



A Study of the Correlation Between Intercultural Competence and Linguistic Competence at Postgraduate Level: From Theory to Practice

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Abstract

This study investigates the correlation between intercultural competence and linguistic competence among postgraduate students. The current research also aims to explore how linguistic competence and intercultural competence contribute to each other in bidirectional way, what role is played by language proficiency in achieving intercultural competence at postgraduate level. Correspondingly, a quantitative survey is conducted to collect data from 35 postgraduate level students from diverse cultural backgrounds currently studying in prestigious universities, viz. Kohat University of Science and Technology, KUST, Kohat, National University of Modern Languages, NUML, Islamabad, COMSATS University Islamabad, Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences), Peshawar, Pakistan, Lanzhou University, China and Xi'an Jiaotong University, China. The major findings of the study revealed that there lies a positive correlation between intercultural competence and linguistic competence. It was also found out that students with higher linguistic competence tend to have higher intercultural competence. Likewise, the study in hand, confirmed that students in the given context and at post graduate level demonstrate good understanding and sound awareness regarding their host culture, social norms, cultural values, customs, laws and



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traditions. Additionally, it was also highlighted by the study that students were found able enough to interact appropriately in various social situation i.e. aptly called pragmatic situations. Moreover, findings of the study have brought out significant implications for educators and policymakers by seeking to promote intercultural understandings/ awareness along with the focus on linguistic competence in higher education in order to prepare global citizens. Finally, the study emphasizes on intercultural knowledge to be imparted to the young language learners in Pakistan in order to overcome the chances of fluent fool phenomenon.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence; Linguistic Competence; Fluent Fool; Communication; Social Norms, cultural Values, Customs.

Introduction

Intercultural competence refers to the “ability to interact in their own language with the people from another country and culture (Byram (1997)). Intercultural competence enhanced through human experiences, attitudes, interactions, skills, knowledge, behaviors as Dell Hymes (1966) claims that language proficiency involves not only grammatical knowledge i.e. the knowledge of rules and principles of language but socio-cultural knowledge, pragmatics as well as strategic competence. Additionally, he focuses on cultural awareness cultural knowledge, language proficiency, adaptability and empathy. According to Klak and Martin (2003) Intercultural competence can be enhanced through intercultural education and training. Caligiuri, Jacobson and Farr (2000) Intercultural competence may go beyond ethnic groups such as global and international level. In the same way, Olson and Kroeger (2001) and Gul et al.,2022(b) advance proficiency in and language requires higher levels of intercultural competence. As for linguistic competence is concerned Noam Chomsky, the pioneer of linguistic competence, views linguistic competence as an inherent property of individuals which allows them to generate sounds and constructs words and sentences, whereas Dell Hymes analyzes linguistic competence as individuals' capability to make an acknowledge grammatically accurate sentences.

As can be experienced linguistic competence serves as a channel for intercultural competence. As linguistic competence contributes to the components to the individual's communication such as such as form and structure, meanings, context etc. While intercultural competence includes cultural awareness, social context, emotional intelligence etc. As communication requires form and structures, social context of the communication, cultural knowledge, cohesion and coherence etc. Hence, both the competencies overlap on the gateway of communication.

However, it implies that intercultural competence is complex multifaceted and dynamic concept that has been explored by different anthropologist, researchers, scholars and linguists across the world. Therefore, it is associated with society and culture.

Undeniably, the study is about correlation between intercultural competence and linguistic competence at postgraduate level. This study reveals how and when linguistic competence develops intercultural competence at postgraduate level. By exploring this work, readers can gain insights that how language learners need to develop intercultural



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awareness to navigate diverse cultural context and understanding the impact of cultural background on linguistic and intercultural competence as well as examining the development of both competencies overtime.

Research Objectives

- i. To investigate the relationship between intercultural competence and linguistic competence among postgraduate students.
- ii. To examine the impact of language proficiency on intercultural competence development.

Research Questions

- i. What is the correlation between intercultural competence and linguistic competence among postgraduate students?
- ii. How does language proficiency influence intercultural competence development among postgraduate students?

