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# **Culture Shock Among International Students: A Case Study at The University of Tlemcen.**

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English  
Literature and Cultural Studies*

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## ***Dedication***

*We dedicate this dissertation to our beloved parents, brothers and sisters. To our families BELHADI and AYAD.*

## **Acknowledgments**

First of all, we thank ALLAH who has guided us in shaping and molding our personal growth and reach this success.

We particularly wish to express our thanks to Dr. Kheladi Mohammed, our advisor, for his academic guidance and his generous encouragement to put our ideas into a framework and write this thesis. Our sincere thanks also go to the members of the jury who have kindly accepted to read and evaluate the present work.

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## **Abstract**

International students from different regions around the world leave their home countries and travel abroad to continue their higher studies. This, in turn, might expose them to culture shock and requires them to adapt to the new environment. The present dissertation focuses on the phenomenon of “culture shock” at educational institutions. It studies the experience of some international students from Africa and China in Tlemcen University. Its main aim is to identify the factors contributing to culture shock in order to find some strategies to cope with this phenomenon, and therefore, facilitate the acclimatization in the host country. In this study, the researchers have adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyse the data gathered via the interview and the questionnaire. As a result of data analysis, it has been revealed that almost all international students experienced culture shock in both social and academic life. Another important finding is that the main factor contributing to this phenomenon among them is language barrier. In addition to this, the false expectations of international students about their destination, and the unfamiliar social and academic conditions are other factors that negatively affected their adjustment to the new milieu. Hoping to reduce the negative impact of this phenomenon at academic settings in particular, the researchers have strived to come up with some relevant suggestions and recommendations.

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# **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

## General Introduction

In this globalized world, borders between countries disappeared and people mobility became commonplace due to the developments the world, nowadays, witnesses in all fields.

Since 1950 until now, the number of internationally mobile students increased to exceed 3 million international students worldwide. Those students who decide to abandon their homes and travel to other countries for the singular purpose of studying are exposed to some difficulties in many areas of their social and academic life. They may experience some psychological and physical changes because of the unfamiliar environment. In a clear way, those students experience a common phenomenon, so called “culture shock”. Internationally mobile students are asked to get over those difficulties and negative changes, and try to adjust and adapt to the new social and academic milieu in order to create a comfortable climate for the learning process.

In this perspective, the present research attempts to examine culture shock among international students in Tlemcen University. At its first position, it tries to identify the main factors contributing to culture shock among international students since this phenomenon negatively affect the educational attainment. At the second phase, this study seeks to provide a set of strategies and guidelines that would help international students to cope with culture shock, and achieve a successful learning and adjustment process to the social and academic life.

Taking into consideration what was mentioned above; the following research questions will guide this study:

- Do international students face culture shock at the University of Tlemcen?
- What factors contribute to culture shock?
- How can culture shock be managed among international students?

Based on the research questions above, it is hypothesized that:

- Many international students face culture shock at the University of Tlemcen.
- A myriad of reasons might contribute to culture shock among international students, such as knowledge of the language of the country they study in besides false expectations about academic institutions, and the failure to bridge friendship with local students.
- Students usually refer to their and families, and participate in cultural activities.

The present dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical background which provides a literature review about culture shock. It gives a broad definition of this multidimensional phenomenon, and goes on to outline its stages, common symptoms, and major consequences.

The second chapter describes the research methodology adopted in the study. It seeks to examine culture shock at the University of Tlemcen in order to investigate about the experience of international students in their new educational institution, and determine the factors contributing to this phenomenon.

The third chapter concludes with some recommendations to cope with culture shock among international students. It also offers other strategies for teaching an international classroom.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## ***LITERATURE REVIEW***

## **1.1. Introduction**

Circumstances may force people to travel and leave their own countries, and the adaptation to the new environment is difficult. Those sojourners experience many physical and psychological changes like anxiety, depression, confusion, pains and insomnia. These changes are the main characteristics for a common phenomenon which is “culture shock”. Because of the high proportion of mobility among people, and especially the increase of the number of international students in universities all around the world, the phenomenon of “culture shock” caught the attention of many anthropologists and psychologists who tried to study this multidimensional phenomenon. This chapter represents a brief literature review of culture shock to get a close insight about its main stages, symptoms, causes and consequences.

## **1.2. Culture Defined**

The word “culture” is a wide concept and a complex term to define. It was discussed by a huge number of sociologists and anthropologists. There are different complex and simple definitions for culture. According to Hofstede, “culture is a catchword for all those patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting, and also the ordinary and menial things in life: greeting, eating, showing or not showing feelings, making love or maintaining body hygiene” (1991:05). In simpler words, culture is generally defined as the way of living and thinking shared by a specific group of people in a particular society.

According to Peterson, “culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on the peoples’ outward behaviors and environment” (17: 2004).

There are four basic characteristics of culture:

- Culture is learned and acquired. It is not inherited through genes. People acquire it from parents, society, institutions and media. The process of learning culture is called enculturation.
- Culture is shared. Members of a particular society share the same way of living, thinking and behaving. Learning a language, custom or tradition often acquires interaction with other people. Thus, culture is largely shared. Culture is collective in nature, not limited few members. It is shared by the majority of individuals.
- Culture is social, not individual. It is considered as a social product because it is impossible to be cultured without interacting with members of society.
- Culture is integrated because all cultural aspects are connected to each other. Each aspect reflects the other one.

Culture is categorized into two types: big “C” culture and small “c” culture. Lee defines the big “C” culture as “a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society”. Meanwhile, the small “c” culture is “the invisible and deeper sense of a target culture such as values, norms and assumptions” (Lee, 2009: 87). For Peterson (2004), big “C” culture is the culture that focuses on “classic or grand themes” like architecture, geography, classic literature, classical music and political issues. However, small “c” culture is related to the “minor or common themes” including opinions, viewpoints, food, taste, clothing style and hobbies.

### **1.3. Acculturation Defined**

The term “acculturation” was first introduced by the American explorer and ethnologist John Wesley Powell in 1880, referring to it as “the psychological changes induced by cross-cultural imitation” (Seel; 2012: 1149). Acculturation is a form of culture contact. It refers to the changes that occur because of the contact between different cultures. It is a process of shift in cultural beliefs and practices. It can be also defined as the process of cultural modification of a person or a group

of people through adapting to another culture or adopting its characteristics. “Interest in research on acculturation grow out of a concern for the effects of European domination of indigenous people” (Berry; 2005: 700). In recent researches, this concept is mainly connected to immigrants, international students and refugees.

Many other researchers offered different definitions of this term:

“Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” (Redfield et al; 1936:149)

According to John Berry (2000: 698):

Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members. At the group level, it involves changes in social structures and institutions and in cultural practices. At the individual level, it involves changes in in a person’s behavioral repertoire.

#### **1.4. Culture Shock Defined**

Kalervo Oberg was an anthropologist and one of the pioneers on adaptation research, and the person who coined the term “*culture shock*”. He defines it as “**da** malady and an occupational disease of many people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad” (1960:142). Culture shock is experienced by every new comer to another environment including international students, businessmen, tourists, missionaries and refugees.

Oberg also described culture shock as “the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (1960:142). Most people ignore the importance of the symbols, cues and signals they use in their daily life



such as language, gestures, norms and customs. This importance is only recognized when a person lives in a different environment with different people. He or she feels confused and anxious in simple situations that seemed obvious in his or her country; because those signs of his or her social communication and connections acquired throughout his or her life have changed in this new environment. In such situation, frustration and anxiety increase, and serious problems emerge no matter how the person is. Culture shock is not abnormal, but a common phenomenon in one way or another the sojourner is affected by when he or she comes to a new environment. Oberg believes that temperature, climate and strange food are real difficulties that the new comer experiences. In addition to these physical difficulties, communication and other strange customs are other problems which contribute in increasing anxiety and confusion.

Pedersen explained culture shock as follows: (a) culture shock as the consequence of an encounter to a new environment or situation, (b) as caused by ineffectiveness of intercultural or interpersonal communication, (c) as a threat to the emotional well-being of the sojourner, (d) as inappropriate behaviors that are caused by needs and wants, and (e) as a growth and learning experience. (Chege, 2013: 8)

Many other researchers discussed the term culture shock:

According to Adler, “culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcement from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding for new and diverse experiences” (1973: 531).

### **1.5. Stages of Culture Shock**

The cultural adjustment is the time that the sojourner needs to learn how to live and adjust to a new culture. By studying the experience of Norwegian scholars in the US in 1955, Lysgaard developed a theory called “U-curve theory”. As a result

of these studies, he estimated three stages of culture shock. In the beginning, scholars were optimistic and fascinated by the new culture. Then, they felt anxious, frustrated and confused. Finally, scholars learned how to deal with culture shock, and could adapt to the new environment. “Thus, the initial feeling of euphoria, the subsequent crisis and the final adjustment, all expressed in graph form, gave a U pattern. This pattern became known as the U-curve hypothesis” (Katan et al, 2009:81).

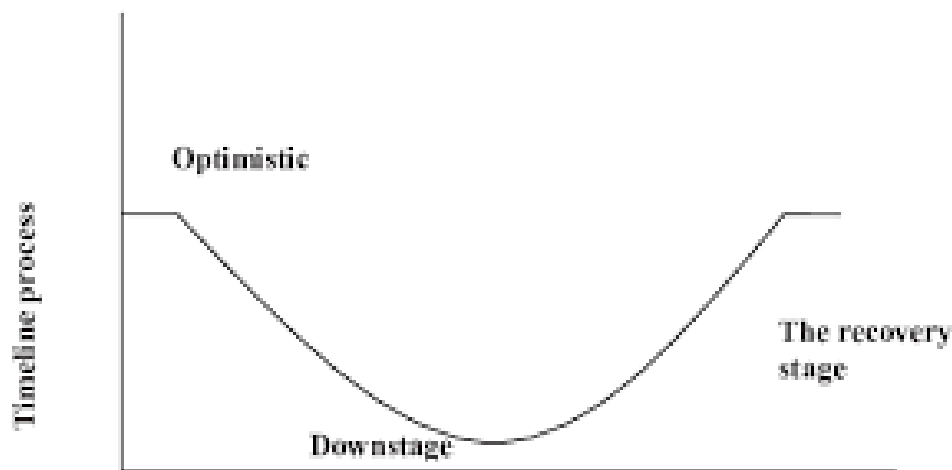


Figure 1.1. Lysgaard's U-curve Hypothesis.

