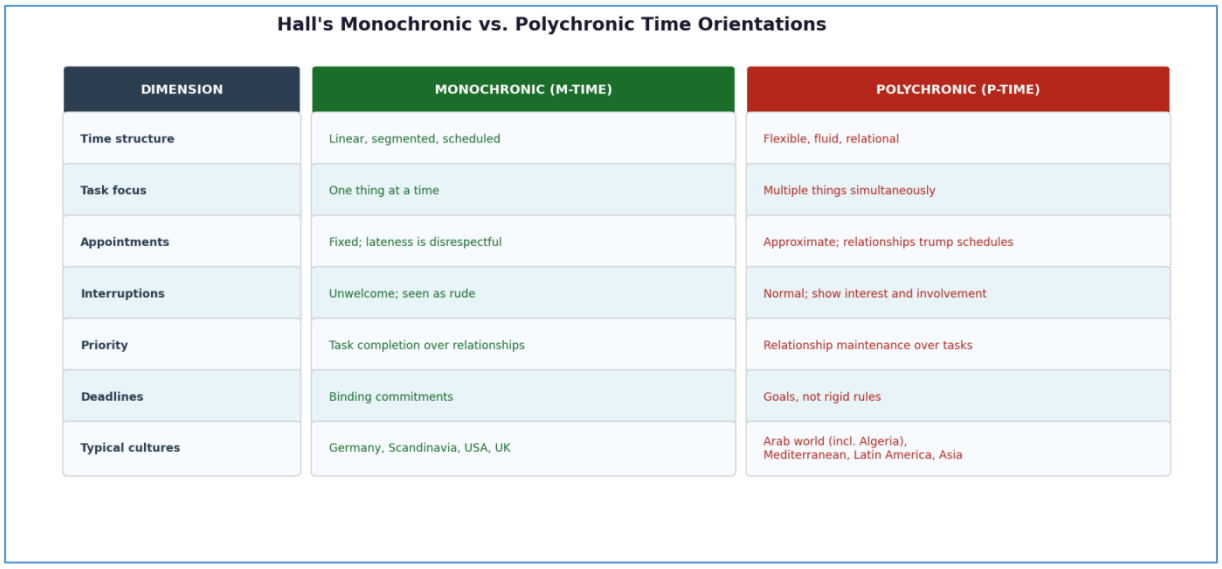

Figure 3. Hall's Monochronic vs. Polychronic Time Orientations

These differences lead to friction in service interactions. For example, a monochronic guest who makes a tour reservation for 9:00 AM will most likely expect the tour to start exactly at 9:00 AM. A polychronic staff member might think of 9:00 AM as a rough time, and when the guests arrive late, he or she will warmly welcome them and not pay too much attention to the schedule. In this case, the guest sees it as unprofessional behavior, whereas the staff member sees the guest's impatience as a sign of inflexibility or even rudeness. Actually, both of them are not doing anything wrong, they are just using different cultural models in the same situation. Our second hypothesis is based quite directly on this point.

1.2.3. Tourism Communication Implications

Hall's three dimensions are correlated: high-context cultures tend to be polychronic and have close interpersonal distances, while low-context cultures tend to be monochronic and keep greater distances. Because of this correlation, there can be several intercultural differences simultaneously in a single intercultural encounter.

Imaging a typical situation in Ghardaïa tourism: a German couple makes a reservation for a tour of M'Zab Valley. They show up on time and expect that the tour starts immediately (monochronic expectation). The guide welcomes them very warmly but after that keeps talking to a colleague while they are standing very close to each other (high-context relationship maintenance, polychronic multitasking, small proxemic distance). The couple asks direct questions about time schedules (low-context need for explicit information). The guide gives general information, and says "we will see how it goes" (high-context, polychronic flexibility). The couple considers the guide to be unprepared. The guide thinks the couple is inflexible. Neither party is bad. Both parties are from working cultural frameworks. Staff trained on Hall's frameworks will recognize these mismatches and imitate, not by the culture loss but by the development of the ability to switch code across cultural contexts. This is what we conclude from Hall's work in Chapter Three.

1.2.4. Criticisms and Contemporary Relevance

Hall's frameworks have been criticized for cultural essentialism the risk of treating cultures as monolithic and individuals as representatives of cultural stereotypes rather than unique people (Holliday, 2011). Not all Germans are monochronic; not all Algerians are polychronic. Individual variation within cultures can be as significant as variation between cultures. Moreover, globalization and increased migration create hybrid cultural identities that complicate neat categorizations. These criticisms are valid. Hall's frameworks should be used as sensitizing concepts tools that heighten awareness of possible differences rather than deterministic predictions. We adopt this position explicitly: in both our data collection instruments and our analysis, Hall's dimensions function as interpretive guides rather than classification systems. Despite these limitations, Hall's work remains highly relevant to tourism communication, where brief encounters between strangers leave little time for developing individual understanding and cultural scripts therefore operate with particular force.

1.3. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory emerged from surveys of IBM employees across fifty countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Rather than describing cultures holistically, Hofstede identified measurable dimensions: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). These dimensions help explain systematic variation in workplace expectations. While valuable for identifying broad patterns, Hofstede's framework has been criticized for relying on outdated corporate data and for treating nations as culturally homogeneous. In this study, Hofstede's dimensions serve as a complementary lens; Hall's framework carries the primary analytical weight.

1.4. Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model

Michael Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) shifts focus from describing cultural differences to defining what it takes to communicate effectively across them (Byram, 1997, 2008). Byram argues that linguistic competence is necessary but insufficient. True intercultural competence requires sociolinguistic awareness, discourse competence, and most importantly critical cultural awareness: the ability to recognize that both one's own culture and others' cultures are constructed systems of values and norms, neither inherently superior. This model is particularly relevant to our research because it demonstrates that teaching English and teaching intercultural competence are not the same thing. Training must go beyond linguistics to include cultural awareness and critical reflection a point we return to in the General Conclusion.

1.5. Scollon and Scollon's Communicative Frames Theory

Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon offer the concept of communicative frames (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). A communicative frame is a person's understanding of what kind of interaction is taking place the rules, expectations, and purposes that apply. When frames are misaligned, communication fails even with grammatically correct language. In tourism, a staff member might frame an interaction as 'providing information about tour packages' while a guest frames it as 'building a relationship with someone from a different culture.' The staff member's style then feels impersonal to the guest; the guest's expectations feel inappropriately personal to the staff member. This framework is particularly useful for analyzing the specific gaps we identify in our data, as it shifts focus from individual deficiency to relational misalignment.

1.6. Types and Causes of Intercultural Communication Gaps

Drawing on these theoretical frameworks, we can identify several types of intercultural communication gaps: linguistic gaps (insufficient language proficiency), pragmatic gaps (different uses of language despite correct grammar), cultural gaps (different assumptions about values and norms), and behavioral gaps (different nonverbal communication norms). These gaps arise from multiple causes: language proficiency limitations, lack of cultural knowledge, limited intercultural experience, attribution errors, and lack of awareness of one's own cultural assumptions (Byram, 1 997; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). In our context, the gap most relevant to the research hypotheses is the cultural gap specifically, the misalignment between high-context communication norms in Ghardaïa's tourism workforce and the low-context expectations of many international visitors.

1.7. Conclusion

Intercultural communication gaps are not random failures. They arise from systematic differences in cultural values, communication styles, and underlying assumptions. Hall's frameworks of context, space, and time provide particularly concrete tools for understanding and addressing these differences in tourism contexts. Hofstede's dimensions, Byram's competence model, and Scollon and Scollon's frame theory complement this understanding. Together, these frameworks explain why staff members and guests sometimes fail to understand each other despite speaking a common language. Providing English language training alone will not solve these problems. What is needed is training in intercultural awareness and communication that makes cultural frameworks explicit and negotiable.

2. English for Occupational Purposes in Tourism: Context, Communication Demands, and the Case of Ghardaïa

2.1. Introduction

The theoretical frameworks set out in Part 1 provide us with conceptual tools for analyzing intercultural communication. But theory must meet the context. Communication does not happen in the abstract it happens in specific workplaces, specific cities, specific cultural encounters. This part makes the link between the general and the particular. It asks: in the specific context of Ghardaïa's tourism sector, do the dynamics identified in Part One unfold in the way theory would anticipate? Part 2 first clarifies the distinction between English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), tracing the emergence of ESP as a field and explaining what makes occupational English different. It then examines the communicative demands of the global tourism industry before situating Algeria and Ghardaïa within that picture. It closes by identifying what current EOP training in the region is missing specifically, the intercultural communication dimension this research addresses.

2.2. The Emergence and Evolution of English for Specific Purposes

2.2.1. From General English to ESP: Historical Development

English for Specific Purposes grew into a distinct field in the 1960s, driven by practical considerations. Since the end of World War II, English became the global lingua franca of science, technology, and commerce. Non-English speakers needed English not for general conversation but for professional and academic purposes. General English courses did not effectively serve these learners (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Early ESP focused on linguistic features specific to specialized domains. Researchers analyzed authentic texts to identify recurring patterns the 'register analysis' approach assumed that mastering the characteristic language of a field would enable learners to function within it (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). By the 1980s and 1990s, scholars recognized that practitioners needed genre awareness and rhetorical competence beyond register knowledge, and ESP consolidated as a distinct field with the key division between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

2.2.2. The ESP Tree: Types and Branches

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) defined ESP as 'an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning.' EAP equips students for university-level scholarly work. EOP trains professionals for workplace communication, subdivided into English for Professional Purposes (EPP), for knowledge-

intensive fields such as medicine, law, and engineering, and English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), for technical, trade, and service occupations including tourism guides and hospitality workers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

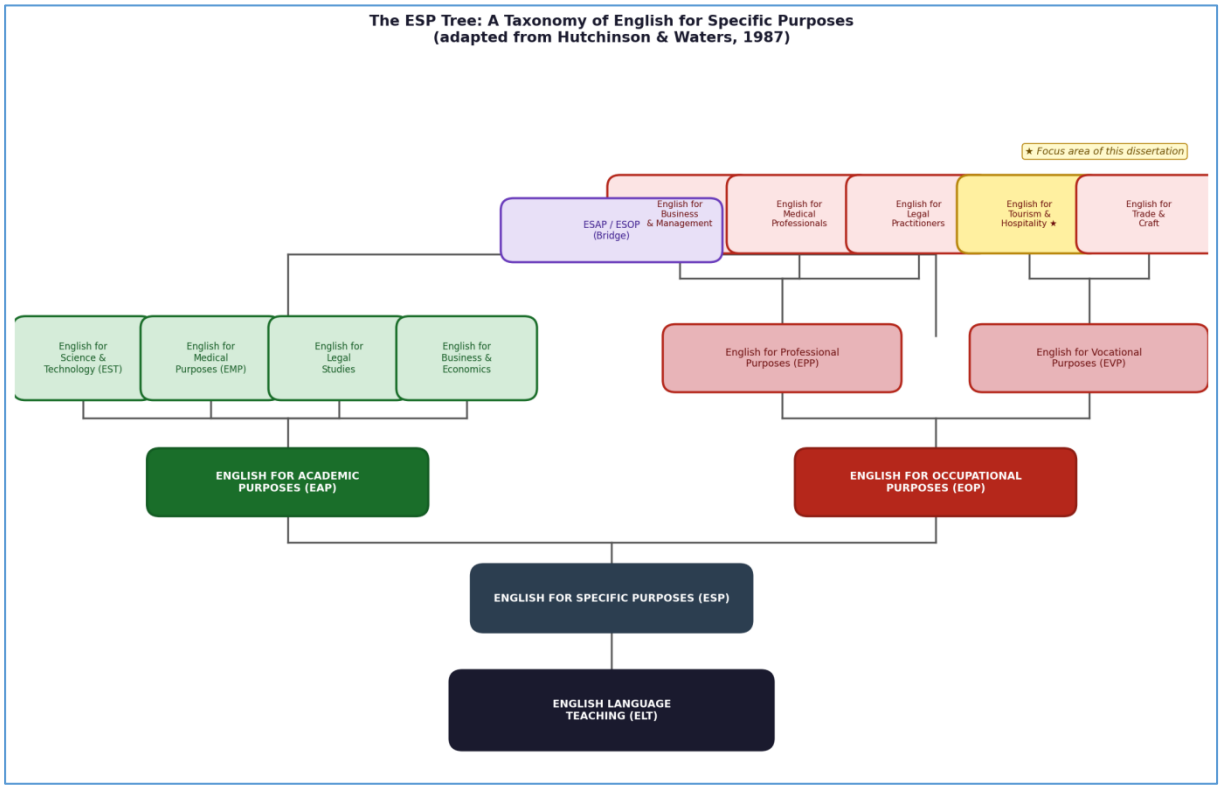

Figure 4. The ESP Tree: A Taxonomy of English for Specific Purposes (adapted from Hutchinson & Waters, 1987)

2.2.3. EAP versus EOP: Major Differences

EAP is concerned primarily with written academic genres research articles, essays, reports and stresses critical reading and formal argumentation. The criteria for success are grades, thesis defenses, and publications (Hyland, 2006). EOP focuses on spoken workplace communication, with writing also important for emails, reports, and documentation. The criteria for success are task completion, customer satisfaction, and professional effectiveness (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). This difference has direct curriculum implications: EAP students benefit from analyzing academic texts; EOP students benefit from role-plays of workplace situations and practice of the spoken genres their profession uses daily.