Rationale of the Study

It is often observed that students have greater linguistic competence at post-graduate level but they face problems in real life situations when/where they encounter with the participants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. For instance, if participants are sharing different nationalities, mother tongues in intercultural situations because such instances contribute to enough cultural distances. Numerous studies, viz. Lehmann, 2007 and Abdulrahman et al., 2019 etc. have reported the importance of linguistic competence but there is still gape between the linguistic competence and intercultural competence (Gul et al., 2023 and Gul et al., 2024). Culture and language are inseparable in nature with the target language cultural knowledge higher proficiency is difficult to be achieved. It implies that along with linguistic competence language learners also need intercultural competence in order to gain higher proficiency either for employability purposes abroad or if they intend to study in European countries. Therefore, the study in hand, intends to explore the correlation between linguistic competence and intercultural competence at post graduate level.

Significance of the Study

In the context of rapidly increase of socio- cultural, economic, and globalization, intercultural-cultural communication received much attention scholars and experts in language studies. It implies that inter-cultural awareness is one of the crucial factors to be included in language classroom discourse in order to avoid fluent fool phenomenon. Importantly, it is also crucial that to add intercultural communication aspects to language/linguistic curriculum/syllabi to foster undergraduate and post graduate levels students' cultural knowledge of the target language. Therefore, in this regard, the current sheds light on the significance of intercultural communicative competence alongside with linguistic competence. Similarly, the study also guides language instructors and students towards culture teaching and learning inside the language



Literature Review

Intercultural competence can be increased through a range of intercultural experiences, for example by attending international schools, attending different ethnic institutions which have a non-discriminatory environment, or by having extensive contact with people from other countries (Pascarella et al. 1996; Straffon, 2003; Zhai & Scheer, 2004; Ali et al., 2022; Gul et al., 2022(b); Ishtiaq et al., 2022).

In the same line, intercultural competence (including respect for otherness, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity, behavioral changes communicative awareness, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness) by supporting learners' critical reflection on encounters with people from other cultures which they themselves have personally (Byram, 1997). Similarly, Deardorff (2006) commented on Intercultural competence that it is the ability to effectively and appropriately communicate and interact across cultural boundaries, utilizing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (Habib et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2024;

Additionally, Dell Hymes (1966) Communicative competence can be defined, it refers to the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in social contexts, taking into account the relationship between language, culture, and social situation. This competence encompasses four key components: linguistic competence, or knowledge of language rules and structures; sociolinguistic competence, or understanding language use in social contexts; pragmatic competence, or the ability to use language effectively in communication; and strategic competence, or the ability to repair communication breakdowns. Later, Canale and Swain (1980) expanded on this concept by adding discourse competence, the ability to understand and produce connected texts, and sociocultural competence, understanding cultural norms and values.

Furthermore, Jackson (2014) stated that Intercultural competence involves the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that enable individuals to navigate complex cultural contexts and interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. This concept is further elaborated by (Fantini, 2015) and Sabih-Ul-Hassan et al., (2023); Gul et al., 2022 (c); Afaq et al., 2023 who define Intercultural competence is the complex of abilities, attitudes, and knowledge that enables effective interaction and communication across cultural boundaries.

However, Noam Chomsky (1965) emphasized the difference between linguistic competence, the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language and performance, the actual use of language in concrete situations, he points out that "linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interests, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. Furthermore, different linguists observed different aspects as (Canale & Swain, 1980; Gul et al., 2022(a); Afaq et al., 2022 claim that linguistic competence refers to the knowledge and mastery of the language code,



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encompassing phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Bachman (1990) Said that linguistic competence involves the ability to understand and produce language forms, including phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic aspects. Therefore, the term “fluent fool” was used that is informally describes individuals who possess fluent language skills but lack deeper understanding, critical thinking, or effective communication skills as linguist Stephen Krashen (1982) stated that, fluency refers to the ability to produce language automatically and effortlessly, whereas proficiency encompasses a broader range of language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and communication strategies (Sajjad et al., 2023; Gul et al., 2022(d); Ishtiaq et al., 2022;

Methodological Framework

This study employed a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between linguistic competence and intercultural competence among postgraduate students. A survey research design was used to collect data from the target population, providing quantitative data and facilitating the generalization of findings.