([https://www.researchgate.net/figure/257938551\\_fig1\\_Figure-1-Lysgaard-1955-U-Curve-model-diagram](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/257938551_fig1_Figure-1-Lysgaard-1955-U-Curve-model-diagram) )

In 1960, Oberg studied the adjustment of immigrants in the US, and completed the U-curve theory developed by Lysgaard. However, Oberg defined four stages of culture shock. These stages are also expressed by a U-curve graphic.



Figure 1.2. Oberg's U-curve Hypothesis.

(<https://iwasanexpatwife.com/2012/08/06/u-curve-maybe-not> )

### **1.5.1. Honeymoon Stage**

During this period the sojourner is astonished by the new; he or she sets out to study a new language or to reach other purposes. In this stage sojourners discover things that are alike between the host country and their origin country, and they assume that people in all over the world are not different and everything is right; they will be pleased by everything. But, everyone will arrive to the end of this stage and enter to the second stage.

### **1.5.2. Crisis**

In this stage, sojourner starts to notice the differences between the new country and the origin one .The sojourner's feelings will be changed. As a result, ambiguity emerge .He or she will encounter some difficult times and crises in daily life. It implies that the sojourner develops a hostile attitude towards the new culture. This stage can be also called "shock stage".

### **1.5.3. Recovery**

The sojourner takes a positive attitude to the people of the new country and the culture becomes more familiar. In this moment the sojourner feels comfortable in the new environment. This stage occurs when sojourners are able to deal with some obstacles without asking for help; it is a recovery from frustration.

### **1.5.4. Adjustment Stage**

During this stage individuals gain both self-confidence and the ability to live and function in the new culture. "Although full assimilation is difficult if not impossible, one will acculturate and may undergo substantial personal change through cultural adaptation and development of a bicultural identity" (Winkelman, 1994: 122).

## **1.6. Symptoms of Culture Shock**

Culture shock is experienced by every sojourner who leaves his or her environment and moves to another one. It is a physical and psychological reaction that occurs when the sojourner loses his or her daily routine. Culture shock has a number of symptoms, affecting body and mind, which vary from one to the other. The sojourner has to be aware of these symptoms in order to cope with culture shock and get over it. According to Oberg (1960: 142),

Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (something called the tropical stare); fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; great concern over minor pains; and finally that terrible longing to be back home.

In addition to the symptoms above, there are other symptoms classified into two categories:

### **1.6.1. Physical Symptoms**

Although culture shock is not a physical issue, many negative changes occurring in the body may be easy to define. Different climate can sway the energy level and cause fatigue to the sojourner. Strange food can also perturb the gastrointestinal. Moreover, other symptoms can include:

- Aches and pains.
- Insomnia or oversleeping.
- Overeating or lack of appetite.
- Abuse of drugs or alcohols.

### **1.6.2. Psychological Symptoms**

Adler states that “culture shock is a set of emotional reactions that may encompass feelings of helplessness; irritability; and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured, or disregarded” (1975:13).

In addition to these symptoms identified by Adler, anxiety and frustration are the most dangerous psychological symptoms of culture shock, especially when the sojourner does not understand the language spoken by the locals, and ignore the values and customs of the host country. Loneliness is another symptom that the sojourner can experience. He or she may avoid locals and the host culture, instead he or she contacts and makes friendships only with people from the same home country. This can lead to issues involving isolation from locals and the new culture. Other psychological symptoms can include boredom, sadness, depression, loss of identity, and idealization of the home culture.

## **1.7. Impact of Culture Shock**

The phenomenon of culture shock has many impacts on the sojourner. Some of them are negative and others are positive. These impacts are summarized in two models, the

disease model and the growth model. According to Dongfeng(2012:71-72), the two models focus not only on the short run effect(to reduce the symptoms) but also on the long run individual development (to cultivate intellectual competence).

### **1.7.1. Psychological Impact (disease model)**

Culture shock comes as a hurtful surprise to many sojourners and psychologists have suggested mental disorders that are the result of culture shock. The disease model of culture shock puts too much importance on the negative impact of culture shock. This mode treats culture shock as a disease and it was developed to deal with emotional disorders, it is suggested that an emotional disorder is an illness because moving outside can be hard on sojourner's health. When culture shock occurs, it always followed by a set of psychological confusion .Consequently, physical stress begins to appear. But not everyone is affected by culture shock in the same way.

This approach derives from investigations on mental health; these investigations believe that different behaviors of sojourners compared to natives makes them mentally disturbed and feel incapable to protect themselves from mistakes .as a result, culture fatigue emerge. The main assumption of this approach is that adaptation is guided by uncertainty and the reduction or control of anxiety .Anxiety can be reduced by the emergence of four factors: equal status, cooperative interdependence supported by authority figures, and interacting with other group members.

There are three basic challenges to emotional reactions and two of them are based on the medical disease model: the loss of familiar cues, the breakdown of communication, and identity crisis. First, familiar cues make people feel comfortable; cues are signposts that make communication easy; when an individual interact with people from a foreign country, their familiar cues are not clear which led to ambiguity and confusion. It implies that the stress will be produced. Second, a breakdown of communication on both conscious and

unconscious levels, causes frustration, anxiety and is a source of alienation from others.

Dealing with the emotional reactions implies another aspect of culture shock. The disease model believe that an emotional disorder has a set of symptoms which can be cured.

The U-curve referring to the adjustment of sojourners over time. It describes in a very general manner how the sojourner tends to undergo a decline in adjustment shortly after entering a foreign culture.

Oberg argues for four stages. Later, Lewis & Jungman (1986) develop Oberg's theory; they proposed six phases of culture shock to illustrate the process of sojourner's affective experience:

- ✓ Preliminary phase (events that occur before departure)
- ✓ The spectator phase(the first weeks or months of living in a foreign culture)
- ✓ The increasing participation phase
- ✓ The adaptation phase
- ✓ The reentry into home culture

When culture shock is conceptualized as a process of emotional changes over the duration of the sojourn, it is known to be very painful for many sojourners. This model allows understanding the variations of emotional reactions as a process of culture learning and personal growth.

### **1.7.2. Intellectual Impact (the growth model)**

Culture shock and other cross-culture adjustment stresses may be positive and creative force with an educational impact to stimulate, motivate, and enhance the culture traveler's intercultural communicative competence. Cultural intelligence is the ability to adapt successfully across different cultures; it consists of three dimensions including the emotional, motivational and physical in addition to the cognitive. People are motivated to act on the new understanding of cues that they

experience. Sojourners must act on their knowledge and passion to understand and adapt a new culture; they try to physically adapt their behavior to be familiar to natives.

Adler (1975) believes culture shock as a process of intercultural learning, leading to greater self-awareness and personal growth. Furnham and Bochner (1986) conceive of the potentially positive consequences of culture shock as part of the culture learning process. As a result, they advocate a social skills approach to culture shock, where the culture travelers learn the skills, rules, and roles that are required in the new culture. For long-term consideration, culture shock may be very helpful for individuals to develop communication competence and gain personal growth.

### **1.8. Variations of the Culture Learning Concept**

Some researchers on culture shock have extended the viewpoint of culture shock as a learning process during which affective experience occurs to several further models.

Three of the alternative concepts are discussed in this section. One is the concept of "*accommodation*" by Bochner (1982); another one is the "*sojourner assumption*" by Church (1982), and the third is the "*personal growth model*" by Juffer (1986).

Furnham and Bochner suggested an alternative concept of cultural accommodation concept is not adjustment, but accommodation. The concept of accommodation assumes that "the major task facing a sojourner is not adjust to a new culture, but to learn its salient characteristics" (Bochner, 1982: 164). Based on Bochner's culture learning concept, culture accommodation modifies cultural adjustment, and opens a broader avenue for development of cross-cultural studies, because accommodation does not carry "ethnocentric overtones" instead, it releases the sojourner's fear of giving up his or her familiar cultural values and



allows consideration of learning and developing necessary new social skills to function more effectively in a new culture. When sojourners realize that accommodation is just a temporary necessity, and it is an opportunity for learning something that can be added to the social skills they already have, learning would become more willing and natural.

Furthermore, Furnham and Bochner argue that only when people lack the appropriate social skills or when they act inappropriately in a strange environment will their social performances be noticed and judged. The very intensive emotions a sojourner might experience ,and the level of competence the sojourner is able to achieve in an appropriate circumstance to balance his or her inner world is the result of a complex set of social – psychological influences played out over a long period in the person’s life .

Therefore, the emotional reactions to the challenges of cultural differences and the meanings made out of the affective experiences in a cross – cultural setting varies from person to person.

In summarizing, Church (1982) states that conceptualizing sojourner adjustment in terms of learning principles implies procedures for encouraging the learning of new social skills that are appropriate for the new culture. What is relevant to this study is the concept that learning may be advantageous in helping achieve success in a new culture

Juffer suggests that emphasis needs to be put on the positiveness of the growth experience for self-development and learning. Sojourner will begin with an encounter with the self. Juffer’s model consists of five categories, one of which is particularly significant to this study. This is that “culture shock is caused by growth experience”, viewing culture shock as “a natural transition state that has potential for positive learning and growth”. This category of the model suggests several approaches for cross- cultural orientation: 1) focusing the discussion on the positive aspects of the personal – growth experience ,2) presenting cultural

accommodation and adjustment as being a “natural part of personal change , evolution , and transition toward higher levels of personality development” (Juffer, 1986: 214), and 3 ) focusing on the process of culture shock that will begin with an encounter of cultural differences and grow into and encounter with the self and the home culture.