2.2.4. English for Occupational Purposes in Tourism

Tourism is one of the vocational branches of EOP. Tourism employees are in need of specialized English but rarely have a university academic background. Most of their work is through face-to-face interaction only: greeting guests, explaining services, handling complaints,

and building positive service experiences. Tourism EOP is unlike other EOP domains since building social relationships and performing emotional labor are the main aspects of the work. A tourism worker might technically succeed but behave socially awkwardly. Therefore, training should include the use of language and interpersonal communication, cultural awareness, and service psychology (Leslie & Russell, 2006). Tourism EOP is connected with the intercultural communication issues presented in Part One: every tourist interaction is, by definition, a contact between different cultures.

2.2.5. Needs Analysis: The Methodological Foundation of ESP

Needs analysis determines all the other processes of ESP. It means to study the language use that learners require in a certain context. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) define 'target needs' as the activities to be carried out in the target situation and 'learning needs' as the methods of enhancing the ability to perform those activities. In most tourism development EOP programs, this degree of context-specific analysis is missing. Training is based on general templates or textbook dialogues which hardly reflect actual workplace situations. Our study directly targets this issue: by recording the communication problems that are actually happening in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies, we provide a decision basis for training recommendation that is evidence-based as opposed to assumption-based.

2.3. The Global Tourism Industry and the English Language Factor

Tourism is one of the major economic activities worldwide. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals hit 1.4 billion in 2023, which amounted to over 1.4 trillion dollars of export revenue (UNWTO, 2023). English has become the common shared language of international tourism. For tourism workers in Algeria, English is a minimum requirement for any meaningful international engagement. Language proficiency is a necessary condition but it alone does not guarantee service quality. Passenger satisfaction studies always include interpersonal communication that is understood, welcomed, and respected as the main factor of the guest experience (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Both fluency and cultural sensitivity are aspects that must be addressed in training design.

2.4. Tourism in North Africa and Algeria: Setting the Stage

Geographically, North Africa is located at the crossroad of the cultural traditions of the Mediterranean, Saharan, and Islamic. Morocco receives over eleven million international tourists each year; Tunisia over seven million; Egypt over thirteen million. Algeria is considered to attract approximately 2.5 million tourists fewer than what its size and heritage would suggest, partly due to its historically stricter visa requirements and a cautious government stance towards foreign

tourism (UNWTO, 2023). Things are changing: Algeria has eased visa requirements for visitors from several European and Asian countries, has made investments in hotel infrastructure and transportation, and its UNESCO World Heritage sites are becoming internationally recognized.

2.5. Ghardaïa: Culture, Tourism, and Communication

Ghardaïa is situated in the heart of the M'zab Valley, about 600 kilometers south of the capital city, Algiers. It is the cultural center of the Mozabites, a Berber ethnic group who have maintained a distinct cultural identity for more than a millennium by adhering to the Ibadi branch of Islam. The M'zab Valley was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1982. Tourists generally come with certain expectations: to see real traditional Islamic architectures, to discover Mozabite's history and culture, and to use the Sahara as a starting point for other travel. A guide, who is describing the M'zab city's layout, has to reconcile two aspects: not only different languages but also fundamentally different worldviews. For a long time, Mozabite men were crossing Algeria as merchants, which made the community familiar with other cultures. Nonetheless, the very specific cultural skills for international tourism, like managing low-context guest expectations, interacting in the proxemic mismatches, and dealing with the pressures of monochronic time - all these differ from regular commercial interactions. The mentioned gap is one aspect of what our research finds.

2.6. Current EOP Training for Tourism Professionals in Algeria

The Tourism Ministry is responsible for schools of hospitality and tourism that provide certificate and diploma programs. Besides, English language components are a part of these programs, but usually, these components are rather general than context-specific, because the course books used are mainly intended for the European or North American contexts, which have very little relevance to a Saharan cultural tourism destination (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Had most tourism professionals working in Ghardaïa come traditionally to the sector, thanks to family connections, by apprenticeship or through the help of an experienced self-taught person. Their English language was acquired at school or by regular communication with tourists but without formal systems of feedback. One thing missing almost totally from present training environments is the focus on intercultural communication. Employees are taught the technical part of waiting on tourists, but not that tourists from different cultures will have different expectations for service. This gap between language training and intercultural training is the major issue that our research is dealing with.

2.7. Research Gap: The Missing Intersection

The literature reviewed in this chapter indicates a clear pattern. On the one hand, intercultural communication theory is well established but mostly rooted in Western or East Asian contexts. On the other hand, research EOP is significant but regularly focused on big corporate settings rather than small-scale tourism enterprises in developing countries. Additionally, tourism communication research is increasing but mainly focused on established countries as destination. Therefore, the combination of intercultural communication in EOP for tourism professionals in North African emerging destinations is almost completely neglected. Without empirical research in contexts such as Ghardaïa, training programs are designed from generic templates or intuition. Our aim is to partly address this issue. We provide context-specific evidence by analyzing communication gaps in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies - what they are, when they occur, what their causes are, and how staff are currently managing them - that can be used to inform training design and professional development.

2.8. Conclusion

English for Occupational Purposes provides both the theoretical framework and the practical methodology for addressing the communication needs of tourism professionals. However, It has to be kept in mind that EOP, in the way it is conventionally practiced, is mainly focused on language while intercultural issues are taken for granted. In practical terms, tourism arrivals in Ghardaïa after years of isolation are more and more culturally diverse while the local professional who are mainly limited in service English, as well through formal training are unaware of how to interact effectively with foreign visitors, and this in turn gives rise to fails in communication that are predictable and addressable. The study cited here in the next chapters therefore, is grounded in this reality and aims at not only discovering the gaps but also understanding them specifically.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Procedures

1. Introduction

The theoretical frameworks examined in Chapter One Hall's (1976, 1966, 1983) distinctions between high- and low-context communication, proxemics, and monochronic versus polychronic time orientations do not operate as abstract constructs. They manifest in concrete, observable behaviors: in the degree of explicitness a staff member brings to an information exchange, in the physical distance maintained during a counter interaction, in the elasticity shown toward a scheduled departure time. For these dimensions to be investigated meaningfully, the methodology must be designed to capture them where they actually occur.

This chapter describes and justifies the research approach adopted in this study. It demonstrates how the study's two hypotheses shaped the construction of each instrument, before the chapter moves to describe the research sites, participant selection, and the four data collection instruments: a structured questionnaire distributed to all tourism agency staff, semi-structured interviews conducted with four international tourist visitors, a structured questionnaire administered to those visitors, and a structured observation protocol documenting staff–guest interactions in real time. The chapter closes with accounts of data collection procedures, analysis strategies, data saturation considerations, ethical principles, and the methodological limitations the researchers acknowledge.

2. Research Design

This study examines intercultural communication in the tourism agencies of Ghardaïa through a descriptive, exploratory mixed-methods case study. The variables it examines are the staff's and tourists' cultural-context orientation (high- versus low-context communication style), English-speaking proficiency, and prior intercultural training, considered in relation to the outcomes of interest: the type and frequency of intercultural communication gaps and tourist satisfaction with the service encounter. Qualitative data carry the main analytic weight, supported by a smaller quantitative strand. That balance follows from the kind of phenomenon under investigation. Intercultural communication gaps are relational: they open up between parties whose cultural assumptions diverge, and both sides experience, interpret, and frequently misinterpret them. Counting how often they occur would miss what makes them worth studying, namely the meanings participants attach to them and the cultural logic that produces them. Qualitative methods reach that level of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

A case study design fits because the focus is narrow and clearly bounded: intercultural communication in the tourism agencies of Ghardaïa, Algeria. Yin (2018) argues that case study methodology suits research questions about how or why something happens in a real-world setting

the researcher cannot manipulate. Both conditions hold here. Intercultural communication in a tourism agency cannot be reproduced in a laboratory, so it has to be observed where it ordinarily occurs.

The design is best described as a qualitatively driven mixed-methods case study, in which the two strands are deliberately unequal in priority. This is a recognised configuration in the mixed-methods literature, not the equal-weighting, fully integrated model that some treatments present as the default (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The questionnaires generate descriptive statistics that contextualise and corroborate the qualitative findings rather than form an independent line of analysis. Combining four instruments also enables methodological triangulation, which raises confidence in the conclusions and offsets the limitations of any single source (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2015).

3. Hall's Theoretical Framework as Methodological Anchor

The decision to center this study's methodology on Hall's framework rather than treating it as one of several equally weighted theories is deliberate and consequential. Hall's three dimensions address precisely the domains where tourism service encounters are most vulnerable to breakdown (Hall, 1976, 1966, 1983). They also share a methodological advantage: each dimension generates observable behavioral indicators, which means they can be operationalized in data collection instruments in ways that more abstract frameworks cannot.

High- and low-context communication differences appear in data as the degree to which staff provide explicit versus implicit information, the extent to which visitors seek clarification of unstated expectations, and the frequency with which indirect responses generate visible confusion. Proxemic differences appear as the physical distances maintained during interactions and the comfort or discomfort signals those distances produce. Monochronic and polychronic differences appear as responses to scheduling, interpretations of punctuality, and the priority given to relationship maintenance over task completion. These observable correlates guided every design decision in this study.

This does not mean Hall's framework is applied deterministically. As noted in Chapter One, Hall's categories are sensitizing concepts rather than rigid classifications (Holliday, 2011). The framework is used here as an interpretive guide a set of conceptually grounded lenses through which patterns in the data become legible not as a checklist against which participants are classified.

3.1. From Hypotheses to Instruments

The study's two hypotheses formulated in the General Introduction on the basis of int ercultural communication theory and preliminary observation provided the direct starting point for instrument design. Making this connection explicit is necessary because it establishes that data collection was theoretically driven rather than ad hoc.

Hypothesis 1 proposes that the root cause of intercultural communication problems between guides and visitors is not deficient English but the conflict between the guides' high-context communication style and visitors' low-context expectations. Testing this hypothesis requires data that separates language proficiency from communication style. Staff questionnaire Section C (intercultural awareness and communication style) and Section D (communication challenges) were designed for this purpose: the Likert items in Section C ask whether staff are aware of and adapt to cultural communication differences, while Section D asks respondents to weigh language barriers against cultural differences as causes of communication breakdowns. Tourist questionnaire items C7–C12 approach the same dimension from the guest side. Interview Section 3 elicits the distinction through participant narrative. Observation Protocol Section 2 records it from outside the interaction entirely.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that low-context tourists experience more communication difficulty than high-context tourists, not because of language limitations but because their cultural habit of explicit, detail-oriented communication amplifies misalignment with high-context staff. This hypothesis requires the researchers to identify each tourist's own cultural orientation as a variable. Tourist questionnaire items C10 and C12 serve this function: they establish whether the respondent expects explicit detail or is comfortable inferring meaning from context. This self-report, combined with the respondent's nationality and the interaction quality documented in the observation protocol, allows patterns consistent with Hypothesis 2 to be identified across the dataset.

4. Research Setting

The research was carried out in the tourism agency sector of Ghardaïa wilaya. At the initial stage, the teams went to more than seven agencies working in the area in order to decide their eligibility for the research and to negotiate their cooperation.

Most of the agencies before whom the decision has been taken at this stage were found to be oriented only to domestic excursions, Hajj and Umrah services and that they did not have any substantial contact with foreign tourists; therefore, they have been removed from the study on this

basis. The agencies that participated fully including administration of staff questionnaires, researcher observation of the premises, and arrangement of meetings with international guests were very few in number. The main data collection sites were these cooperating agencies.