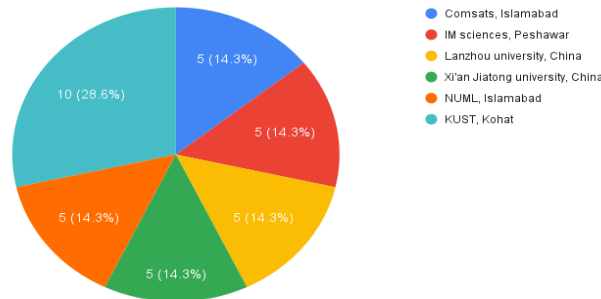
The population consisted of postgraduate students from various academic disciplines. A random sampling method was used to select 35 participants, ensuring a representative sample sufficient for statistical reliability.

A structured questionnaire was designed, comprising 20 questions on a Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: linguistic competence (10 questions) and intercultural competence (10 questions). The linguistic competence section assessed language proficiency, including grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. The intercultural competence section evaluated participants' ability to interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Data collection occurred in a controlled environment, using self-reporting to ensure honest responses.

The survey collected responses from 35 students, representing six institutions across Pakistan and China. These are Kohat university of Science and Technology, Kohat, National University of Modern Languages, NUML, Islamabad, COMSATS University Islamabad, Institute of Management Sciences (IMSciences), Peshawar, Lanzhou University, China and Xi'an Jiaotong University, China. The sample comprised 10 students from Kohat University, and 5/5 students from each of the other five institutions. The diversity in institutions, cultures, and genders (male and female) helps minimize bias. This demographic distribution allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The small sample size may limit generalizability, but provides in-depth insights into the perspectives of students from various cultural backgrounds. The data can be used to identify trends and patterns. The statistical representation of gathered data is given below:

Analysis and Discussion

The sample audience for this quantitative survey was 35 students of Kohat university of Science and Technology, Kohat, National University of Modern Languages, NUML, Islamabad, COMSATS University Islamabad, Institute of Management Sciences

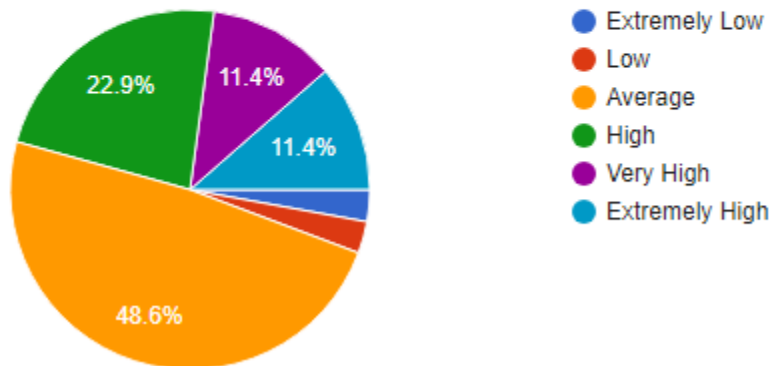


(IMSciences), Peshawar, Lanzhou University, China and Xi'an Jiaotong University, China. These students are from different cultures. These responses were collected by both the genders male and female to overcome biasedness. The statistic representation of gathered data is given below:

Graph 1. Responses to “I knew the essential norms and taboos of the host culture (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviors, etc.).

1. I knew the essential norms and taboos of the host culture (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviours, etc.).

35 responses



As data shown in the above graph No.1 most of the students' intercultural competence is an average i.e.48%, are agreed, 22.9% of the students are highly agreed, 11.4 are very highly agreed, 11.4 are extremely agreed and 5% have no opinion regarding the statement i.e. I knew the essential norms and taboos of the host culture (e.g., greetings, dress, behaviors etc. It means most of the students have the knowledge of the host culture. The students at postgraduate level have the knowledge of how the host culture's people dressed, greet, and their behavior. These all things put positive effect on the communicative competence. Surprisingly, in the exiting research studies such as communicative competence. Surprisingly, in the exiting research studies such as