## **1.9. International Students and Culture Shock**

“Sojourners are type of strangers who spend many years of their lifetime in a foreign country without being assimilated into it” (Siu, 1952: 34), or “those individuals who voluntarily spend a medium length of time in a new and unfamiliar environment with the intention of returning at some point to their home country” (Furnham, 1988: 28).

Leaving home to attend university is an important step for students, especially for students studying abroad. Tlemcen University is one of the host universities that receives students from different countries. The number of international students studying at *ABOU BAKR BELKAID UNIVERSITY* increased significantly. Therefore, the free education system in Tlemcen has opened the doors for students from South Africa and other countries such as China.

International students are the students who leave their home country and move to another one with the singular goal of studying. There is a difference between the two terms “international students” and “foreign students”. The former, as already mentioned, refers to students who cross borders in order to study. However, the latter is used to describe non-citizens who are registered in educational institutions outside their home country.

Being an international student requires two major conditions:

-Permanent residence: international student is not a permanent habitant of the host country.

-Prior education: international student must have the entry adequacy to their contemporary level of study in the host country.

Pull & Push factors play a great role in the higher education realm. The international students rely on many factors associated with the Pull & Push model and many researches have investigated international students' motivations for studying abroad in terms of pull and push factors.

According to Mazzarol and Soutar, pull factors are defined as "factors that operate within the home country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study" (82: 2002). Pull factors can be comprised of the unavailability of a study program in the home country, lack of access to home universities, and poor quality of education in the home country. On the other hand, Push factors are comprised of factors in the host country or institution that attract international students such as interesting culture, living standards, socio-economic status, improving career prospects and immigration opportunities . Consequently, the international students start a new adventure outside their home countries and usually face different kinds of difficulties and experience different kinds of problems which include Culture Shock.

With every new experience, there is a new challenge. International education is a new experience for those students who move to other countries in order to study. Internationally mobile students may face a set of problems, and especially feel anxious, stressed and confused when they live in a new environment, because the host country, its people and culture are different from their home country, its citizens and own culture. The feeling of anxiety, stress and confusion is called "culture shock". So, culture shock is one of the primary challenges faced by international students in a new environment. Therefore, they need to cope with this phenomenon and try to adjust to the host culture in order to achieve a successful learning process.

Most international students suffer from four major problems: “insufficient linguistic and cultural skills, prejudice, discrimination, and homesickness and loneliness”. Besides this, they face other problems, like other local students, such as “identity conflict related to personal development in late adolescence and early adulthood, academic challenges and the stressors associated with transition to a new school or university” (Ward et al.153).

### **1.10. Reverse Culture Shock**

Reverse culture shock or re- entry shock is the shock experienced by sojourners when they return home from another country. In order to better understand and define reverse culture shock, it is necessary to acknowledge its parent construct; culture shock. The former is similar to the latter in definition, however, in reverse culture shock, the adaptation process concentrates on the obstacles of the re-adjusting to home culture after returning from overseas.

Both Lysgaard and Oberg studied the phenomenon of culture shock and represented the adjustment process with a U-curve pattern describing the stages of culture shock. In 1963, Gullahorn and Gullahorn studied the experience of some returning scholars. As a result of their studies, they introduced the reverse culture shock, and the W- curve hypothesis incorporating the re-entry stage. They suggested that reverse culture shock pattern of re-adjusting to home culture is similar to the U-curve of adjustment, describing the stages of culture shock, introduced by Lysgaard and Oberg.

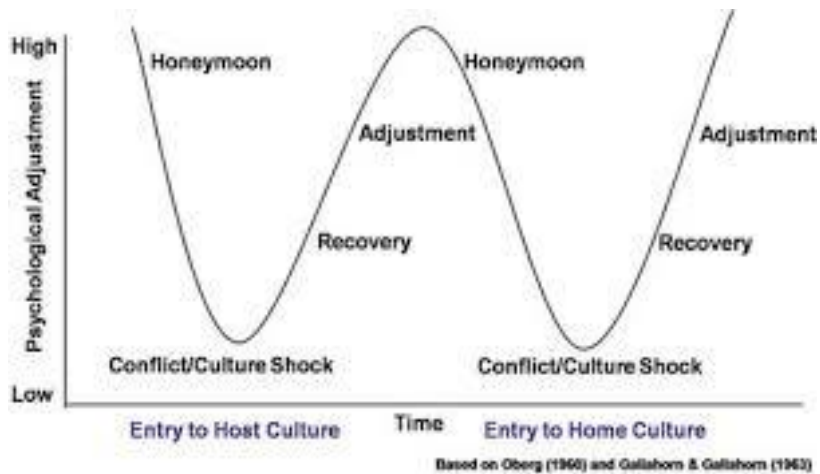


Figure 1.3. Gullahorn & Gullahorn W-curve hypothesis.

(<https://studyabroad.gwu.edu/cultural-adjustments> )

According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn, the main difference between reverse culture shock and culture shock was the expectations of the sojourners. Sojourners often expected to return to an unchanged home as unchanged individuals, which was not the case. In other words, one can expect the cultural differences when entering a new culture, thereby potentially minimizing the effects of culture shock. (Gaw, 1999: 86).

Kevin F. Gaw refers to this phenomenon as “the process of re-adjusting, re-aculturating, and re-assimilating into one’s own home after living in a different culture for a significant period of time”(1999: 83). The main symptoms of reverse culture shock are boredom, reverse homesickness, feeling of alienation and being misunderstood, and changes in relationships with family members and friends.

### 1.11. Conclusion

The transition from home to a foreign country can be challenging for people living abroad. In the review above, researchers discussed the existing definitions of culture shock introduced by some anthropologists and psychologists. The chapter explored

symptoms, causes and both negative and positive impacts of culture shock. Moreover, the researchers pointed at the four stages of culture shock which can help sojourners learn about this phenomenon, and adjust to the new culture; each stage appears at certain time and shows different features. Additionally, this review discussed the variations of the culture learning concept that may result in discovery and allow for greater self-development and personal growth. Finally, researchers concluded the chapter by another phenomenon which was reverse culture shock.

**CHAPTER TWO**

***DATA COLLECTION AND***

***ANALYSIS***

## **2.1. Introduction**

In order to confirm or refute the hypotheses proposed to the research questions, the researchers were supposed to interview some international students and submit questionnaires to other local students. The analysis and discussion of the students' answers enable the researchers to examine the phenomenon of culture shock in Tlemcen University and identify the main factors contributing to it, and from that help them to suggest some strategies to cope with this phenomenon. So, this chapter presents the research methodology and describes the methods used.

## **2.2. Research Objectives**

Nowadays, education witnesses a great amount of mobility of students who leave their countries and travel to other ones in order to continue their higher studies. Tlemcen University is one of the higher educational institutions in Algeria that receives many international students from different parts of the world, and offers them courses in different specializations. The different educational system and the new culture where the international students are supposed to study and live in can cause a common phenomenon which is "culture shock". So that, this research aims to study culture shock among international students, and tries to identify their expectations, feelings and experiences in the host country and the new educational milieu. This study enables the researchers to detect the factors that contribute to culture shock, and from there find solutions to cope with this phenomenon in order to facilitate the cultural adjustment and the learning process in the new environment.

## **2.3. The Participants**

In order to examine culture shock in a foreign country and a different academic institution, international students in Tlemcen University were invited to participate in the interviews. The researchers personally met international students. They presented



the topic of their research and its purpose. Some international students accepted to be a part of this research. The group of participants includes 15 international students from different countries: China (6), Zimbabwe (2), Niger (1), Nigeria (1), Zambia (2) and Mali (3). Ten of them are females and five males. Their age is between 19 and 24. The international students expressed their excitement and appreciation. They were happy to share their experiences. They claimed that it was the first time someone care about their situation. To have a more clear picture about the academic culture shock, a questionnaire was submitted to 30 local students from the departments of English, medical sciences, civil engineering and biology.

## **2.4. Limitations of the Study**

One limitation is that the researchers wanted to deal with more international students from more different origins. However, they faced a problem to convince some students from other nationalities to be a part of this research. Another limitation was time because the interviews were done during the first make-up exam, and many international students were absent or busy for the exam. Language was another limitation of this study. Some participants do not understand English so the researchers were supposed to translate the questions. Because of the language misunderstanding, some answers were not evident. Other students spent more than two years in Tlemcen so they did not remember their exact feelings when they arrived.

## **2.5 Data Collection and Research Instruments**

In this study, interview and questionnaire are the tools used to collect data:

### **2.5.1. The Interview**

The interview is the most common tool used in qualitative research to elicit information. It is a conversation between people; one of them is the researcher. This latter asks questions to get answers from the participants. In his book "Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods", Quinn Patton cites that "interviewing people enables to find out from them things the researcher cannot directly observe such as

feelings, thoughts and intentions". He summarizes: "the purpose of interviewing, then, is to enter in the other person's perspective, and to find out what is in and on someone else's mind to gather their stories." (2002:341)

There are three types of interviewing: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide and the standardized open-ended interview. In this study, the third type is used to collect data. Standardized open-ended interview is a set of carefully worded questions prepared before the interview in order to ask each interviewee the same questions with the same words. These standard questions minimize the possibility of bias.

According to Nedstam, "this is the most structured of the qualitative interview and is used for collecting data from more respondents or about more issues, or when several interviews are used and interviewer bias is unwanted. The questions are predetermined word by word, and the sequence of questions is fixed" (2004:5).

This type of interviews fits researches when there is only a short period of time or when interviewing the participants once. The researchers chose this sort of interviews for one main reason: the interviews were done during the first make-up exam just before spring holidays. So, many international students were busy preparing for the exam and there was not enough time to interview them more than once or for a long period of time. The standardization of questions doesn't prevent the interviewer to change the questions. For example, in this study, many interviewees had a problem to understand English language. So that, the interviewer was supposed to change some questions keeping the main ideas. In case of some Chinese students, the interviewer translated the questions into Arabic in order to clarify the questions and get clear answers.

#### **2.5.1.1 Development of the Interview**

The interview is divided into two parts:

The first part contains four questions. These questions are about the students' personal information: name, age, origins and university specialization.