The M'Zab Valley, since 1982 a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracts international visitors mainly from Europe and, to some extent, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This provision of a constant flow of encounters between the members of staff who have done through cultural orientations of the high-context, polychronic Algerian type and the guests whose cultural orientations are distributed all along the wide spectrum. The cultural selection of Ghardaïa was intentional rather than simple convenience. The city reflects a coordinate of the integrated situations turning intercultural communication into an unavoidable and quite challenging matter: authentic culture attracting deeply curious visitors mostly first-timers; local tourism staff largely self-trained with no formal preparation for international communication; and a service environment where the cost of misunderstanding for small agencies is not only economic but also in reputation. For all reasons, Ghardaïa is not only just a locally accessible case but also a theoretically motivated one.

5. Participants

The study involved two distinct participant groups whose roles in the data collection differ: tourism agency staff, who completed a structured questionnaire and whose interactions were documented through direct observation; and international tourists, who completed a separate structured questionnaire and, for a subset of four participants, provided in-depth interview data.

5.1. Tourism Agency Staff

A staff questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given to every worker in each of the partner agencies without considering their role or how often they interact directly with international customers. It was a conscious decision to include everyone. Communication problems in a tourism office are not necessarily limited to the guide-tourist interaction during the site visit. They may also occur at the reception desk, during the reservation process, in written correspondence, or in fact, anywhere in service encounters where a staff member and an international visitor interact. If the questionnaire was given only to front-line personnel with a lot of tourist contact, it would have missed out on valuable input from staff who get intercultural communication issues in different situations, and possibly equally revealing ones.

The questionnaire for staff gathered background data such as role, years of experience, self-rating of English proficiency, and contact frequency with international guests along with

major items related to Hall's three dimensions: the style of contextual communication, proxemic behavior, temporal orientation, and relational behaviors including the initiation of small talk. Filled-in questionnaires were obtained face to face at each agency.

5.2. International Tourist Participants

During the data collection period, efforts were made to engage and invite international tourists present at the cooperating agencies to complete a structured questionnaire (Appendix A) by explaining the purpose and procedures. The criteria for inclusion were that the visitor has had at least one English language interaction with the agency staff during the present visit. Masking identity and voluntariness were the guiding principles of participation.

Following the questionnaire phase, four respondents consented to a follow-up semi-structured interview (Appendix B). This figure is indicative of the ceiling of availability during the very short data collection period a limitation that is very well documented in the General Introduction. The four interviewees with their culturally and nationally diverse backgrounds partly cover the high-context/low-context dimension which is at the core of the study hypotheses. These narratives do not allow for generalization but are still solid arguments for the development of major propositions on staff-guest communication patterns, which are theoretically and empirically based.

6. Data Collection Instruments

Four instruments were used to generate data. Each was designed with Hall's three dimensions as explicit organizing principles and with the two research hypotheses as its primary targets. The instruments are described in the order of their administration: staff questionnaire, tourist questionnaire, tourist interview, and observation protocol.

6.1. Staff Questionnaire (Appendix D)

A structured questionnaire was distributed to all staff at the cooperating agencies. The instrument comprised six sections. Section A collected demographic information: age, gender, role, years of experience in tourism, and educational qualification. Section B established English language background and self-assessed proficiency across the four skills, as well as the frequency of English use in the workplace. These two sections provide the background variables against which substantive findings can be interpreted in particular, whether experience level or proficiency self-rating moderates staff awareness of intercultural communication difficulty. Section C addressed intercultural experience and awareness, including prior exposure to English-speaking environments, experience with international guests, and formal intercultural training received. It closed with five Likert items (1–5) asking respondents to rate their awareness of cultural co

mmunication differences, their ability to adapt style by nationality, their knowledge of guests' cult ures, and their confidence in cross-cultural communication. The final item in Section C asked: 'Do you engage in small talk with international guests?' with a follow-up asking who takes the initiative the staff member or the guest. This item carries specific analytical weight within Hall's (1976) framework. Small talk functions as the primary relational precursor to task communication in high-context cultures; relationship-building precedes business. Whether staff extend this norm to foreign guests or revert to a task-first approach when interacting with visitors they recognize as culturally different is directly relevant to Hypothesis 1. A staff population that waits for guests to initiate small talk is, in effect, code-switching away from the high-context default, which complicates a straightforward attribution of communication gaps to style mismatch alone. Section D addressed communication challenges and gaps: frequency of communication difficulties, the types of problems most commonly experienced (linguistic, cultural, non-verbal), and five Likert items asking respondents to assess the relative contribution of language barriers versus cultural differences to their day-to-day communication problems. Section E addressed training and support needs, asking respondents to rank six training modalities and to identify the forms of management support they consider most useful. Section F comprised three open-ended questions inviting respondents to describe their most significant communication challenge, their view of what would improve intercultural communication in Ghardaïa's tourism sector, and any additional observations.

6.2. Tourist Questionnaire (Appendix A)

A parallel structured questionnaire was administered to international visitors at the cooperating agencies. The instrument covered the same Hall dimensions as the staff questionnaire but from the guest perspective: how explicitly staff communicated, whether meaning was conveyed through context rather than words, whether proxemic norms felt comfortable or disorienting, and how temporal expectations were managed. Section E invited respondents to describe and classify one specific misunderstanding, providing incident-level data mappable to Hall's dimensional categories. Section F addressed communication adaptation and Sections G–H covered preferences, satisfaction, and suggestions.

6.3. Semi-Structured Interviews with Tourist Participants (Appendix B)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four tourist participants who completed the questionnaire and agreed to elaborate on their experience. This format was chosen because the goal was experiential depth rather than categorical comparability across a large sample (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview guide was organized across eight sections corresponding to

Hall's three dimensions and to the specific constructs targeted by the hypotheses. Section 3 addressed Hypothesis 1 directly by inviting participants to contrast interactions where verbal explanation sufficed with those where meaning had to be inferred. Section 4 elicited a detailed account of one specific misunderstanding. Sections 5–7 covered adaptation, preferences, pr oxemics, and silence. Interviews were conducted in English, lasted twenty to forty minutes, and were audio-recorded with participant consent prior to verbatim transcription.

6.4. Observation Protocol: Staff–Guest Interaction Documentation (Appendix C)

The observation protocol was completed by the researchers for each observed staff–guest interaction. Direct observation records enacted behavior rather than retrospective accounts of it a particularly important distinction for behaviors such as proxemic management and implicit communication, which participants rarely reflect on consciously and may therefore describe inaccurately in self-report (Angrosino, 2007). The protocol was organized across ten sections covering: contextual communication (explicit versus implicit), proxemics (physical distance and appropriateness), paralanguage and nonverbal signals, temporal orientation, information structure, interaction outcome, and gap classification by Hall dimension. An optional mismatch rating (1–5 per dimension) in Section 9 facilitated cross-interaction comparison during analysis. The protocol was completed immediately following each observation to preserve the natural character of the interaction.

6.5. Pilot Testing

Formal instrument piloting prior to full deployment was not feasible within the compressed research timeline of approximately one month. This is acknowledged as a methodological limitat ion. The instruments' internal coherence rests on the researchers' theoretical grounding in Hall's framework and their professional familiarity with the local context rather than on empirical pre-testing. Future replications of this study with a longer timeline should incorporate a pilot phase as a standard step, particularly for the staff questionnaire items addressing relational communication practices, which were newly constructed for this study.

7. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over approximately one month at the cooperating agencies. Staff questionnaires were distributed to all personnel present at each agency during the researchers' visits and collected in person on the same or a subsequent visit. The researchers were available to clarify procedural questions without prompting specific responses. Tourist questionnaires were administered to international visitors present at agency premises during operating hours. Interview participants were identified from the questionnaire pool and interviewed in quiet spaces where

audio recording was feasible. The semi-structured guide was followed flexibly: topic sequencing was adjusted to match conversational flow while ensuring all eight sections were addressed. Observations were conducted during regular operating hours across different times of day and different locations within each agency reception areas, tour desks, and waiting spaces to capture variation in interaction type and staff pressure. The researchers' presence was disclosed to agency management and, where practicable, to staff. Guests were not individually informed prior to each observation, consistent with conventions for observational research in public and semi-public service settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

8. Data Analysis Procedures

Each data type was analyzed through procedures appropriate to its nature, and the analyses were subsequently triangulated to produce integrated findings. Staff and tourist questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively. Frequency distributions and mean scores were calculated for Likert-scale and rating items. For the staff questionnaire, particular attention was given to the small talk initiation item: whether staff report initiating relational small talk with international guests, or whether they describe a pattern in which guests lead and staff follow, has direct interpretive implications for Hypothesis 1. A staff population that consistently reports waiting for guests to initiate relational communication would represent a departure from the high-context norm that the hypothesis predicts they embody. Interview data was analyzed thematically following the six-phase procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with transcripts through repeated reading, generation of initial codes, construction of preliminary themes, review of themes against the full dataset, definition and naming of final themes, and production of the written analysis. The coding framework was theoretically informed by Hall's three dimensions as deductive starting categories, supplemented by inductive attention to themes arising from participant accounts that the framework did not anticipate (Patton, 2015). Observation protocol data was analyzed by reviewing all completed forms for recurring behavioral patterns within each Hall-dimension category. Interactions were grouped by overall quality rating and examined for the specific behaviors that distinguished higher- from lower-quality encounters. Triangulation was conducted by asking, for each emergent finding, whether it appeared in more than one data source and more than one participant group. Discrepancies between sources for instance, where staff questionnaire responses suggest confident proxemic management but observation records visible guest discomfort at close distances are treated as analytically significant, potentially revealing the gap between intended and enacted communication behavior.

8.1. Data Saturation

With four tourist interview participants, this study does not claim to have reached data saturation in the conventional sense (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2006). The interview dataset is sufficient for initial, theoretically grounded hypothesis generation identifying the types of misalignment that occur and their most likely Hall-dimensional sources but not for asserting that all relevant communication gap patterns have been captured. The study is therefore positioned as exploratory: it produces evidence that supports, complicates, or refines the two hypotheses, and generates specific, empirically grounded questions for future research with larger and more varied samples.

9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical research practice in this study was guided by three principles: informed consent, confidentiality, and minimization of participant burden. Staff participants were informed of the questionnaire's academic purpose and its anonymous character before responding. Tourist questionnaire participants were similarly informed. Interview participants were informed of the audio recording procedure and their right to withdraw; each provided verbal consent. No participant was asked to provide information that could be professionally or personally damaging. Confidentiality was maintained by assigning codes to all participants and removing identifying information from transcripts and field notes prior to analysis. Agency names are not disclosed in the research report. Observation protocol records use staff roles and estimated English proficienc y rather than names or personal identifiers.

10. Methodological Limitations

Several limitations specific to the methodology deserve explicit acknowledgment, in addition to those arising from the research context discussed in the General Introduction. The absence of formal instrument piloting, as noted in Section 2.8, means that questionnaire items were not empirically pre-tested. Some items particularly those addressing the culturally implicit dimensions of proxemics and temporal orientation may have been interpreted differently by respondents than the researchers intended, and this possibility cannot be assessed retrospectively. Observation was limited to selected moments rather than extended interaction sequences. A guided tour unfolds over hours and involves multiple communicative episodes that build on one another; the protocol captures only discrete encounters within the agency premises. Communication gaps that develop gradually through small misalignments rather than emerging in a single exchange may therefore be underrepresented in the observational data. The tourist interview sample of four participants restricts the scope of claims that can be drawn from the tourist-side qualitative data.

The participants' cultural backgrounds, while varied, do not represent the full spectrum of high- and low-context cultures that visit Ghardaïa. Findings from the interviews describe the experiences of these specific individuals and should be read as preliminary, hypothesis-generating evidence. Finally, the researchers' cultural embeddedness in the Ghardaïa context, discussed in Section 2.4, is a limitation as well as an asset. Despite the mitigating measures described there, the risk that h igh-context norms were normalized during observation rather than noticed and recorded cannot be fully eliminated.