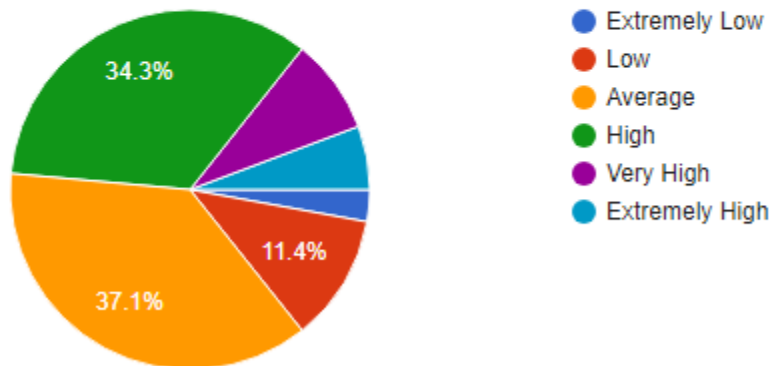
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Masigan, 2021;

Graph 2. Responses to “I could contrast important aspects of the host language and culture with my own”.

2. I could contrast important aspects of the host language and culture with my own.

35 responses

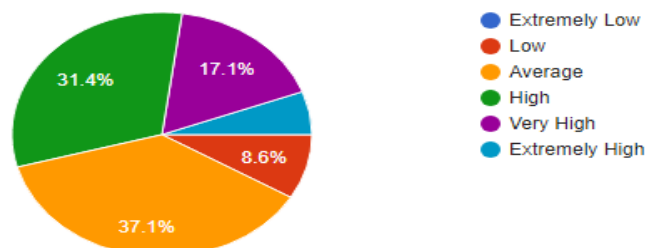


The data in the graph. No.2 demonstrates that most of the students' intercultural competence is an average i.e 37.1%, are agreed, 34.3%, of the students are highly agreed, 8.6 %, are very highly agreed, 5.7% are extremely agreed and 11.4 % 2.9 % of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I could contrast important aspects of the host language and culture with my own. The students at postgraduate level can compare their own culture with the host culture to get come positive output.

Graph.3 Responses to “I knew some techniques to aid my learning of the host language and culture”.

3. I knew some techniques to aid my learning of the host language and culture.

35 responses



The data in the graph No.3 shows that students' intercultural competence is an average



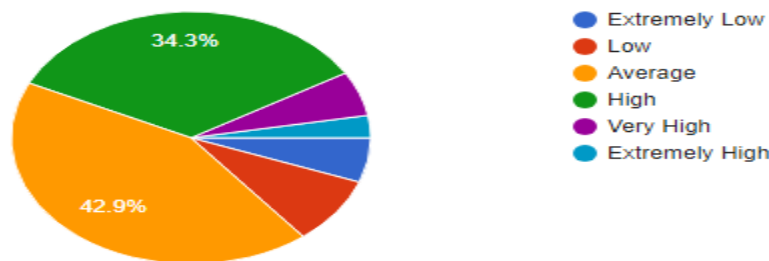
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i.e 37.1% are agreed, 31.4 % of the students are highly agreed, 17.1 are very highly agreed, 5.7% of the students are extremely agreed, and 8.6 % of the students are hardly agreed with the statement i.e I knew some techniques to aid my learning of the host language and culture. It means high number of students aided their knowledge of learning of linguistics competence and inter culture competence by knowing the techniques of the host culture and language.

Graph.4. Responses to “I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages”.

4. I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages

35 responses



As the data shown in the graph No.4 most of the students are in an average i.e 42.9% are agreed, 34.3 % are highly agreed, 5.7 % of the students are very highly agreed, and 14 % have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages. to this response high number of students can describe a model of Cross-cultural adjustment stages. As they have the ability to describe the model of Cross-cultural adjustment, they can easily communicate with the host culture people or students.