The second part contains seven questions centered on the students' experiences in the academic milieu:

\_The first question is about the push and pull factors to study in Tlemcen University.

\_The second question is designed to know the difference between the academic life of students' universities and Tlemcen University in order to know how much the difference affect the adaptation and the learning process.

\_The third question investigates about the students' expectations about studying in Algeria. This question aims to examine the degree of academic shock they experienced.

\_The fourth question deals with the feelings of international students when they arrived to Tlemcen, and the challenges faced in the classroom with teachers and classmates. The purpose of this question is to identify the factors contributing to academic culture shock.

\_The fifth question examines the relationship between international students and their teachers.

\_The last question is designed to know the students' own tips to manage culture shock.

### **2.5.2. The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is a data collection instrument contains a set of printed or written questions for the purpose of gathering information and obtaining a useful data about a given topic from respondents or participants. A questionnaire can be classified as both qualitative and quantitative method depending on the nature of questions.

#### **2.5.2.1 Questionnaire Process and Design**

In order to write a questionnaire, it is important to follow the following steps:

Writing the questions:

- Clarity: use easy language and simple words to make the question clear for all respondents.
- Phrasing: use short sentences, avoid negatives if possible and ask precise questions.
- Sensitive question: avoid questions that could be embarrassing to respondent.

Question pilot testing: before doing the final questionnaire

It is obligatory to test the questionnaire to:

- If the questions are understood.
- Make sure that there are no mistake.
- To see if you get the sort of answers you want to get.

Administration of the questionnaire: questionnaire can be administered by:

- Personal contact.
- Group of focus interview.
- Telephone.
- Mail based questionnaire.

## **2.6 Data Analysis Methods**

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are applied to analyze data:

Qualitative research is a form of social investigation that concentrates on how humans describe, interpret and picture their experiences in their lives. “Qualitative research attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to the way they are in social world” (Hancock et al 2009: 04). It is interested in promoting answers and interpretations of social phenomena. It is also concerned with social attitudes of the world. The major aim of qualitative research is to analyze the behaviors,

emotions, experiences and points of view of people. It intends to learn the social facts of societies and cultures.

“Quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about the world.

This research method is used:

- To describe variables;
- To examine relationships among variables;
- To determine cause-and-effect interactions between variables.”(Burns & Grove 2005:23)

To put it simply, quantitative research focuses more on counting and classifying features, and constructing statistical models and figures to explain what is observed. It is concerned with numbers, statistics, and the relationships between events and numbers.

## **2.7. The Results of the Study**

The results of the interview and questionnaire are as follows:

### **2.7.1 International Students’ Interview Results**

Below are the main findings of the interview:

#### ***Item1: Student’s Background***

The answers about the personal information are summarized in the table below:

Origins	China	Mali	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Niger	Nigeria
Name, Age , University Specialization	Biyu 20 Arabic	Ahmed 21 Medicine	Linettee 24 Biology	Jane 22 Biology	Michel 19 medicine	Jonathan 20 English
	Dai-Bai 19 Arabic					
	Ah Kum 23 Arabic	Sarah 22 English				
	Dan Dan 24 Arabic		Lilly 22 Biology	Sandra 20 French		
	Bai 19 Arabic	Fatima 20 French				
	Bingwen 22 Arabic					

Table 2.1 Students' profile and biodata

**Item 2: Push-Pull Factors**

The push pull factors are the motivational reasons that make people travel overseas. The push factors, like unfavorable conditions and family support, are the forces which drive people away from their home countries to other ones searching for good opportunities. Meanwhile, the pull factors are the host country's characteristics which attract people to live in that country such as high living conditions, freedom and good environment.

Most of the African interviewed students confessed that they benefited from scholarships to study in Algeria. In their countries, families support students to study

abroad searching for high quality education. The Algerian universities have a good reputation in their home countries. This good reputation as well as advanced living and social conditions are always presented in media. The low satisfaction for African universities is another factor that pushed them to study abroad seeking knowledge and development of critical thinking of students. Another motivational reason, students who studied abroad have the priority to get eminent jobs when they return to home.

Jane: "I came to study in Algeria because I won a scholarship to study in Tlemcen University. It was my dream to study here. My family also supported me to study abroad."

Linettee: "I benefited from a scholarship to study biology in Tlemcen University. It was a good opportunity to get high education quality."

Jonathan: "I was awarded a scholarship to study in Algeria. In response to my teachers and family support, I accepted to study here. I was always fascinated by the image of Algerian universities presented in social media."

Mohammed and Michel are two friends studying medicine in Tlemcen University. Their parents work in the General Consulates of Mali and Niger in Tamanraset.

Mohammed: "My father works in the Consulate of Mali. His friends suggested to me and Michel to study in Tlemcen University because of its good reputation in medicine studies."

Sandra: "I preferred to study abroad because this will give me the opportunity to get a good job when I go back home. My family also supported me to study here."

Political conflicts can be included as a push factor for some international students to study abroad. Sarah and Fatima are two Malian students who left their homes and traveled to Algeria in order to continue their higher studies. They said that because of the war and the unfavorable conditions in regions where they live, they were supposed to live and study in a peaceful environment.

Fatima: "Because of Northern Mali Conflict, I was supposed to study abroad."

Concerning the Chinese students, Tlemcen University signed a scientific partnership with Sichuan University to give them courses in Arabic language. Some Chinese students reported that they came to study in Algeria in order to improve their language skills in Arabic, and to explore the Algerian culture.

Dai Tai: "I came to Algeria to study Arabic language. I like to study different languages, and my university gave me this opportunity so I gladly accept it."

Dan Dan: "I like to explore cultures and learn languages. So, I came to Algeria to have the chance to discover its culture and learn its language."

Like African families, Chinese families also support students to study abroad.

Biyu: "Last year, my brother was a member in the list of students who studied in Algeria. He liked the experience and supported me to come here."

Bai: "when my parents heard about the university proposition to study Arabic in Algeria, they supported me come here."

To have better chances for better job opportunities, Bingwen chose to study Arabic. "China deals with many countries all around the world. Since I have interests in business, I wanted to learn Arabic because I am sure I will need it in my future job."

### ***Item3: Academic Life***

All the informants reported that the academic life in Tlemcen University is totally different from the academic life in the educational institution in their home countries in everything: educational system, curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation.

### ***Item4: Expectations about Academic Life***

Most African students reported that they expected Tlemcen University to be like European universities; as it was presented in media. Biology and medicine students thought that the lectures would be in laboratories equipped with instructional and scientific materials. Almost half of the interviewees expected to have some textbooks.



Others expected to be guided by some advisors since they are international students and necessarily need help to adjust in the new educational environment. They expected the studies to be practical more than theoretical, and the use of technology is allowed.

Lilly: "I thought that I was coming to study in a university like that ones in Britain and France." She laughed saying "media always lies."

Jane: "I expected Tlemcen University to be like Oxford University."

Mohammed: "I imagined myself in a university full of laboratories like labs I watch in American movies."

Linettee: "I thought I will spend much time in a laboratory not in an amphitheater."

Jonathan: "... I expected to have some textbooks and an advisor to help and guide us."

Sandra: "there are no textbooks. I expected to have some. I expected to be treated in a different manner because I am a foreign student. There wre no advisors to instruct us."

As well, Chinese students share some expectations with African students.

Biyu: "I saw many photos of this university. I thought it is like European universities."

Bai: "I thought that everyone speaks classical Arabic. I was wrong."

#### ***Item5: Academic Culture Shock***

All the participants experienced academic culture shock. The degree of shock differed among them. Anxiety, loneliness and frustration were the main symptoms the international students suffered from.

Jane: "I felt anxious, everything seemed weird to me. The major problem was language because I speak English but everyone here speaks either Arabic or French. It was hard to understand teachers and classmates."

Lilly: "I was confused. I knew no one here. I was alone and helpless. Communication with others was my big problem. I coldn't understand lectures and contact with others."

Linettee: "I felt lonely and I missed my family and my friends. I could not attend lectures in the morning because of insomnia. The education system was totally different from ours. Arabic and French were difficult to understand. My grades were low because of these problems."

Sarah: "I had no friends to talk and study with. There were no one to support me to carry on. Teachers and classmates were not helpful."

Michel: "At first I felt anxious. I found the courses difficult and the explanation not clear. I wanted to return home."

Sandra: "I couldn't keep studying in Tlemcen. I was anxious and confused. I suffered from insomnia. I wanted to go home. Boys were annoying. I didn't like them."

Dai Tai: "It was very hard to stay here alone. I was confused and I missed my mother. I did not attend lectures at first."

Ah Kum: "I was very sad. I missed my family and my friends. I found the way teachers explain lectures very different."

Bai: "I was frustrated in the first two weeks. Communication with teachers was hard."

Bingwen: "I was anxious, depressed and sad. Some local students were disturbing. Contact with teachers was hard and the way they explain lessons was different."

#### ***Item6: Students-teachers Relationship***

Generally, the students are satisfied about the teachers. They felt that they do their best to explain the lectures and try to help them if they are in need, but the problem is always language.

Lilly: "Most teachers are good and kind. They explain the lectures in a good way. Besides this, they are helpful."

Jonathan: "Teachers are kind and serious in their work. They explain the lectures very well and treat international students kindly."

Dan Dan: "Although there is a problem in communication, teachers are serious and helpful. If students do not understand something, they do their best to clarify things."

Bai: "Teachers support us and their explanation is clear for me. I understand the lessons very well."

On the other hand, some students have other points of view.

Jane: "Most teachers use slide shows to explain lectures. They only read what is written but do not explain. Some of them ignores you when you try to participate or ask a question."

Sarah: "Generally I find teachers not responsible. They do not care about international students. When students make noise, they do not order them to be silent or kick them out."

Michel: "Some teachers are kind and helpful, but some of them do not care. Whenever I try to talk to them after sessions, they just say they are busy and I can e-mail them. I send e-mails but there are no answers."

### ***Item7: Student's Own Tips to Manage Culture Shock***

Strategies and ways to cope with academic culture shock from one student to the other.