11. Conclusion

This chapter has described a predominantly qualitative case study employing four complementary instruments: a staff questionnaire distributed to all personnel at the cooperating agencies, a tourist questionnaire administered to international visitors, semi-structured interviews with four tourist participants, and a researcher observation protocol. The study was conducted following an initial survey of more than seven tourism agencies across the Ghardaïa wilaya, conducted jointly by two English-language professionals each with approximately fifteen years of teaching experience in the region. Each instrument was designed to operationalize Hall's (1976, 1966, 1983) three cultural dimensions and to generate data directly relevant to the two research hypotheses. The absence of formal instrument piloting and the limited tourist interview sample ar e acknowledged as constraints on the scope of conclusions. Within those constraints, the multi-source, multi-perspective design produces data that is contextually grounded and internally triangulated. Chapter Three presents the findings and connects them to the theoretical framework established in Chapter One.

Chapter Three

Results and Discussion

1. Introduction

This chapter presents and interprets the findings generated through the four data collection instruments described in Chapter Two: a structured questionnaire administered to 17 agency staff members, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews conducted with four international tourist participants, and four structured observations of staff–guest interactions. The analysis is organized around Hall's three theoretical dimensions contextual communication (high- versus low-context), proxemics, and temporal orientation (Hall, 1966, 1976, 1983) and is structured to address each research question before returning, at the close of the chapter, to evaluate the two hypotheses formulated in the General Introduction.

The findings are presented sequentially by instrument before being triangulated thematically. Where data from different sources converge, the convergence strengthens the interpretation. Where they diverge, the divergence is treated as analytically significant in its own right. Throughout, participant contributions are identified by code (S1–S17 for staff, T1–T4 for tourists, O1–O4 for observations) to preserve confidentiality while maintaining traceability of evidence.

2. Staff Questionnaire Results

2.1. Demographic and Professional Profile

Seventeen staff members completed the questionnaire across the cooperating agencies. The sample was predominantly male (n = 11; 64.7%) with a female minority (n = 6; 35.3%). The largest age cohort was 26–35 years (n = 8; 47%), followed by 18–25 (n = 3; 17.6%) and 36–45 (n = 4; 23.5%). In terms of role, reception and information desk personnel constituted the largest group (n = 7; 41.2%), followed by tour guides (n = 5; 29.4%), with a small number in management and administrative roles. The educational profile was diverse: diploma holders formed the largest gr oup (n = 6; 35.3%), followed by master's degree holders (n = 5; 29.4%) and bachelor's degree holders (n = 4; 23.5%). This profile is consistent with Ghardaïa's tourism workforce as a sector that recruits from multiple educational backgrounds without a single dominant training pathway. Experience levels were modest: eleven of seventeen respondents (64.7%) had fewer than five years in tourism, and only one reported more than ten years. This relatively low experience base is signi ficant for interpreting subsequent findings on cultural awareness and communication confidence: staff are, in the main, relatively new to international service encounters and have not had the extended exposure that might otherwise compensate for the absence of formal intercultural training.

Table 1. Staff Demographic and Professional Profile (N = 17)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	11	64.7
	Female	6	35.3
Age	18–25	3	17.6
	26–35	8	47.0
	36–45	4	23.5
Role	Reception / information desk	7	41.2
	Tour guide	5	29.4
	Management / administrative	5	29.4
Education	Diploma	6	35.3
	Master's degree	5	29.4
	Bachelor's degree	4	23.5
Experience	Fewer than 5 years	11	64.7
	More than 10 years	1	5.9

2.2. English Language Profile

The gap between receptive and productive English competence is one of the most consequential findings in the staff questionnaire. In listening comprehension, eight respondents (47%) rated themselves at intermediate level and seven (41.2%) at advanced, with only two (11.8%) at beginner. The picture changes markedly for speaking: eight respondents (47%) rated themselves intermediate, but six (35.3%) rated themselves beginner, and only three (17.6%) advanced. The downward shift from listening to speaking from a majority intermediate-to-adva nced profile to a significant beginner component indicates that many staff can follow spoken English with reasonable comprehension but struggle to produce it. This asymmetry has direct implications for the quality of intercultural service encounters: a staff member who can understand a guest's question but cannot formulate a clear answer creates a specific and frustrating communication gap. Frequency of English use in the workplace reinforces this concern. Six respondents (35.3%) reported using English rarely, four (23.5%) several times a week, four (23.5%) sometimes, and only two (11.8%) daily or more. This distribution suggests that for the majority of the sample, English is an occasional rather than habitual working tool which means that whatever proficiency these staff members possess is not being developed through regular practice.

Table 2. Self-Rated English Proficiency by Skill (N = 17)

Skill	Beginner n (%)	Intermediate n (%)	Advanced n (%)
Listening	2 (11.8)	8 (47.0)	7 (41.2)
Speaking	6 (35.3)	8 (47.0)	3 (17.6)

2.3. Intercultural Experience and Awareness

The data on formal intercultural training reveals the most striking single finding in the staff questionnaire. Ten of seventeen respondents (58.8%) reported having received no formal training in intercultural communication but expressing a desire for it. Only three (17.6%) had received training recently, and two (11.8%) reported past training that was no longer current. One res pondent stated that no such training was necessary. The combined picture a large majority untrained, wanting training, and working in contexts where international interaction occurs describes a systemic gap between the actual communication demands of the role and the prepar ation provided by employing institutions. Self-reported cultural awareness was measured using five Likert items (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean scores across the cultural awa reness items were as follows: awareness that different cultures prefer different communication styles (M = 3.44); ability to adapt communication style based on guest nationality (M = 3.25); self-assessed cultural knowledge (M = 3.31); belief that respecting cultural differences is important (M = 3.75); and confidence in intercultural communication (M = 3.44). All means cluster around the midpoint of the scale, indicating widespread uncertainty rather than either strong awareness or its clear absence. Notably, the highest mean was for the importance of respecting cultural differences (M = 3.75) suggesting that staff value intercultural respect in principle while the ability to adapt communication style (M = 3.25) scored lowest among the five items. The gap between valuing respect and demonstrating adaptive competence is itself a finding: motivation and ability do not m ove in tandem here.

Table 3. Cultural-Awareness Likert Item Means (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item	Mean (M)
Different cultures prefer different communication styles	3.44
Ability to adapt communication style by guest nationality	3.25
Self-assessed cultural knowledge	3.31
Importance of respecting cultural differences	3.75
Confidence in intercultural communication	3.44

2.4. Small Talk and Relational Communication

Staff were asked whether they engage in small talk with international guests before or during service encounters, and if so, who usually initiates it. This item was added at the supervisor's recommendation because small talk, in Hall's (1976) framework, functions as the relational precursor to task communication in high-context cultures. The pattern of small talk ini tiation therefore reveals whether staff are actively deploying their high-context relational norm in intercultural encounters. Five respondents (29.4%) reported engaging in small talk regularly, two (11.8%) sometimes, five (35.3%) rarely, and five (29.4%) not at all. Taken together, 58.8% of staff engage in small talk rarely or never with international guests. When asked about initiation among those who do engage in small talk, seven respondents (41.2%) said they typically initiate it themselves, eight (47.1%) said it varies, and two (11.8%) reported that guests usually initiate. These figures are analytically significant. Hall (1976) characterizes high-context cultures as ones in which relationship-building precedes transaction where establishing personal rapport is not a prelude to the real work but part of it. The finding that a majority of staff rarely or never initiate small talk with international guests suggests that the high-context relational norm, far from being uniformly applied in cross-cultural service encounters, is suspended for a substantial proportion of the workforce. Whether this reflects deliberate adjustment to perceived guest preferences, professional formality adopted in international contexts, or linguistic insecurity that makes open-ended conversation feel risky cannot be established from the questionnaire data alone. The interview and observation data address this question further.

2.5. Communication Challenges and Gap Beliefs

Staff were asked how frequently they experience communication difficulties with inter national guests. Eight respondents (47.1%) reported experiencing difficulties sometimes, four (23.5%) rarely, three (17.6%) frequently, and one never. No respondent reported experiencing communication difficulties very frequently. The distribution suggests that while problems are not uncommon, they are not perceived as a constant feature of work an assessment that may reflect both the limited frequency of international guest contact for many staff and the tendency to attribute smooth interactions to personal competence rather than favorable contextual conditions. When asked to identify the most common types of communication problems, the most frequently cited category across respondents was difficulty understanding guests' English due to accent, speed, or vocabulary a receptive rather than productive challenge. Different cultural expectations and misunderstanding guest needs were also prominent. Non-verbal communication problems were mentioned by two respondents, and dissatisfaction with communication style by one. The dominance of linguistic explanations over cultural ones in staff self-reports reflects a pattern w

orth examining: staff tend to perceive communication breakdown as a language proficiency problem rather than a cultural mismatch problem. This self-perception is partially supported and partially contradicted by the Likert items addressing gap beliefs. The mean agreement that l anguage barriers are the primary cause of communication problems was M = 3.53 above the midpoint, indicating moderate agreement that language is the main issue. However, mean agreement that cultural differences cause as many problems as language was M = 2.12, indicating general disagreement with the equivalence of linguistic and cultural causes. Staff, in other words, acknowledge language as a significant barrier but do not strongly recognize cultural differences as equally important. This finding is directly relevant to Hypothesis 1, which proposes that communication gaps are primarily cultural rather than linguistic. Staff's own attribution patterns show limited awareness of the cultural contribution to breakdown itself a communicative risk, since a person who attributes misunderstanding to language tends to address it by speaking more slowly or simply, rather than by adjusting the cultural assumptions embedded in their communication style. On the positive side, mean agreement that better training would reduce communication problems was M = 4.00 the highest mean of any Likert item in the questionnaire. Staff not only want training; they believe it works. This belief is the appropriate foundation for the practical recommendations offered in the General Conclusion.

2.6. Training and Support Priorities

Staff were asked to rank five training modalities in order of perceived usefulness. Tourism-specific English language classes and general communication skills training were ranked first by ten and eleven respondents respectively, yielding the two lowest (most favoured) mean ranks: M = 1.67 and M = 1.69. Cross-cultural communication strategies ranked third (M = 2.53), customer service fourth (M = 2.40), and cultural awareness fifth (M = 2.73). The ranking confirms the pa ttern identified in the gap beliefs data: staff prioritise language-focused training over intercultural training. Notably, cultural awareness the domain most directly targeted by this study's recommendations received the highest mean rank, meaning it was placed last or near-last by most respondents. This is not evidence of indifference; it reflects a genuine belief that language is the binding constraint. The pedagogical challenge this creates is discussed in the General Conclusion. In open-ended responses, the most frequently requested form of management support was paid time off for training (cited by twelve respondents), followed by more opportunities for direct inte raction with international guests (cited by thirteen), and clear communication guidelines (cited by eight). Financial support for external courses was requested by seven. The prominence of 'more interaction with guests' as a support need is telling: staff correctly identify experiential exposure

as a learning pathway and are requesting it. This has implications for how training programmes are designed.

3. Tourist Questionnaire Results

The four tourist participants T1 (United Kingdom), T2 (Hong Kong), T3 (Canada), T4 (Malaysia) represent varied cultural profiles. T1, T3, and T4 are first-time visitors to Ghardaïa; T2 joined a UK-organized tour group. Self-rated English proficiency was native for T1 and T3, adva nced for T2, and intermediate for T4. Table 4 provides a comparative summary of the key questionnaire responses across the four participants.

Table 4. Comparative Summary of Tourist Questionnaire Responses (N = 4)

Item	T1 – UK	T2 – HK	T3 – Canada	T4 – Malaysia
English level	Native	Advanced	Native	Intermediate
Staff communication style (Q7: explicit/direct)	1 (SA)	1 (SA)	1 (SA)	3 (Neutral)
Reliance on nonverbal cues (Q8)	4 (Disagree)	2 (Agree)	4 (Disagree)	2 (Agree)
Preference for explicit information (Q9)	1 (SA)	1 (SA)	1 (SA)	1 (SA)
Messages seemed implicit (Q10)	4 (Disagree)	4 (Disagree)	4 (Disagree)	2 (Agree)
Misunderstanding reported	None	None	Linguistic (driver)	Multiple minor
Communication preference	Low-context	Both (slight LC)	Low-context	Low-context
Staff adaptation effectiveness	5/5	5/5	5/5	2/5
Overall satisfaction	5/5	5/5	5/5	3/5

Note. SA = Strongly Agree. LC = low-context. Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Three of four tourist participants (T1, T2, T3) rated their overall communication satisfaction at 5/5 and reported no significant misunderstandings. All four expressed a preference for direct, explicit communication consistent with low-context orientation regardless of cultural background. T2 (Hong Kong) exhibited the most balanced profile, rating both explicitness and relational cues equally at 4/5, which is consistent with Hong Kong's historically hybrid position between East Asian and British communicative norms (Hall, 1976). T4 (Malaysia) stands out as the only participant to report persistent communication friction, moderate staff adaptation (2/5 effectiveness), and a satisfaction rating of 3/5. Notably, T4 also used three languages during the visit (English, French, Arabic), used translation apps, and characterised the community as 'closed' the only participant to use the term. The Malaysian participant's experience is the single most productive case for the study's hypotheses and receives extended treatment in the interview an alysis below.

4. Tourist Interview Findings

The four semi-structured interviews are analyzed thematically, organized around Hall's three dimensions: contextual communication, proxemics, and temporal orientation. A fourth theme communication adaptation addresses the strategies deployed by both parties when gaps were encountered. Participant quotations are presented as block quotations where three lines or more are required, and integrated into prose for shorter extracts, following the editorial standards of the dissertation.

4.1. Theme One: High-Context versus Low-Context Communication

All four participants expressed a clear preference for explicit, direct verbal communication from service staff the canonical low-context expectation (Hall, 1976). T1 (Bristol, UK) stated: 'I am personally very direct. If I have a question, I go straight to the point, and I expect the same in return.' T3 (Canada) described his most satisfying interactions as feeling 'like a regular conversat ion in my country' a formulation that implies a low-context standard of verbal directness. T2 (Hong Kong) rated both explicitness and relational cues at 4/5, marking herself as the participant most open to high-context communication alongside explicit delivery. T1 and T3 reported that staff communication met their low-context expectations. T1 attributed this directly to guide quality: S taff relied primarily on direct verbal explanations. They stated cultural expectations explicitly for instance, telling us about appropriate dress and respectful behaviour rather than leaving us to pick up on cues. That said, their warmth and body language reinforced what they said verbally. This observation captures an important nuance: the guide was producing low-context message content (explicit information, stated expectations) within a high-context relational frame (warmth, body language). T1 received the content she needed and experienced the warmth as complementary rather than substitutive a successful instance of what Hall (1976) describes as a communicator operating across context levels rather than being confined to one. T4 (Malaysia) presents a contrasting picture. She described needing to ask questions 'again and again' because information was not volunteered proactively: 'You should always seek what you want by asking the tourist guide, the companion.' The phrase 'always seek' implies that information-giving was reactive rather than anticipatory the guide responded when asked but did not volunteer context that a visitor new to the destination might need. From the staff side, this is standard high-context service behavior: the assumption that relevant information will be requested when needed. From T4's side, it produced the experience of a 'closed community' meaning a community whose communicative norms she could not read and whose information access rules she could not anticipate. What makes T4's case theoretically interesting is that Malaysia is itself typically classified as a high-context culture (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2001). Yet her communication behavior throughout the visit was

consistently low-context: she sought explicit verbal clarity, used translation apps, and switched languages to achieve precision. The Ghardaïa guides' high-context communication style clashed with her expectations not because she came from a low-context culture but because high-context systems, when they differ in their specific cultural logic Mozabite-Algerian versus Southeast Asian-Malay can be as mutually opaque as high-context and low-context systems. Her frustration was not with implicitness per se but with a form of implicitness she had no framework for reading.

4.2. Theme Two: Proxemics and Nonverbal Communication

Three of four participants (T1, T2, T3) described physical distance during interactions as comfortable and appropriate. T1 (Bristol) noted: 'The staff maintained a comfortable conversational distance. It felt natural and respectful not too close, not distant. In the market, the shopkeeper stood a bit closer when showing carpet details, which felt appropriate to the task rather than intrusive.' T2 (Hong Kong) made a similar observation: 'The staff's physical distance felt appropriate neither too close nor too distant.' These consistent assessments suggest that the guides serving UK-organized tour groups had calibrated their proxemic behavior to an international nor m rather than a locally typical one possibly through accumulated experience with European tourists. T3 (Canada) did not comment directly on proxemics in interview, but Observation 4, which documented the Canadian tourist's 50-minute palace tour, recorded 'eye contact mostly avoided, physical distance noticeably distant' from the guest, and 'guest body language: withdrawn.' The researcher's field note reads: 'the guest likes to be treated like a sir... if you know what I mean,' and the guide is described as having maintained formal distance and a 'more formal tone' in response. This observation captures a proxemic dynamic that the questionnaire and interview did not surface directly: the Canadian participant arrived with strong status-distance expectations (confirmed by his questionnaire preference for being addressed as 'Sir' or by last name) that the guide read correctly and accommodated through spatial and tonal formality. The interaction quality was rated 'adequate' rather than 'high' reflecting that while communication was functional, the relational warmth present in O1, O2, and O3 was absent here. All four participants noted the productive use of gesture and physical demonstration. T1 described the guide holding two carpets side by side for visual comparison; T2 mentioned guides pointing at architectural details and using hand movements to indicate shapes and proportions; T3 noted that vendors used gestures freely in the marketplace. These instances represent high-context communication strategies conveying meaning through physical action rather than verbal description that all three satisfied participants received positively when they supplemented rather than replaced explicit ver bal information. T1's summary is instructive: she described gestures as a 'show, don't just tell' approach, framing it as an enhancement of verbal communication rather than an alternative to it.

This is consistent with Hall's (1966, 1976) observation that high-context and low-context behaviors are not mutually exclusive; they become problematic only when context substitutes for content rather than enriching it.

4.3. Theme Three: Temporal Orientation

Temporal orientation the monochronic/polychronic dimension of Hall's (1983) framework generated the least direct data across the four tourist interviews. None of the four participants described explicit scheduling conflicts or complaints about timing. This absence may reflect the quality of the guides involved in these particular interactions rather than the absence of temporal difference as a structural feature of Ghardaïa's tourism environment. Indirect evidence of temporal expectations is present, however. T1 (Bristol) suggested, as her primary recommendation for improvement, that 'more time at each location' should be allowed implying that the current pacing felt rushed relative to her expectations for depth of engagement. T2 (Hong Kong) made a similar suggestion: 'brief written summaries of key cultural information so tourists can review and reflect on what they learned after the tour.' Both suggestions are consistent with a monochronic expectation that each activity should be given sufficient allocated time to be completed satisfactorily, and that information given in excess of what a scheduled slot allows should be made available through supplementary means. T3 (Canada) expressed no timing concerns, which is consistent with the smoothness of his verbal communication experience. T4 (Malaysia) also did not specifically address scheduling, though her description of having to extract information activ ely 'always seek what you want' implies a visit pace that felt reactive rather than organized. The staff questionnaire's finding that many respondents are comfortable managing simultaneous inte ractions and accommodating schedule changes (items 17–18 in the original instrument) points to a polychronic default that, while not generating major conflicts in these four cases, represents a structural difference whose effects would likely become visible with less experienced or less flexible guides.

4.4. Theme Four: Communication Adaptation Strategies

The study's data reveal an asymmetry in adaptation effort across the four tourist participants. T1, T2, and T3 reported that staff adapted proactively and effectively: T1 noted the guide slowing his pace when she asked detailed questions; T2 observed guides using a 'consistent tone calibrated to an international audience'; T3's guide managed translation to a driver who lacked English and resolved the problem immediately. In all three cases, the burden of communication maintenance rested primarily with the staff member. T4's experience was different. She reported initiating all adaptation herself: switching from English to French or Arabic, using translation apps,

and asking questions repeatedly. Her assessment that staff should 'be more flexible and tolerate the ignorance of the tourist' makes explicit what the data imply: she felt the accommodation burden was distributed unevenly, with the tourist expected to adapt to the staff's communicative environment rather than the reverse. This perception is consistent with high-context service norms in which the guest is expected to operate within the cultural framework of the host community rather than having that framework adapted for them a norm that functions well for guests who share the cultural background but creates friction for those who do not. T3 (Canada) had a l inguistically simple but practically important adaptation experience: he gradually developed an awareness that being addressed as 'Sir' or by last name mattered to him, and communicated this preference to the guide. His questionnaire suggestion 'ask tourists at the beginning how they prefe r to be addressed' is a low-cost, high-value adaptation that the agencies had not implemented. This absence is a small example of a larger pattern: staff have not been trained to elicit guest communication preferences at the start of an interaction, which is a standard low-context service practice in cultures where explicit preference-stating is the norm.

5. Observation Protocol Findings

Four staff–guest interactions were documented through the structured observation protocol. Table 5 provides a comparative summary.

Table 5. Summary of Observed Staff–Guest Interactions (N = 4)

Feature	O1 – France	O2 – UK (2)	O3 – HK	O4 – Canada
Duration	45 min	10 min	12 min	50 min
Purpose	Palace tour	Carpet purchase	Date purchase	Palace tour
Staff English level	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced	Advanced
Languages used	EN / AR / FR	English only	English only	EN / FR
Physical distance	Close	Close	Close	Noticeably distant
Eye contact (staff)	Direct / sustained	Direct / sustained	Direct / sustained	Mostly avoided
Guest body language	Relaxed / engaged	Relaxed / engaged	Relaxed / engaged	Withdrawn
Gap apparent?	No	No	No	No (verbal)
Staff adaptation	Partial (code-switch)	Partial	Partial (slowed)	Yes (formal tone / distance)
Overall quality	High	High	High	Adequate

Note. EN = English; AR = Arabic; FR = French.

Three of four observations (O1, O2, O3) were rated high quality; one (O4) was rated adequate. All four guides were observed to have advanced English competence, suggesting that the cooperating agencies assigned their most proficient staff to international tour duties a finding that has implications for how representative the observed interactions are of the broader agency workforce captured in the staff questionnaire, where beginner-to-intermediate speaking profiles predominated. The most analytically significant observation is O4. The Canadian tourist's body language 'withdrawn,' with 'noticeably distant' physical positioning and 'mostly avoided' eye contact contrasts sharply with the relaxed, engaged body language documented in O1, O2, and O3. Yet the observer recorded no verbal communication gap as apparent. The guide's response maintaining formal distance, adopting a more formal tone, and, according to the researcher's field note, reading the guest as someone who 'likes to be treated like a sir' represents an instance of proxemic adaptation in real time: the guide correctly read nonverbal cues from the guest and adjusted his own spatial and tonal behavior accordingly. That this produced only an 'adequate' rather than 'high' quality rating suggests that correct reading and adequate accommodation do not automatically produce the relational warmth that elevates an interaction from functional to satisfying. O3 (Hong Kong) recorded one recurring accent-related moment in which the guest occasionally did not catch the guide's words. The guide's adaptation slowing delivery was noted as partially effective. This is a linguistic rather than cultural gap, but it illustrates how a single phonological feature (accent) can disrupt comprehension even between two advanced English speakers, and how a simple delivery adjustment can substantially reduce that disruption. O1 (French guest, palace tour) generated the most detailed researcher notes and is the only observation in which code-switching was documented systematically: 'when the guest does not understand something' in English, the guide switched to French. The researcher's analytical memo notes that the interaction's smoothness was partly attributable to the guest's likely familiarity with North African cultural context a factor that reduced the cultural distance the guide needed to bridge. This contextual variable how culturally proximate the guest is to the host culture is not captured in the questionnaire instruments but appears in field observation as a potentially important moderator of communication quality.

6. Discussion

Three findings converge consistently across all four data sources. First, English language proficiency specifically speaking proficiency is a genuine and widespread constraint for the broader agency workforce. The staff questionnaire documents a significant gap between listening comprehension (majority intermediate-to-advanced) and speaking production (significant beginner component). The tourist questionnaires and interviews confirm that where guides with

advanced English were deployed, satisfaction was high and linguistic barriers were minimal. The observation data shows all four assigned guides had advanced English. Taken together, these sources suggest that the agencies have a two-tier English proficiency structure: a small number of advanced-proficiency guides who handle international tours, and a larger workforce of reception and administrative staff whose English is insufficient for extended intercultural interaction. This structure masks the true scope of the language challenge at the institutional level. Second, all data sources point to the near-total absence of formal intercultural communication training. The staff questionnaire documents this directly (58.8% untrained, desiring training). The tourist data confirms its effects indirectly: T4's experience of being expected to adapt to the host environment rather than receiving proactive cultural scaffolding is the experiential correlate of a workforce that has not been prepared to recognize or address guests' cultural communication expectations. The observation data shows guides reading cultural cues and adapting but doing so intuitively, on the basis of personal experience rather than trained framework. Intuition works for experienced guide s in familiar situations; it fails when the cultural gap is wider or the guide is newer. Third, physical demonstrations and gestures were consistently noted across interviews and observations as effective communication supplements. T1, T2, and observations O1–O3 all document gestures, pointing, and 'show rather than tell' strategies being used productively. This is high-context communication behavior conveying meaning through action that tourists received positively when it enriched explicit verbal content. The convergence of evidence here is relevant to training design: gesture-supplemented explanation is a natural and effective strategy already in use; formalising it as a deliberate intercultural adaptation tool rather than an improvised fallback could increase its consistency.