Jane: "I kept in touch with my family and friends who supported me to be strong and attend lectures. I made new friendships with some international students because they experience the same shock. I also tried to communicate with some local students. The most important thing is that I believed in myself."

Linettee: "I tried to be in contact with my classmates, locals and internationals. I did my best to understand French language. I used dictionaries and some students helped me."

Jonathan: "I was always in contact with my family and friend in my home country. They supported me to keep going on. I asked former international students in social media about their experiences and what strategies they followed to get over difficulties."

Mohammed: “I called my family whenever I felt lonely because they gave me strength every time I talked to them. I tried to develop my relationship with teachers and students. I tried to be open on everything. I even joined in the University football team.”

Fatima: “I tried to be realistic and defeat the anxiety and confusion I suffered from. I started communicating with local students and I kept in touch with my family in Mali. I determined to do my best to succeed in my studies.”

Michel: “I made friendships with many international students because we share the same situation. I also tried to be a friend with local students because they know much more about educational approaches and how teacher evaluate students. I participated in some university activities.”

Biyu: “I made friendships with Chinese students because we share the same language. I could easily communicate with them. I was in touch with my family. I trusted myself and fought to get over difficulties.”

Dan Dan: “I was chatting with parents and friends. They supported and pushed me to resist. Whenever I felt weak, I remembered my parents so I braced up and moved on.”

#### **2.7.1.1 Interpretation of the Interview Results**

The first part was an introductory step to the interview. The questions were about the interviewees’ names, ages, origins and university specialization. The second part of the interview contains questions about the students’ experience in Tlemcen University.

The results of the interview gave a clear picture about the phenomenon of culture shock experiences by international students. As the answers reveals, there are many students from different countries studying different specializations in Tlemcen University. Most of them stated that searching for high quality education, seeking good job opportunities in home countries, and family support were the main motivational factors to study in this university. These answers show the good reputation of Tlemcen University in their home countries. All respondent’s answers revealed that academic life in Tlemcen differs from academic life where they used to study. Students’ expectations

about their new educational institutions were far from reality. The majority expected to study in a university like western universities. Some students expected to have some textbooks, and others thought that there are some advisors to guide them. From the answer of a participant in the interview; “media always lies” and “in response to my teachers’ support”; it comes clear that the good image of Tlemcen University is presented in media and educational institutions.

The academic differences and the false expectations about the learning setting could be classified as the main factors contributing to culture shock for international students. In addition to these factors, the answers showed that language barriers was the major cause of this phenomenon. All respondents reported that language was a big challenge for them. Language is a means of communication, and if a person cannot understand what is said, it is impossible for him to interact with others and get what they say or want, and this was the case of international students. They felt like aliens in this new environment. From the participants’ answers about their feelings when they arrived to Tlemcen University, they shared some similar feelings like anxiety, confusion, frustration, loneliness and feelings of helplessness. In addition to this, two students suffered from insomnia. This is because students came from a different environment and had different culture, and they found themselves in a foreign country, and obliged to live with its people and adapt to its culture. As it is mentioned in the previous chapters, these feelings are classified as the main symptoms of culture shock. Students’ impressions about their teachers were generally good. However some students reported negative impressions about teachers’ irresponsibility, carelessness and poor explanation of lectures. These exceptional answers can be true and represents some cases of teachers, or may be derived from the fact that teaching methods and pedagogical strategies in tlemcen University differs from those methods adopted in the universities in their home countries. The answers about the last question revealed the strategies international students followed to cope with academic culture shock. The main tips to get over this phenomenon were keeping in touch with family and friends, patience, determination, self-confidence and participation in university activities.

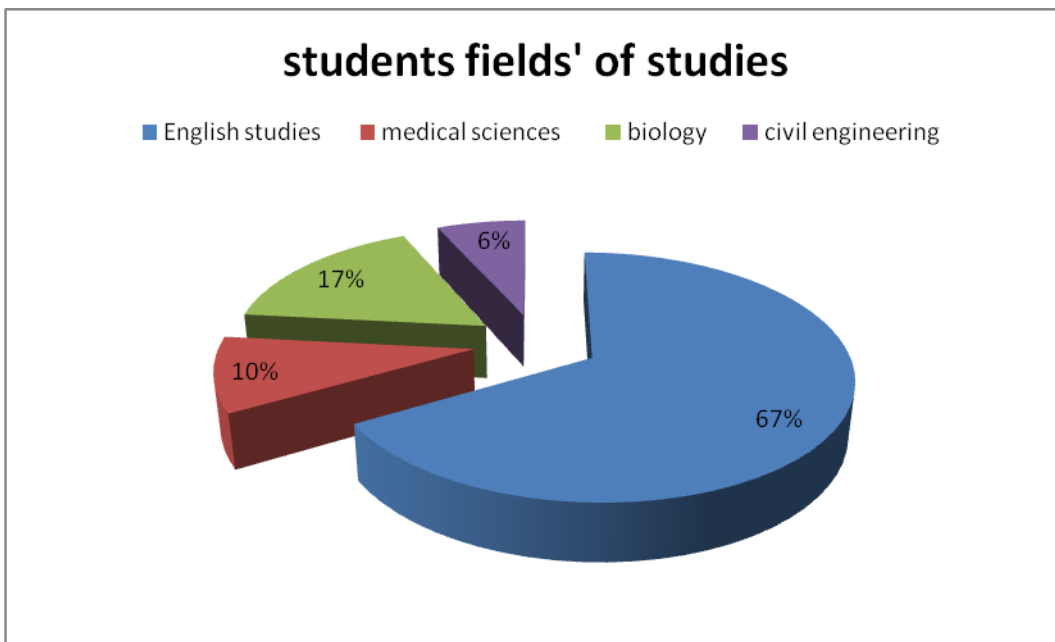
Culture shock is a personal experience. So, each student adopted a strategy to get over the obstacles he faced, and reduce the impact of culture shock on himself.

### 2.7.2 Local Students' Questionnaire Results

Below are the results obtained from the questionnaire addressed to thirteen (30) local students at the University of Tlemcen about the phenomenon of culture shock among international students.

#### ***Q1. Students' fields of study.***

The answers to this preliminary question revealed that the questioned students are from different specialties namely, English language studies, medical sciences, biology and civil engineering.



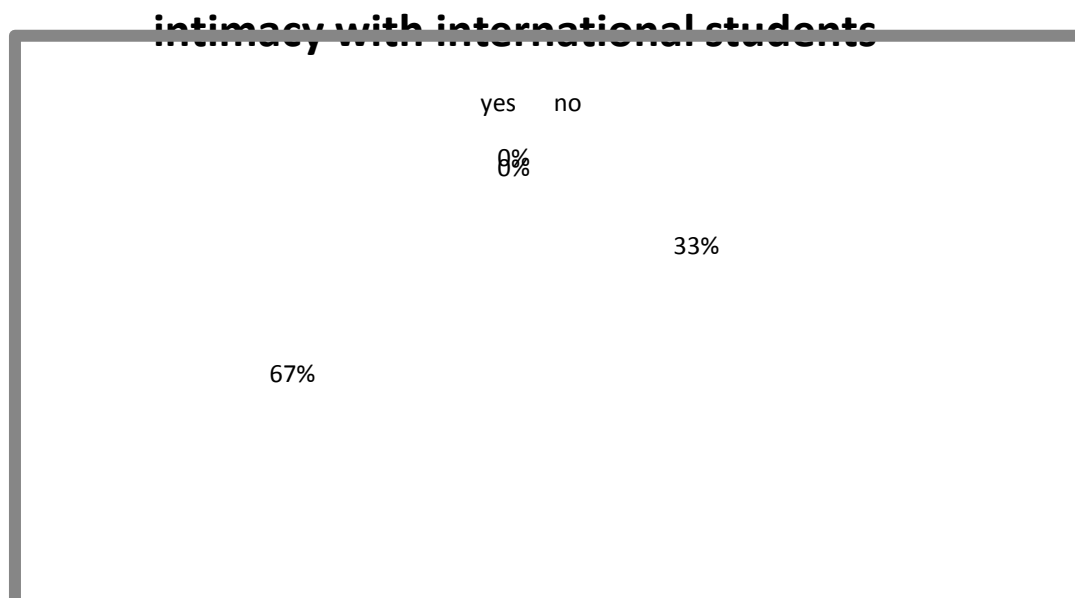
Pie chart.2.1. Students' fields of studies

**Q2. International students at the departments.**

In response to this question, all the students said that their departments include students from other countries.

**Q3. The respondents' intimacy with international students.**

In answering this question, only ten (10) students said that they are in a close relationship with international students, while the remaining students seemed to be in a superficial relationship with them.



Pie chart.2.2. Local students' intimacy with international students

**Q4. International students in the respondents' own classrooms.**

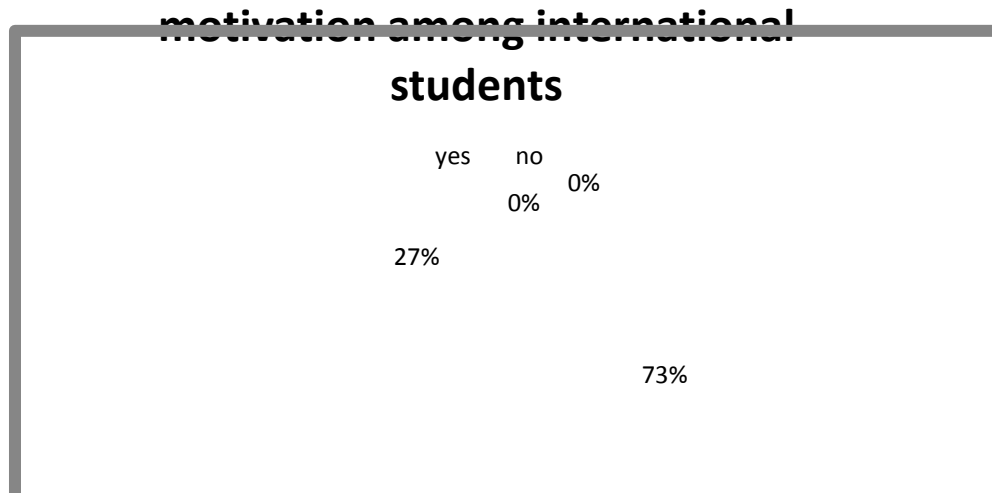
Responding to this query, twenty 20 students answered that their own classroom contain international students.