The most significant divergence in the data is between staff perceptions of communication gap causes and the evidence generated by tourist accounts and observation. Staff questionnaire responses locate the primary cause of communication breakdown in language barriers (M = 3.53 for language as main cause) and show limited endorsement of cultural differences as equally important (M = 2.12). Tourist accounts and observation data tell a different story: T4's persistent friction arose from contextual and cultural misalignment as much as from language the implicit access rules of the community, the reactive rather than proactive information provision, the asymmetric distribution of accommodation effort. O4 documents proxemic and tonal misalignment that never produced a verbal gap but nonetheless reduced interaction quality to 'adequate.' This divergence between staff attribution and tourist experience is itself a finding. It suggests that staff are not misreporting they genuinely perceive language as the main barrier but that their perception is incomplete. The cultural dimensions of communication gaps are not visible

to them as cultural because they experience their own high-context, polychronic communication style as simply normal behavior, not as a cultural choice that could be adjusted. This is precisely the dynamic Hall (1976) describes as the invisibility of one's own cultural framework: it becomes visible only in the collision with a different one. The staff questionnaire data on cultural awareness means clustering around the scale midpoint, reflecting widespread uncertainty is consistent with this interpretation. A second notable divergence concerns T4 (Malaysia) versus T1 and T3 (UK and Canada). H2 predicts that low-context tourists experience more difficulty than high-context tourists. T1 and T3, both from prototypically low-context cultures, reported no significant gaps and rated satisfaction at 5/5. T4, from a nominally high-context culture, reported persistent friction and rated satisfaction at 3/5. This appears to contradict H2 until the mechanism is examined more carefully. T1 and T3 had access to guides with advanced English who produced explicitly low-context communication style effectively removing the cultural mismatch by providing what those tourists expected. T4 encountered a more variable communication environment (multiple staff wit h different English levels, code-switching, limited proactive information-giving) in which the guides' high-context defaults were more visible. The variable is therefore not tourist cultural background alone but the interaction between tourist background and guide communication style. H2 is partially supported in the sense that low-context tourist expectations do create specific friction points formal address expectations, need for proactive information but the guides' adaptation capacity moderated the outcome for T1 and T3 in ways it did not for T4.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that the root cause of intercultural communication problems between agency staff and international visitors is not insufficient English proficiency but the confl ict between the staff's high-context communication style and visitors' low-context expectations. The evidence partially supports this hypothesis. The partial support operates in two directions. On the one hand, the data do confirm that cultural and contextual factors contribute to communication difficulty in ways that language training alone would not address: T4's experience of implicit access rules, the small talk initiation findings (59% rarely or never initiating), O4's proxemic and tonal dynamics, and staff's self-reported uncertainty about whether they adapt their communication style by guest nationality (M = 3.25) all point to cultural rather than linguistic gaps. On the other hand, the language dimension cannot be dismissed. The staff questionnaire shows six respondents (35.3%) with beginner-level speaking English, and the majority rarely using English at work. For those staff members, language is a real and present barrier, not a secondary issue. Hypothesis 1's formulation 'not linguistic but cultural' overstates the case as an either/or. The more accurate conclusion from the data is that language and culture interact as co-producing causes, and that

existing training addresses the linguistic dimension while leaving the cultural dimension almost entirely unaddressed.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that low-context tourists experience more communication difficulty than high-context tourists, independent of language proficiency. The evidence does not straigh tforwardly support or refute this hypothesis, and the sample is too small (N = 4) to draw any co nclusion with confidence. The most important finding relevant to H2 is the Malaysian participant's case, which illustrates that cultural background does not determine communication experience in isolation. T4's home culture is high-context, yet she behaved as a low-context communicator in Ghardaïa and experienced more friction than the low-context UK and Canadian participants. The key moderating variable appears to be the quality and style of the assigned guide specifically, whether the guide produced communication that matched the tourist's expectations, regardless of whether those expectations were culturally typical of the tourist's country of origin. Individual var iation within cultural categories is large enough to complicate cultural generalizations, a limitation that Hall (1976) himself acknowledged and that Holliday (2011) subsequently formalized through the critique of cultural essentialism. H2 remains a plausible hypothesis worth testing with a larger and more culturally varied sample, but cannot be confirmed on the basis of the present data.

7. Conclusion

The data generated through four complementary instruments reveal a consistent and coherent picture of intercultural communication in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies. A workforce with modest and unevenly distributed English proficiency, limited intercultural training, and a high-context communication default is serving an international clientele whose members regardless of cultural origin arrive with low-context expectations for explicit, proactive, and verbally clear service c ommunication. Where experienced, advanced-proficiency guides bridge this gap through intuitive adaptation, satisfaction is high. Where the bridge is absent different guide quality, limited proactive information-giving, asymmetric accommodation effort friction emerges and satisfaction drops. The small talk data add a specific and theoretically grounded dimension to this picture: the high-context relational norm that Hall (1976) identifies as central to cultures like Algeria's is not being consistently applied in intercultural encounters. A majority of staff engage in small talk rarely or never with international guests, and initiation patterns are variable. Whether this reflects linguistic insecurity, professional formality, or deliberate adjustment to perceived guest preferences cannot be determined from the present data alone, but the finding creates a productive question for future research and a concrete point of intervention for training design. The General Conclusion draws on these findings to formulate specific, evidence-based recommendations for tourism EOP curricula and staff development programmes.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This dissertation set out to investigate intercultural communication gaps in English for Occupational Purposes interactions between tourism agency staff and international visitors in Ghardaïa, Algeria. The study was motivated by a practical observation: staff in the cooperating agencies could often produce grammatically correct English, yet interactions with foreign tourists still broke down in ways that neither party could easily explain. The theoretical basis was that Hall's (1976, 1966, 1983) high context-low context communication, proxemics, and temporal orientation framework would uncover what language alone analysis could not, i.e. the cultural logic behind the gaps. The study employed four data collection instruments: a structured questionnaire which was given to 17 members of agency staff, a similar questionnaire filled by four participants who were international tourists, semi-structured interviews with each of those tourists, and finally a structured observation protocol was used on four staff, guest interactions. Together, they produced a dataset from multiple perspectives that helped us to cross-validate results with different sources and to make conclusions supported by evidence from both sides of the interactions studied.

Several findings stand out as both consistent across data sources and consequential for understanding what is happening in Ghardaïa's tourism agencies. The workforce carries a significant speaking proficiency deficit. While listening comprehension was rated intermediate to advanced by the majority of staff respondents, 35.3% rated their English-speaking ability at beginner level. This receptive-productive asymmetry means that many staff can follow a tourist's question but cannot formulate a clear response. The majority use English rarely in their working week, which means proficiency is not being maintained through practice. Observation data show that the cooperating agencies manage this gap by assigning their most proficient guides to international tour duties creating a two-tier structure in which a small number of capable guides absorb most of the intercultural communication challenge while the broader workforce remains un derprepared. Formal intercultural communication training is effectively absent. Ten of seventeen staff respondents (58.8%) had received no intercultural training and expressed a desire for it. The five cultural awareness Likert items all produced means clustered around the scale midpoint, reflecting widespread uncertainty about whether one's communication style varies by culture, whether one can adapt it, and whether one has adequate cultural knowledge to do so. Staff are not indifferent to these questions mean agreement that better training would reduce communication problems was the highest in the survey at M = 4.00 but the institutional infrastructure to act on tha t belief does not yet exist. The small talk data reveal a specific and theoretically grounded gap. Hall (1976) characterizes high-context cultures as ones in which relationship-building precedes

transaction the relational dimension of an encounter is not preliminary to the real work but con stitutive of it. Yet 58.8% of staff reported engaging in small talk with international guests rarely or never. The high-context relational norm is, for the majority of the workforce, suspended rather than deployed in cross-cultural encounters. The cause cannot be determined from questionnaire data alone linguistic insecurity, professional formality, or a deliberate adjustment to perceived guest expectations are all plausible but the pattern is clear and creates a measurable deficit in the r elational quality of international service interactions. Tourist satisfaction was strongly differentiated by guide quality rather than by cultural background. Three of four tourist participants, regardless of their cultural orientation, rated satisfaction at 5/5 when served by guides with advanced English and adaptive communication styles. The fourth participant from Malaysia, a nominally high-context culture reported persistent friction and rated satisfaction at 3/5. Her experience was shaped less by her cultural origin than by a more variable service environment in which guides' high-context defaults were more visible and proactive information-giving less consistent. This finding underlines the importance of guide quality as the decisive variable in intercultural communication outcomes and, by implication, the centrality of guide training as a lever for improvement.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that the primary cause of intercultural communication problems is not insufficient English proficiency but the conflict between the staff's high-context communication style and visitors' low-context expectations. The evidence partially supports this hypothesis. Cultural and contextual factors do contribute to communication difficulty in ways that language instruction alone would not address: the implicit access rules that T4 found opaque, the uneven distribution of accommodation effort, the reactive rather than proactive information-giving, and the proxemic-tonal dynamics documented in Observation 4 are all culturally rather than linguistically generated. At the same time, the data cannot support an either/or framing. Language proficiency is a genuine constraint for a substantial portion of the workforce. The more precise conclusion is that language and culture co-produce communication gaps, and that current training addresses one while leaving the other untouched.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that low-context tourists experience more communication diffic ulty than high-context tourists. The evidence does not confirm this hypothesis, and the sample is too small to test it rigorously. The Malaysian tourist's case from a nominally high-context culture yet experiencing the most friction introduces a complication that the hypothesis, in its original f orm, does not accommodate: high-context systems differ from one another, and a Mozabite-Algerian high-context framework can be as opaque to a Southeast Asian visitor as a Northern European one. Cultural background does not determine experience independently of guide quality

and the communication environment encountered. H2 remains a productive hypothesis for future research with larger and more varied samples, but it cannot be confirmed here.

This study makes two contributions to the theoretical understanding of intercultural communication in tourism contexts. The first is the application of Hall's framework to a North African tourism setting. The vast majority of empirical studies using Hall's dimensions focus on East Asian, European, or North American contexts (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The Ghardaïa data extend this body of evidence to a Saharan, Mozabite-Islamic context that shares some features of the broader Arab high-context profile Hall (1976) describes but also carries spe cific cultural characteristics a centuries-old mercantile tradition, a distinctive Islamic community identity, a heritage tourism profile that produce interaction dynamics not fully captured by regi onal generalizations. Hall's framework proves its value precisely here: by generating observable, behavioral indicators rather than abstract cultural characterizations, it allows the researcher to work with what is actually present in service encounters rather than with what regional typologies would predict. The second contribution concerns high-context/high-context interaction. Hall's framework is predominantly invoked to explain friction between high-context and low-context communicators. The Malaysian tourist case introduces a different phenomenon: two high-context systems whose specific cultural logics are mutually opaque. T4 came from a culture that shares Algeria's high-context orientation in broad structural terms but not in its specific relational scripts, access rules, or community norms. Her default response switching to low-context strategies such as translation apps, language-switching, and explicit questioning was an accommodation to a high-context environment she could not read, not evidence of a low-context cultural orientation. This case suggests that Hall's (1976) binary of high versus low context, while analytically useful, may need a third axis: within-high-context cross-cultural variation. This is a question that future r esearch, with larger samples spanning multiple high-context cultures, is better placed to address.

The study's most direct practical application is in the design of EOP training for tourism professionals in Ghardaïa and comparable emerging destinations. Current training, where it exists, addresses language proficiency vocabulary, grammar, and formulaic service language without attending to the intercultural communication dimension that this research shows to be as consequential as linguistic proficiency. The following recommendations are grounded in the study's empirical findings rather than in generic best-practice frameworks.

First, intercultural communication awareness should be integrated into tourism EOP curricula as a core component rather than an optional module. Byram's (1997) model of intercultur al communicative competence provides the appropriate framework: learners need not only

language knowledge but the critical cultural awareness to recognize that their own communication defaults are not universal, and the adaptive skills to adjust when they encounter different ones. For Ghardaïa's tourism professionals, this means explicit classroom attention to Hall's dimensions not as abstract theory but as a diagnostic framework for understanding specific, recurring friction points in their own service encounters.

Second, the small talk finding points to a concrete and trainable intervention. Guides who engage in relational small talk initiate it in 41.2% of cases a minority of interactions. Training that reframes small talk not as idle chat but as a culturally strategic tool for reducing perceived distance and establishing the relational trust on which informative, effective communication depends would address a specific gap identified in the data. Byram (1997) and Holliday (2011) both note that intercultural competence involves managing the relational dimension of encounters, not just the informational one.

Third, a simple structural intervention asking tourists at the start of each interaction how they prefer to be addressed would address the address preference gap identified by T3 (Canada). The broader principle is to develop a brief guest preference elicitation practice: a standardized set of opening questions that establish how the guest wants information delivered, what they are most interested in, and whether they have any specific communication needs. This is standard low-context service practice and requires only training and institutional encouragement to implement.

Fourth, the observation data and tourist suggestions converge on the value of written cultural summaries brief, take-away documents covering the key cultural, historical, and behavioral information visitors encounter during a tour. T1 (Bristol) and T2 (Hong Kong) both independently suggested this. Such materials reduce the cognitive load on guides to transmit everything verbally, give tourists a reference they can consult after the tour, and allow guides to spend more time on relational interaction rather than information delivery.

Fifth, and most structurally, the agencies require a pathway for developing their broader workforce's intercultural awareness alongside their language proficiency. The current two-tier model a small number of advanced guides handling international interactions, a larger workforce with limited English and no intercultural preparation is not sustainable as international visitor numbers grow. Needs analysis procedures, as described by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), should be applied periodically to identify which specific communicative situations are generating the most friction, so that training targets the actual challenges staff encounter rather than generic proficiency objectives.

General Conclusion:

The limitations acknowledged in the General Introduction and Chapter Two remain in force and must be restated here. The tourist interview sample of four participants restricts the scope of conclusions that can be drawn from the tourist-side qualitative data. Four participants from four countries, while providing cultural diversity, cannot support claims about communication experiences across the full range of nationalities visiting Ghardaïa. The one-month data collection window constrained both the volume of tourist contact and the depth of observational data, which captured discrete interactions rather than the full arc of extended tour experiences. The absence of formal instrument piloting means that item comprehension cannot be verified retrospectively. The majority of tourism agencies visited operate in domestic and religious travel markets without international tourist contact, which narrowed the accessible population and contributed to the smal l tourist sample. We also acknowledge the limitation of researcher positionality discussed in Chapter Two. Both researchers are embedded in the Ghardaïa cultural context with over fifteen years of professional experience each. While this provided access, reduced social distance, and enabled culturally informed observation, it also carries the risk that high-context communication behaviors normalized by long familiarity were underrepresented in the observational data. Hall's framework was used explicitly as an external analytical lens to counteract this tendency, but the risk cannot be fully eliminated.

Several research directions emerge directly from the present study's findings and limitations. The most pressing is replication with a larger tourist sample spanning a wider range of cultural origins, including visitors from prototypically high-context cultures across the Arab world, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. A sample large enough to support systematic comparison across cultural profiles would allow the hypotheses formulated in this study particularly H2 to be tested rigorously rather than explored tentatively. A second direction is a staff-facing qualitative study. The present research captured staff perspectives through a questionnaire but not through in-depth interviews. Staff accounts of their own intercultural communication challenges, their interpretations of tourist behavior, and their existing if intuitive adaptation strategies would add a dimension of depth that the survey instrument could not generate. Combining staff and tourist interview data would enable genuine bilateral analysis of the same encounters rather than the primarily tourist-side qualitative analysis available here. Third, a longitudinal study measuring communication satisfaction before and after a structured intercultural training programme would provide the strongest available evidence for the practical recommendations offered in this chapter. If training incorporating Hall's framework and small talk initiation as a deliberate strategy produces measurable improvements in tourist satisfaction and staff confidence, that evidence would support the pedagogical case made here with a degree of

certainty the present study cannot achieve. Fourth, the Malaysian tourist case raises a theoretically productive question about within-high-context-culture variation that deserves dedicated investigation. A study specifically comparing the Ghardaïa service experience of tourists from multiple high-context cultures Arab, Southeast Asian, East Asian, sub-Saharan African would allow the fine-grained differences in high-context cultural logics to be mapped more precisely t han Hall's (1976) broad regional categories permit. Finally, comparative research across North African tourism destinations Tlemcen, Tamanrasset, Ouargla would establish whether the patterns documented in Ghardaïa are specific to its Mozabite-Islamic cultural context or generalizable to the Algerian tourism sector more broadly. Such comparative data would strengthen the basis for national-level training policy recommendations..

The intercultural communication in tourism isn't simply a matter for a technical problem with a technical solution. It originates when two different cultural frameworks come face to face; each of these frameworks is, from the user's perspective, just the normal way of doing things. For example, a guide from Ghardaïa who gives information when asked and makes the visitor laugh through the use of jokes is not only communicating but acting in accordance with a deeply coherent cultural logic. On the other hand, a German or Canadian tourist who expects organized itineraries and formal language is not being unreasonably demanding but rather expressing similarly a coherent set of expectations. It is this divergence between the two legitimate sets of assumptions that the current research focuses on.

This study will contribute to making that gap clear not only to researchers and training designers but ultimately to the professionals who are living and working that cultural gap. Ghardaïa's tourism agencies are one of the places where one of Algeria's most culturally significant heritages meets an increasingly international population of visitors. In many cases, guides who lead tourists there are, to a large extent, doing what might be an entirely new and difficult task without the benefit of much, if any, formal training: they are bridging completely different worlds. What is evident from the data is that most of them are doing it very effectively, and that the ones who have acquired those skills to a great extent can teach those who have yet to receive the training or gain the experience to develop such skills. Disseminating that information/instruction by means of the creation of more effective EOP programmes, guide-to-guide mentoring, and institutional acknowledgment that cultural competence is as valuable as linguistic accuracy is where the actual/immediate work of enhancing intercultural communication in Ghardaïa's tourism sector begins.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Structured Tourist Questionnaire

(Focused on Hall's Theory of Intercultural Communication)

Researcher note: This questionnaire is addressed to international visitors who have had direct English-language interactions with Ghardaïa tourism agency staff. It is anonymous and takes approximately eight minutes to complete. Responses are used solely for academic research.

Instructions: Please circle or tick your answer, or write briefly where indicated. For rating items, circle the number that best represents your view (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree unless otherwise stated).

A. Background Information

Nationality: _____
Age: _____
Self-rated English level: □ Beginner □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Native
Purpose of visit: □ Tourism □ Business □ Family □ Other: _____
Did you use services from a local tourism agency during your visit? □ Yes □ No

B. Language of Interaction

6. Which language(s) did agency staff primarily use with you? (tick all that apply)
□ English □ French □ Arabic □ Other: _____

C. Communication Style: High-Context versus Low-Context (Hall, 1976)

Rate each statement from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

7. Staff communicated information in a direct, explicit way without relying on nonverbal cues.

1	2	3	4	5
□	□	□	□	□

1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree

8. I understood staff more through nonverbal cues (gestures, tone, facial expression) than through words.

1	2	3	4	5
□	□	□	□	□

1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree

9. Staff relied on shared contextual knowledge or implied meanings rather than stating things directly.

1	2	3	4	5
□	□	□	□	□

1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree

10. I prefer service staff to be very clear and provide detailed explicit information.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

11. Staff devoted more attention to relational warmth and small talk than to literal instructions.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

12. I believe people should be able to infer meaning from silence, pauses, or the situation itself.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

D. Proxemics, Temporal Orientation, and Silence (Hall, 1966, 1983)

Rate each statement from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree).

13. The physical distance staff maintained during our interaction (standing close or keeping distance) affected my sense of comfort and comprehension.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

14. Staff communicated a great deal of meaning through body language, gestures, showing, or pointing rather than words.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

15. Long pauses or silences during the interaction felt meaningful (respectful or communicative) rather than awkward.

1	2	3	4	5	1 = Strongly agree … 5 = Strongly disagree
□	□	□	□	□	

E. Specific Communication Incidents

16. Briefly describe one misunderstanding or moment of confusion you experienced with agency staff:

_____

_____

17. What do you think was the main cause? (tick one)

□ Linguistic (vocabulary, accent, grammar)
□ Cultural expectations (different norms about service, politeness, directness)
□ Contextual or nonverbal (hints, silence, implied meaning)
□ Proxemics or personal space
□ Mixed causes
□ Unsure

18. How was the misunderstanding resolved, if at all?

_____

_____

F. Communication Adaptation

19. Did staff change their communication style when they noticed you did not understand? □ Yes □ No
. If yes, how?

_____

_____

20. Did you change your own communication style to be better understood (e.g., speaking more slowly, using gestures, writing things down)? □ Yes □ No
. If yes, how?

_____

_____

21. If staff used alternative strategies (simpler language, gestures, written text), how effective were these?
1 = Not at all effective … 5 = Very effective Rating: _____

G. Communication Preferences and Expectations

22. Which communication style do you prefer from service staff?
□ Direct and explicit (low-context: clear instructions, detailed information)
□ Indirect and relationship-based (high-context: warmth, implied meaning)
□ Depends on the situation / No strong preference

23. Rate the importance of each of the following to your communication satisfaction (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important):
Clear, explicit instructions 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Relational warmth and implied cues 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Appropriate management of personal space and proxemics 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

H. Overall Satisfaction and Suggestions

24. Overall, how satisfied were you with communication at this agency?
1 = Very dissatisfied … 5 = Very satisfied Rating: _____

25. Would you recommend this agency to other travelers from your country? □ Yes □ No
. Why?

_____

_____

26. One suggestion for improving communication between staff and international guests:

_____

_____

Researcher note: During questionnaire administration, record observed nonverbal behaviors (gestures, interpersonal distance, use of silence) and any instances where meaning was inferred from context. These field observations supplement the self-report data.

Appendix B

Interview Guide for International Guests

(Semi-Structured, Focused on Hall's Theory)

Purpose: To elicit experiential accounts of high-context versus low-context communication, proxemic norms, temporal orientation, and accommodation behaviors in interactions between international guests and Ghardaïa tourism agency staff. Duration: approximately 20–40 minutes. Language: English. Interviews are audio-recorded with participant consent.

Section 1. Participant Background

Nationality: _____
Age: _____
Self-rated English level: □ Beginner □ Intermediate □ Advanced □ Native
Purpose of visit: □ Tourism □ Business □ Family □ Other: _____
Is this your first visit to Ghardaïa? □ Yes □ No — If no, number of previous visits: _____

Section 2. General Communication Experience

2a. Which language(s) did agency staff primarily use with you? □ English □ French □ Arabic □ Other: _____

2b. How would you describe your overall communication experience with agency staff? Please give one short example.

_____
_____

Section 3. Message versus Context (Hall's High/Low-Context Dimension)

3a. Did staff rely more on direct verbal explanations or on contextual and nonverbal cues? Please give one concrete example.

3b. Can you recall a moment when you understood something without explicit verbal explanation? What happened and how did you arrive at that understanding?

3c. How often did you need staff to repeat or rephrase information?
□ Never □ Rarely □ Sometimes □ Often □ Always

Section 4. Specific Misunderstanding (One Incident)

4a. Describe one situation where you experienced misunderstanding or discomfort with staff. What was said or done, and what was the outcome?

_____
_____

4b. What do you think caused it? (circle one)
□ Linguistic (vocabulary / accent) □ Cultural (expectations / norms) □ Contextual / nonverbal □ Mixed □ Unsure

4c. How was the issue resolved, if at all?

_____

Section 5. Communication Adaptation

5a. Did you or staff change your communication style to improve understanding? If yes, what changed and was it effective?

5b. Did staff use gestures, demonstrations, or physical showing rather than verbal explanation? Please give one example.

5c. Did you notice changes in staff tone, formality, or use of silence when they realized you were not following? Please describe.

Section 6. Communication Preferences and Expectations

6a. Do you prefer service staff to communicate directly and explicitly (low-context), or indirectly and relationally (high-context)? Why?