**Q5. The home countries of international students.**

The students stated the following countries: Mali, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Niger, and Nigeria.

**Q6. International students' levels of motivation and interest in learning.**

In answering this question, twenty-two (22) students said that international students usually show higher levels of motivation in learning, while the other eight (08) respondents considered that international students in their classrooms do not show higher levels of motivation.

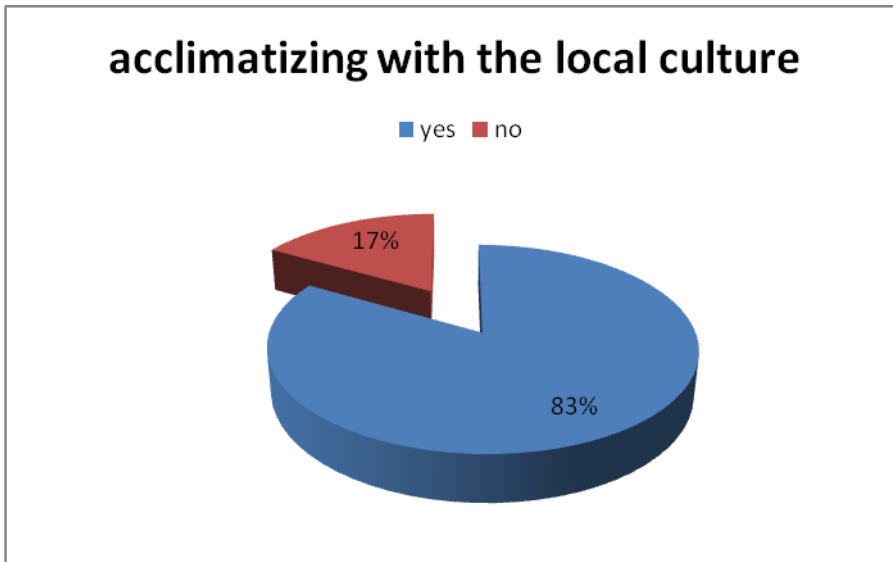


Pie chart.2.3. International students' motivation in learning

***Q7. International students' acclimatization with the local culture.***

In response to this questions, twenty five (25) students said that international students do not acclimatize easily with the local culture, whereas only five(05) respondents said that many foreign students could easily adapt themselves to the mores of the local culture.

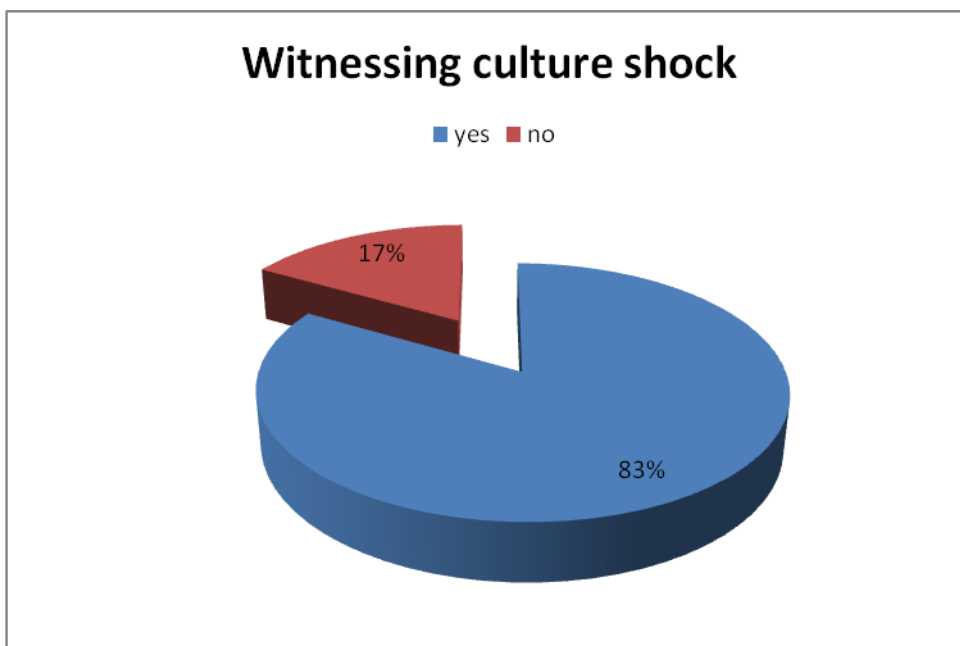




Pie chart.2.4. International students' acclimatization with the local culture

***Q8.Students'witnessing of culture shock instances involving international students.***

On the instances of culture shock, twenty-five(25) respondents reported that they witnessed cases of culture shock involving international students. The other five (05) respondents said that until now they have not witnessed such a case.

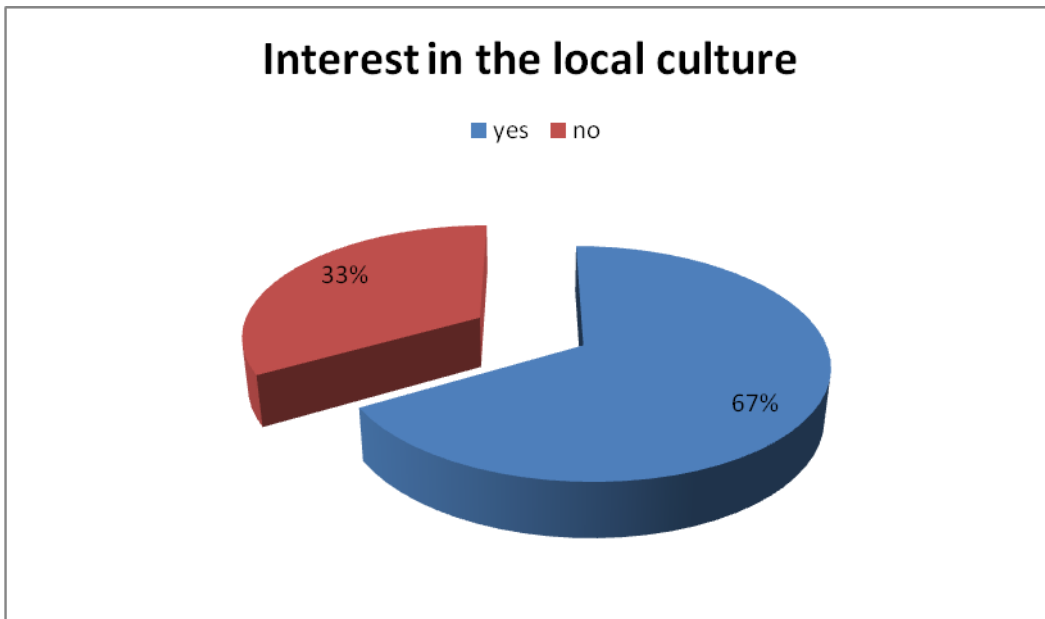


Pie chart 2.5. Students witnessing culture shock involving international students

As for some instances of culture shock, most of the respondents stated that of the behavior of the non-Muslim students during the month of Ramadan where some of those students used to eat or sometimes smoke during fasting time. Others referred to some international students' use of classical Arabic instead of the Algerian dialect.

**Q9. International students' efforts in learning about the local culture.**

The intent of this question was to measure the extent to which international students are striving to learn about the local culture, and therefore, avoiding culture shock. The majority of the respondents (20 students) thought that international students are showing eagerness to know more about the local culture. Others, however, said their foreign class mates do not really show interest in the very specificities of the local culture.



Pie chart 2.6. International students' interest in the local culture

**Q10. Students' own suggestions to avoid culture shock among international students.**

This question was an open space for the respondents to provide the researchers with the different strategies and tips that might help students from other cultures to better suit their behavior within the local culture. In this context, the vast majority of our informants seemed to agree on one point, that is learning about the culture of the target country before settling in it. Other students referred to the importance of having friends from the country they are studying it, since as they reported that some

international students show a kind of a remarkable reluctance in being so intimate with local students.

#### **2.7.2.1. Interpretation of Local Students' Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire submitted of the local students could reveal many important points about the phenomenon of culture shock among international students at an academic setting, particularly at the University of Tlemcen. The respondents were from different fields of studies; yet the majority of them as shown above were from the department of English. The intention behind submitting the questionnaire to students from various fields was to examine the phenomenon of culture shock in different academic settings. The results of the questionnaire showed that international students are enrolled in many departments. This shows the eminence and the privileged status of the University of Tlemcen at least at the national scale .Indeed, many students from different nationalities tend to recognize the quality of educational standards at the University of Tlemcen especially in the field of medical sciences.

The questionnaire also examined the relationship of the local students with those coming from other countries. The objective was to get an idea on the readiness of those students to adapt some of the specificities of the local culture. Similarly, the questionnaire sought to gauge the levels of motivation among international students. In this respect, it is enlightening to state that those students often exhibit higher levels of motivation in learning. They seem to be well aware of the significance of benefiting from a foreign academic institutions that would open to them new opportunities to pursue further studies in European universities.

With regard to international students' integration in the country (Algeria) and its culture, the results showed that this is a sensitive issue since many foreign students face some difficulties to fully immerse themselves into a new culture. Understandably; this is because those students are originally from different backgrounds and ethnicities. In order to deeply examine the studied phenomenon, local students were questioned if it happened to them to witness an instance in which international students encountered a

sort of culture shock. Their response could provide the researchers with some illustrative cases, notably that of some international students' behavior during the fasting month. This reflects some of their little knowledge of the specificities of the local culture especially in the sacred month of Ramadhan. Another case that was provided by the respondents was that of the confusion of international students with regard of the use of classical Arabic. Many of them hold the belief that classical Arabic is used outside educational institutions, whereas on the ground they come to recognize the predominance of Algerian dialect. This is indeed, as shown in the questionnaire, pushed many of them to be inquisitive about the local language and culture. The last item on the questionnaire was devoted to the suggestions provided by local students on how to best manage or even avoid culture shock among international students. Their suggestions on the whole seem to be conducive to one focal point: it is that of the necessity of learning about the cultural norms and mores of the country chosen for studies. Other views have also pointed to the significance of adopting a sort of smoothness and readiness to embrace other cultures on the foreign students' side.

## **2.8. Summary of the Findings**

Because of the educational differences, international students confront many obstacles in the new universities they study in. these difficulties may cause academic culture shock. Academic culture shock is not a common used term. It can be defined as the anxiety and confusion resulted from a mismatch in expectations between students and the new educational milieu (teachers, classmates, and curriculum).

There are different factors contributing to this phenomenon. As a result of this study, language proficiency is the major factor that causes academic culture shock. It is very known that language is a means of communication. It is a set of signs used by people to express their feelings and thoughts. However, all interviewed students reported that they had a problem to understand teachers, classmates and lectures. They could not communicate with them because of language barriers. The ignorance of language made international students feel helpless, isolated and lonely. This problem even affected the

results of some of them. The lack of language skills had a negative impact on the psychology of international students as well as the learning process. The false expectations about their new academic institution, unfamiliar university life, students- teachers relationships are other factors contributing to academic culture shock. Most of the interviewed students witnessed similar changes. Anxiety, depression, confusion, loneliness, withdrawal, feelings of helplessness and insomnia are the common shared symptoms of academic culture shock among international students.

Coping with academic culture shock is not an easy task but not impossible. There are many strategies to overcome it. As it was mentioned by the participants keeping in touch with family and friends is a good way to get over culture shock and feel at ease because of their continuous support. Self-confidence, patience, determination, hard work and being realistic are other ways adopted by international students to decrease the negative impact of culture shock. Other students participated in university activities to keep themselves strong and strengthen their relationship with other students.

Through the interpretation of the questionnaire results, it comes clear that international students are likely to experience adjustment issues when they enter the new university. Some international students find it easy to adjust or to cope with factors associated with living and studying in a foreign country, while others find the experience very difficult. The good relation or contact between international students and the locals help to adjust and understand the new cultural environment. Thus, the fact of coming to study in a foreign country push the international students try to learn and understand local's behavior and their way of communication.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed primarily the methodology chosen for the present research. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. At first, the researchers provided explanations of research objectives, and instruments used; interview and questionnaire. Secondly, they explained the process of working and sharing the data or investigated students' opinions, which included data transcription, data categorizing,

and data analysis. Finally they finished with a brief summary of the main findings of the practical research.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## ***Coping with Culture Shock***

### **3.1. Introduction**

In this section of the present study, the researchers introduce some suggestions and recommendations for international students to cope with culture shock in the social and academic life, followed by other recommendations to get over reverse culture shock. Besides this, the researchers suggest some teaching strategies that might help teachers to manage an international classroom, and develop a successful teaching and learning process.

### **3.2. Coping with Social Culture Shock**

In order to successfully cope with culture shock, it is necessary to address a sequence of issues:

#### **3.2.1. Pre-departure Preparation**

Before going to a new environment, the sojourner has to have an idea about culture shock and how to deal with it. He or she has to know that this phenomenon is normal and every foreigner experiences it. The one needs to be aware of the changes and ready for the problems encountered in this new environment. The sojourner have to make some readings about the country and its people before departure. This step help the international students to feel the new culture and its people more familiar.

Everyone sees his culture superior to other cultures. So, ethnocentrism is a major problem which encounters the individual in the host country, and that is why psychological preparation is obligatory; because the individual will be seen inferior and negatively judged by some locals.

#### **3.2.2. Personal and Social Relations**

Coping with culture shock needs that the individual should establish a network of relations. He or she is supposed to be in touch with family members and friends who absolutely show their support. The one should also make friendships with locals, internationals and especially people from his ethnic group in order to learn from their experiences how to deal with problems (Pugh, 2009).



Participation in social activities, sport teams, social concern groups, reading books, drawing, playing music and exploring the environment are very useful practices in the adaptation process because these activities keep the sojourner busy and help him or her to meet people and make friendships (ibid).

### **3.2.3. Cultural and Interaction Rules**

Language is a means of communication. So it is very necessary to know the local language in order to communicate with people in daily life. Nonverbal communication such as behavioral and emotional communication is another issue that the sojourner has to learn. To successfully master the verbal and nonverbal communication, one must observe, practice and ask (Crawford, 2008).

### **3.2.4. Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Effectiveness Skills**

The sojourner needs to understand the fact that problems and hard situations faced in the new culture are normal. He or she has to try to solve rather than deny them. Seeing problems and seeking solving them from both culture's point of view can be effective. Self-confidence, patience and management of stress are the major factors that help to rapidly adjust to the new culture, because when the sojourner experiences culture shock, his patience and confidence are lost, instead stress and frustration increase (Cohen et al, 1998).

### **3.2.5. Language Proficiency**

They try to learn the language by using it because it is easier to understand a culture when understanding the language used by locals, both verbal (words, grammar, idioms...) and non-verbal (gestures) because, mostly, verbal messages are accompanied with non-verbal messages.

## **3.3. Coping with Academic Culture Shock**

When international students come to study in a new educational institution in a foreign country, they are supposed to adapt to the new academic environment.

However, the adaptation to this new academic life is not an easy task. International students find themselves exposed to academic culture shock. Anxiety, confusion, isolation and lack of understanding are the main symptoms of this phenomenon. Academic culture shock is a personal experience every international students can experience when he or she arrives to an unfamiliar educational institution. It is not abnormal or odd. So, students should not be frustrated and confused. Instead, they must find some solutions to get over it. The following tips are the major strategies to cope with academic culture shock:

### **3.3.1. Learning about the Academic Destination**

International students should read and ask about the university they are going to study in, and try to gather some information about the academic system, curriculum and teaching methods in the host country. This step is very important because many students create some false expectations about their destination. When they arrive, the real academic life surprises them, and the unexpected environment causes feelings of anxiety and frustration.

### **3.3.2. Keeping in Touch with Family and Friends**

It is very hard to live in a foreign country without your family, or to study in a new university without your usual friends. International students are obliged to live and study abroad far away from their families and friends. The distance between international students and people they used to live with is one of the main reasons that contribute to culture shock. Feelings of loneliness and isolation can control students and affect their learning process. Since the world witnesses a great scientific development in the field of communication, international students should not be very worry about the distance between them and their families or friends. They can text, call and even see them through Facebook, Skype and other applications. The contacts between international students and people in their home countries is an effective way to get over culture shock. Parents and good friends always support students studying abroad to resist and keep going on. They are a strong source of support and inspiration. Thus,

international students should keep in touch with their families and friends to decrease the negative effects of distance on their learning process.

### **3.3.3. Development of Relationships with Teachers and Classmates**

According to Wu et al (2015), in a new academic life, international students meet people including teachers and classmates from different cultures with different mentalities. These differences can be a barrier for international students to interact with those people. Many international students cannot accept the cultural differences in the new academic life. They avoid people and try to stay alone or contact only with students from their home countries. However, these behaviors are not right. Instead, students should found a network with professors and classmates. They need to talk with them, and participate in the classroom. They can ask questions during the lectures or after the sessions. Students can also ask for their teachers' emails to discuss the unclear points in the lectures. Making friendships with local and other international students is another effective way to cope with culture shock. International students should contact with classmates from different cultures. Although it is hard for them, they are supposed to communicate with others. Local students can help them in different things. Through them, international students can learn about the host culture and try to adapt to it. Making friendships with other international students is another efficient way to cope with academic culture shock because they share the same experience and feelings, and they can learn from each other's experiences.

### **3.3.4. Physical and Psychological Rest**

It is common that international students are students who travel abroad with the singular purpose of studying. However, this does not mean to spend all time studying. Every person needs some time for himself to relax, sleep and wander. In order to avoid physical fatigue and psychological stress, international students are advised to get enough sleep and rest. It is not all about studying, they have to get outside, explore environment and meet people (Mustaffa and Ilias, 2013)

### **3.3.5. Self-confidence and Patience**

Students must keep their self-confidence and believe on their capacities, keeping in mind that nothing is impossible. Consequently, self-confidence guides to realize miracles. They have to learn to be constructive, and when they make mistakes or find themselves in an uncomfortable situation, they should avoid this position and don't put themselves in the same situation again. Students have to be open, curious, realistic and patient, and must give themselves time to adjust to the new culture.

## **3.4. Teaching International Students**

Teaching international students is a challenge for most educators because it is not easy to teach different students from different cultures. Here are some strategies that can help teachers to improve the teaching and learning process for international students:

### **3.4.1. The positive Teacher-students Relationship**

According to Rose (2000), the development of a positive relationship with international students is the most important step to make a good atmosphere for teaching and learning process in an international classroom. Although it is hard to establish this kind of relationships, the teacher must find ways to enhance his relation with his students. He is supposed to know his students' names and pronounce them well. Learning about their home countries, cultures and previous academic institutions can be effective to fill the gap between teacher and his international students. A good identification of cultural differences can develop a positive communication in the classroom and help the teacher to choose effective instructional strategies, because the cultural misunderstanding depraves the teaching and learning process. In order to promote his relationship with his students, the teacher can arrange some meetings with them and send follow up emails to discuss issues related to lectures.

### **3.4.2. Making Lectures Accessible**

Understanding lectures may be difficult and challenging for some international students, especially for those who face some problems with the language used in the explanation of the lectures. So, the teacher has to take into consideration language barriers for international students, and be aware that most of them do not get the meanings of slangs, idioms, jargons, abbreviations and some expressions that seem familiar to locals, but weird to international students. According to Wu et al (2015), in order to avoid cultural misunderstanding, the teacher need to be aware of the cultural references, because some expressions and gestures may be strange or insulting in some cultures; what makes international students feel confused. That is why the teacher should prepare a list of difficult words and expressions with their meanings and give them to students at the beginning of the lecture in order to make the lecture clear. Another important point is the organization of the lectures by structuring them, and identifying goals and expectations.