6b. Rate the importance of each to your satisfaction (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important):
Explicitness (clear, step-by-step information) 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Relational cues (warmth, politeness, implied meaning) 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

Section 7. Proxemics, Silence, and Hospitality Cues (Probes)

7a. Did staff's physical distance during the interaction — whether standing close, touching, or maintaining distance — affect how you perceived or understood the interaction? Please give one example.

7b. Were there moments of silence or notably long pauses during interactions? If yes, how did you interpret them — comfortable, awkward, respectful, or confusing?

7c. Beyond words, what specific behaviors made you feel welcomed or respected — eye contact, gestures, offering unsolicited help, small talk? Please give one example.

Section 8. Overall Satisfaction and Suggestions

8a. How satisfied are you with communication at this agency? 1 = Very dissatisfied … 5 = Very satisfied Rating: _____

8b. One suggestion to improve communication with tourists from your cultural background:

_____

8c. Is there anything else about communication with staff that you feel is important to share?

_____

Interviewer note: Throughout the interview, record examples of nonverbal behavior, interpersonal distance, length of silences, and any instances where meaning appears to be inferred from context rather than explicit verbalization. These field observations are integral to the Hall-based analysis.

Appendix C

Observation Protocol: Staff–Guest Interaction Documentation

(Hall-Focused)

Instructions for observer: Complete one form per observed interaction. Describe behavior first; interpret second. Link each observation to the Hall dimension it most plausibly reflects (context, proxemics, paralanguage, or temporal orientation). Where in doubt, record verbatim speech, distances, and timing rather than interpretations.

Section 1. Basic Information

Date and time: _____
Duration of interaction: _____ minutes
Location: □ Reception □ Tour Desk □ Restaurant □ Other: _____
Staff role: _____
Estimated staff English level: □ Beginner □ Intermediate □ Advanced
Guest estimated origin (country/region): _____
Number of guests: _____
Anonymization code for this interaction: _____
Informed consent status: □ Obtained □ Not applicable (observational, public service setting)

Section 2. Contextual Communication (High-Context vs. Low-Context — Hall, 1976)

Main purpose of interaction: _____
Language(s) used: □ English □ Arabic □ Code-switching □ Other: _____

High-context indicators (non-explicit meanings, reliance on shared background, implied communication):

Degree observed: □ None □ Some □ Clear
Examples:

_____
___

Low-context indicators (explicit, detailed verbal information, direct statements):

Degree observed: □ None □ Some □ Clear
Examples:

_____

Was meaning inferred rather than explicitly stated? □ Yes □ Partially □ No
Examples:

_____

Section 3. Proxemics — Physical Space (Hall, 1966)

Physical distance maintained during interaction:
□ Intimate (<0.5 m) □ Personal (0.5–1.2 m) □ Social (1.2–3.6 m) □ Public (>3.6 m)
Was the distance culturally appropriate for the guest's origin? □ Yes □ No □ Unsure
Guest reaction (if visible): _____
Physical contact observed: □ None □ Brief handshake □ Touch on arm / shoulder □ Other: _____
Appropriateness of contact: □ Appropriate □ Inappropriate □ Uncertain

Section 4. Paralanguage and Nonverbal Signals (High-Context Indicators — Hall, 1976)

Eye contact: □ Direct and sustained □ Minimal □ Avoided
Notes:

_____

Facial expression: □ Positive / Smiling □ Neutral □ Stressed / Negative
Examples:

_____

Gestures: □ Frequent □ Moderate □ Minimal □ Confusing / Potentially inappropriate
Describe:

_____

Tone, pitch, speech rate, and pauses: □ Calm / Steady □ Loud / Fast □ Hesitant / Paused
Effect on understanding: _____

Section 5. Temporal Orientation (Monochronic vs. Polychronic — Hall, 1983)

Pace and scheduling behavior observed:
□ On-time / Linear / Task-focused (monochronic) □ Flexible / Interrupt-driven / Relationship-first (polychronic)
Did differences in timing expectations cause visible friction? □ Yes □ Partially □ No
Describe:

_____

Section 6. Information Structure and Message Clarity

Was the staff's message explicit or implicit? □ Explicit (step-by-step) □ Mixed □ Implicit (context-dependent)
Use of contextual cues (reference to social roles, environment, shared background): □ None □ Some □ Many
Examples:

_____

Was repetition or elaboration used to bridge gaps? □ Yes □ No
How:

_____

Section 7. Interaction Outcome and Communication Quality

Guest apparent understanding at close of interaction: □ Yes □ Partially □ No
Behavioral indicators: _____
Staff adaptation observed (simplified language, increased gestures, changed distance, etc.): □ Yes □ Partially □ No
Describe:

_____

Overall interaction quality: □ Excellent □ Good □ Adequate □ Poor

Section 8. Communication Gap Classification (Hall Dimensions)

Gap type identified:
□ Linguistic □ Nonverbal / Proxemic □ Contextual (high/low-context mismatch) □ Temporal □ Other: _____
Probable cause(s):
□ Language limits □ Different context norms □ Different proxemic norms □ Different time orientation □ Faulty assumptions □ Other: _____
Was the gap resolved? □ Yes □ Partially □ No
Resolution method: _____

Section 9. Mismatch Ratings (Optional — for Cross-Interaction Analysis)

Rate each dimension on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Strong match between staff and guest; 5 = Strong mismatch).

Context mismatch (high/low-context) 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Proxemics mismatch 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Paralanguage mismatch 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Temporal orientation mismatch 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Overall communication breakdown score 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

Section 10. Field Notes and Verbatim Records

Exact staff utterances (quote directly):

"_____
"

Exact guest utterances (quote directly):

"_____
"

Environmental and contextual details (noise level, desk arrangement, signage, group size, time of day):

_____
_____

Observer initials: _____

Appendix D

Questionnaire: Tourism Staff Communication and Intercultural Competence Survey

This questionnaire seeks to survey tourism workers regarding their levels of English fluency, cultural contacts, and their views on communication problems. The survey method allows gathering by means of structured presentation of the questions and corresponds to a quantitative approach of research interrogation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age:
☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36–45 ☐ 46–55 ☐ 56+

2. Gender:
☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Role at tourism sector:
☐ Front desk / Reception ☐ Tour guide ☐ Manager ☐ Other: _____

4. Experience in the tourism sector (years):
☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–2 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ 6–10 years ☐ More than 10 years

5. Which qualification do you hold?
☐ Secondary school ☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor's degree ☐ Master's degree or higher

SECTION B: ENGLISH LANGUAGE BACKGROUND AND PROFICIENCY

6. What ways of learning English do you have? (Mark all that apply)
☐ School / formal education ☐ Self-study ☐ On-the-job training ☐ Private classes ☐ Other: _____

7. How long have you been studying / using English?
☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 4–6 years ☐ 7–10 years ☐ More than 10 years

8. What is your level of English?
Listening: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced
Speaking: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced
Reading: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced
Writing: ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ Advanced

9. How regularly is English used in your work?
☐ Every day, multiple times ☐ Daily ☐ Several times a week ☐ Weekly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely

10. What English language skills are most required for your work? (Rank 1 = most important to 4 = least important)
_____ Speaking to guests
_____ Understanding guests' spoken English
_____ Writing (emails, forms)
_____ Reading (instructions, reviews)

SECTION C: INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE AND AWARENESS

11. Have you been to English-speaking countries?

☐ Yes, several times
☐ Yes, once or twice
☐ No, but I have experience with international guests
☐ No

12. Have you already worked with international guests before this job?

☐ Yes, for more than 5 years
☐ Yes, for 1–5 years
☐ Yes, for less than 1 year
☐ No

13. Have you been provided with formal training in intercultural communication or cross-cultural awareness?

☐ Yes, recently
☐ Yes, but not recently
☐ No, but I would like to
☐ No, and I don't think it's necessary

14. Please mark your level of agreement with the statements below (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree):

Different cultures have different preferences for communication styles ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

I change my communication style based on the nationality of the guest ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

I am well informed about the cultures of guests' countries / regions ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Respecting guests' cultural differences is very important ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

I am capable of effectively communicating with guests from different cultures ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

15. Do you engage in small talk with international guests? *(e.g., casual conversation about their journey, their impressions of Ghardaïa, or general topics, before or alongside the main service purpose)*

☐ Yes, regularly
☐ Sometimes
☐ Rarely
☐ No — I move directly to the service purpose

If yes or sometimes: Who usually takes the initiative?
☐ I do (I start the small talk)
☐ The guest(s) usually start it
☐ It varies — sometimes me, sometimes the guest

SECTION D: COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND GAPS

16. How frequently do you experience communication difficulties with international guests?

☐ Very frequently ☐ Frequently ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never

17. Which communication problems are the most common that you deal with? (Check all that apply)

☐ Guests do not understand my English

☐ I do not understand guests' English (accent, speed, vocabulary)

☐ Misunderstandings about what guests want / need

☐ Guests are unhappy with my communication style (too formal / informal, too direct / indirect)

☐ Non-verbal communication issues (eye contact, personal space, gestures)

☐ Cultural expectations differ (about politeness, hierarchy, time)

☐ Other: _____

18. What is your position on the following statements about communication gaps? (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Language barriers cause most communication problems ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Cultural differences provoke as many problems as language ones ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

I am less effective in communication due to lack of cultural knowledge ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Poor communication may cause guests to be unsatisfied and business to be lost ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

With good training, communication problems can be lessened ..... 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

SECTION E: TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

19. Which training would be the most useful to you? (Rank 1 = most helpful to 6 = least helpful)

_____ English language classes focused on tourism vocabulary / phrases
_____ Communication skills training (clarity, listening, understanding)
_____ Cultural awareness training about guests' countries / cultures
_____ Cross-cultural communication strategies
_____ Customer service and handling complaints
_____ Other: _____

20. What support from management do you think will help in enhancing intercultural communication? (Mark all that apply)

☐ Time off for training

☐ Financial support for classes

☐ Clearer communication procedures / guidelines

☐ More exposure to international guests (job rotation)

☐ Access to cultural information / resources about guests' countries

☐ Staff incentives for excellent communication

☐ Other: _____

SECTION F: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

21. Please describe, in your own words, the greatest problem in communication that you have with international guests.

_____

_____

22. What, in your opinion, do tourism professionals in Ghardaïa require in order to improve their intercultural communication?

_____

_____

23. Would you like to add anything else about your communication experiences with international guests?

_____

_____

Thank you for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your answers because they will help us understand communication challenges in Ghardaïa's tourism sector.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة فجوات التواصل بين الثقافات في تفاعلات اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض مهنية بين موظفي وكالات السياحة والسياح الدوليين بمدينة غرداية، الجزائر. واستندت الدراسة إلى نظريات هول المتعلقة بالتواصل عالي ومنخفض السياق، والبروكسيميا، والتوجه الزمني، بهدف الكشف عن طبيعة هذه الفجوات وأسبابها وانعكاساتها على التكوين المهني. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً وصفياً استكشافياً من خلال دراسة حالة، باستعمال الاستبيانات، والمقابلات شبه الموجهة، والملاحظة المنظمة، بمشاركة سبعة عشر موظفًا وأربعة سياح دوليين من المملكة المتحدة، هونغ كونغ، كندا، وماليزيا. وقد تم تحليل البيانات وصفيًا وموضوعاتيًا بالاعتماد على تقنية التثليث. أظهرت النتائج أن فجوات التواصل تعود إلى تداخل عاملين رئيسيين: ضعف الكفاءة الشفوية في اللغة الإنجليزية لدى عدد معتبر من الموظفين، وغياب التكوين الرسمي في التواصل بين الثقافات. كما كشفت الدراسة ضعف استخدام استراتيجيات التواصل العلائقي مثل الأحاديث الودية القصيرة، رغم أهميتها في الثقافات عالية السياق. وبينت النتائج أن رضا السياح يرتبط أساسًا بكفاءة المرشدين وقدرتهم على التكيف أكثر من اختلاف الخلفيات الثقافية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن العوامل اللغوية والثقافية تتكامل في تشكيل فعالية التواصل، مع التأكيد على ضرورة إدماج نظرية هول ضمن برامج التكوين في اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض مهنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية :التواصل الثقافي، الإنجليزية للأغراض المهنية، نظرية هول، التواصل العالي السياق، السياحة، غرداية، الجزائر.