### **3.4.3. Creating Opportunities for Participation**

According to (Rocca, 2010), there are three main reasons that prevent international students from participating in the classroom: comprehension problems, lack of confidence, and unfamiliarity with academic classroom expectations. Most international students lack confidence and hesitate to participate in the classroom. Even if they do not understand lectures, they stay quiet and do not ask questions. So, the teacher should encourage students to stop him or her when they do not understand something, and do not hesitate to ask questions. Students prefer their teachers to be a guide rather than a boss. So, the teacher must be helpful, and create a comfortable and safe climate to encourage them contribute in discussions in the classroom, and ask them about what kind of teaching strategies they prefer. When posing a question, students need time to give answers. Wherefore, the teacher must give them for brain storming, or ask them to write answers, and then select some students to answer.

#### **3.4.4. Group projects**

Group projects are an effective strategy to motivate international students participate in the classroom, and communicate with their classmates. It is a good way to develop an active and positive learning process, and improve the critical thinking of international students. The teacher should form some groups which include students from different backgrounds with an equilibrium in capacities. He should create some small conversations between them, and give them some activities or missions to do. It is important to set some rules and create guidelines to manage the group projects, and make them effective and successful (Smith, 1996).

### **3.5. University Support for International Students**

According to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (2008), university can provide some services and make some programs in order to facilitate the adjustment of international students to its academic life.

#### **3.5.1. International Students Orientation Program**

International students orientation program is a period of time organized by the university at the beginning of the academic year. Its main aim is to prepare international students for living in the new environment and studying in the new university. It is to help them adjust to the host culture and mainly the new academic life. During the orientation program, the educational staff welcomes the international students to the university, and introduce them to the academic life and local students. This program is an opportunity to present the host culture and local community to international students. It also includes information about library, campus, transport and university activities.

#### **3.5.2. International Students Advisory Service (ISAS)**

Trying to study and adjust to the new cultural and educational milieu at the same time is not easy for international students. Many obstacles may disrupt their transition to the new social and academic life. ISAS is a set of specialist support services for

international students to help advise, and give them information about different issues including immigration, jobs, residence, examination nerves, learning difficulties and personal crises.

### **3.6. Possible Solutions and Coping Strategies for Reverse Culture Shock**

The Overseas Briefing Center within the US Department of State suggests the following strategies to cope with reverse culture shock

#### **3.6.1. Pre-Departure Preparation**

The most important thing you can do to deal with reverse culture shock is to expect that it will happen to you.

##### **3.6.1.1. Getting Closure**

An essential part of entering new culture is getting closure on foreign experience. If sojourner don't feel like he or she has said "goodbye" to the foreign culture, then he/she might has a harder time accepting his/her new home. Sojourner must do everything that he or she can to make sure that he/she has no regrets when return home. This includes things like:

- Visit all the places and sites before departing (plan these trips in advance, if possible, to assure you have time);
- Take pictures and videos;
- Say goodbye to friends;
- Buy host-country souvenirs and keepsakes;

This is also a good time for sojourner to create or update his/her contacts/friends list (save those phone and email contacts!)

### 3.6.1.2. Mental and Psychological Preparation

The international students know they're going to experience reverse culture shock to some degree, but it may be hard to visualize how these stresses will occur. Before you return, it's a good idea to sit down and think through some of the potential problems you may face and how you should deal with them

For example, sojourners should ask themselves

- How does home look?
- How do I expect to feel?
- What will I find frustrating?
- What do I want to accomplish after I return home?
- How are others likely to feel about me?
- What will be different at home?
- How will my role be different?

➤ What new things might I have to get used to?  
The following are some considerations of general popular culture shifts of which you may have been unaware while abroad:

- New vocabulary
  - New technology and how people use it (texting, video chat, etc.)
  - New foods
  - Trends in fashion
  - U.S. television programming
  - New style automobiles
- What coping strategies will I use to deal with challenges and stress?
- What stress-relieving methods will I use? (Exercise / Health / Diet / Organization)
  - How will I organize my time?
  - What are some cues I can transfer/modify from this culture to my new home?



- What activities and groups can I get involved with at home?

Many organizations can be grounding and familiar, and may provide continuity in the face of change, new activities may provide fun to help sojourners cope with the stress of transition

### **3.6.2. Coping Strategies**

After all, the sojourner has to adjust to the home culture sooner or later. They try to use these methods to help reduce the stress of the transition and not to hide from their need to adjust. These include communication outlets, stress management, and modifying and transferring cues.

#### **3.6.2.1. Communication Outlets**

They must communicate with others who have been overseas and experienced reverse culture shock. They can also lend support and advice on coping with the challenges. Numerous organizations also exist for the very purpose of providing fellowship for former expatriates.

Keep in contact with the friends they have made while serving overseas. As you get used to the new communication patterns of "home," you can maintain communication with your friends overseas. They may enjoy hearing about your new life and experiences, and this can compensate for any "lack" of communication you might be experiencing at home. You can also meet people from the host country who are now in the United States. This may be a good way of keeping in touch with the culture, and keeping up on the language.

#### **3.6.2.2. Stress Management**

Known stress reducers are useful in the stressful situation of reentry as well as many other stressful events. Maintaining your health through diet and exercise will help you to have the energy to accomplish all of the tasks of reentry. Regular planning and organization will also help you to establish familiar routines, adding stability and

predictability to your life, thus reducing stress. When you set goals and accomplish them, you will feel better about yourself and your situation.

Also pay conscious attention to your stress level. Take time to relax and retreat from especially stressful circumstances. Don't overwork. And remember that you are experiencing reverse culture shock: it will pass as you adjust.

### **3.6.2.3. Transferring and Modifying Cues**

Cues are any of the little things that we are familiar and comfortable with in a culture. One way of adding psychological stability to our reentry experience is to transfer cues from the foreign culture into your new home culture, or to modify existing cues to represent your favorite cues of the host culture. These cues include things that you became familiar with and that will remind you of your foreign home. For instance, consider cataloging some of your favorite recipes. Other cues might include art or literature of the host country, and photographs or videos of people and places. Perhaps an item of the local traditional dress is something that you would like to wear when you return to the states. Think of ideas of what cues you can transfer or modify from the culture you're now leaving to keep with you in your "home."

Transferring and modifying cues is a strategy you can use to help you "ease in" to your new home culture. As you get used to the new cues, the transferred or modified cues can fill in the void of familiarity and routine created by your transition. Remember, however, that you will have to adapt to the United States, so don't use these transferred cues as an escape from adapting.

## **3.7. Conclusion**

The researchers, in this chapter, tried to provide some strategies and solutions that help international students to deal with culture shock at the social and educational environment. At the beginning, they gave some recommendations for students,

educators and policy makers about sensitive culturally activities that facilitate the adjustment of international students to the new environment .By the end of the chapter researchers provided solutions to cope with reverse culture shock when returning home.

# **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The term Culture Shock refers to the feelings of distress and unease when being exposed to a foreign culture. Besides this narrow definition of the actual shock the expression is also used in order to describe the whole process a sojourner goes through during an international encounter.

This adaptation or adjustment process usually starts with an initial euphoria about the foreignness of the host culture. Everything is new and exciting and the sojourner is in the role of a tourist exploring the foreign environment. The euphoria is followed by a crisis, the actual Culture Shock. The individual feels isolated and misses the familiar symbols, attitudes and habits of the culture of origin. During the crisis phase many different psychological and physical symptoms of Culture Shock can occur with varying severance, ranging from homesickness to depression and serious illnesses. Once the crisis stage is overcome the sojourner starts to accept the differences of the host culture and becomes functioning. He learns how to cope with the situation and handles the challenges of everyday life. This stage is referred to as the recovery stage. It results in the final adjustment stage, where the individual reaches a certain state of acculturation.

The degree of this acculturation depends on various factors, such as the general personality, the motivation to adapt, language skills, support of fellow and host nationals, the cultural distance between the two cultures involved, and his experiences made during the encounter

International students came to Tlemcen as a new environment in search of higher education and to reach many goals. The researchers explained the meaning of culture shock and explored the international students' emotional reactions to cultural differences and the strategies international students learned and developed to balance their reactions as well as to deal with the differences .Thus, the data collected was

obtained from fifteen international students and thirteen local students through structured interview and a questionnaire. The study ,therefore, has confirmed the fact that many international students at the University of Tlemcen face culture shock ,and because those students recourse to some tips of their own to manage this situation including keeping contact with their families and striving to bridge relationships with their classmates in the host country(Algeria),it has been necessary to provide further strategies and practical suggestions to diminish the negative impact of this phenomenon on their academic life in particular. To this end, it is hoped that the suggested strategies should be tested on the ground to measure their efficacy.

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# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX ONE: Local Student's Questionnaire

Q1: what is your field of study?

Q2: Does your department include international students?

yes

no

Q3: Do you know some of them in person?

yes

no

Q4: Does your own classroom include international students?

yes

no

Q5: Would you state the home countries of those students?

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Q6: Do international students in your class/department show higher levels of motivation in learning?

yes

no

Q7: Do you think that international students acclimatize easily with the local culture?

yes

no

Q8: Have you ever witnessed a case of culture shock involving international students?

yes

no

If yes , please state it : - - - - -  
- - - - -  
- - - - -

Q9: Do international students strive to know more about the local culture?

- yes
- no
- others

Q10: According to you, how would international students avoid or manage culture shock?

- - - - -  
- - - - -  
- - - - -

## **APPENDIX TWO: International students' interview Guide**

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. How old are you?
4. What is your field of studies?
5. What is your native language?
6. What reasons pushed you to come and pursue your studies here in Algeria?
7. How did you manage to come to Algeria?
8. Is the academic environment here at Tlemcen University so different from that of your own university? How?
9. What were your own expectations about Tlemcen University?
10. Did you experience any sort of culture shock here at Tlemcen University? Explain.
11. How is the relationship with teachers?
12. Do teachers help you acclimatize with the new academic environment?
13. How do you usually manage instances of culture shock? Explain.