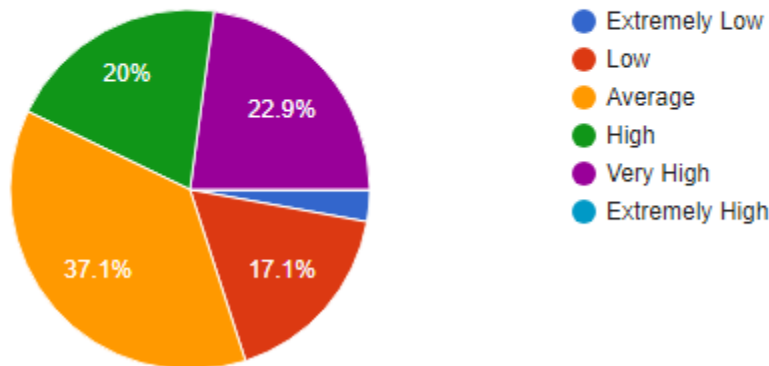
Graph.5. Responses to “I could cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adjusting to the host culture”.



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5. I could cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adjusting to the host culture.

35 responses

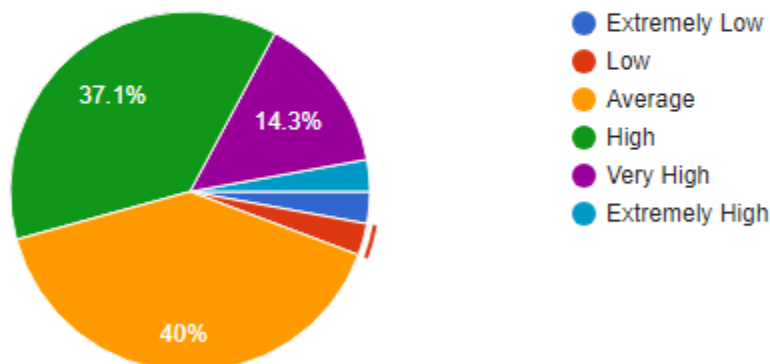


As the data shown in the graph No.5 great number of students are an average i.e 37.1% are agreed, 20% of the students are highly agreed, 22.9% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed and 17.1% students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I could cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adjusting to the host culture. As they can describe the model of cross cultural adjustment, therefore, they can cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adjusting to the host culture.

Graph.6. Responses to “interact with host culture members (I didn’t avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots)”.

6. interact with host culture members (I didn’t avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots).

35 responses



Graph No.6 shows majority of the students are an average i.e 40% are agreed, 37.1% are



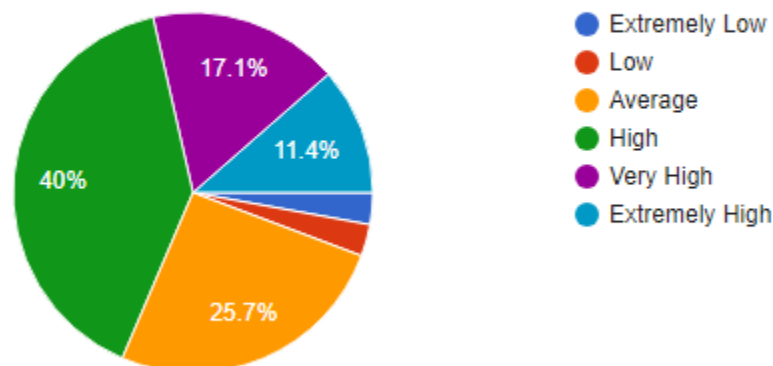
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highly agreed, 14.3% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed while rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e interact with host culture members (I didn't avoid them or primarily seek out my compatriots). It means interacting with the host culture members to gain as much knowledge possible about the host culture and language the students don't avoid to communicate in the host culture which is also a crucial and positive point towards gaining competence in communication.

Graph.7. Responses to “learn from my hosts, their language, and their culture”.

7. learn from my hosts, their language, and their culture

35 responses



Graph No 7 shows majority of the students are an average i.e 25.7% are agreed, 40% are highly agreed, 17.1% are very highly agreed, 11.4% are extremely agreed while rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e learn from my hosts, their language, and their culture. This response reveals that the students are so much interested and involved in learning about the intercultural and linguistic competence. As the majority of students are interested in learning from the host culture, the communicative and cross- cultural competence would automatically increase.

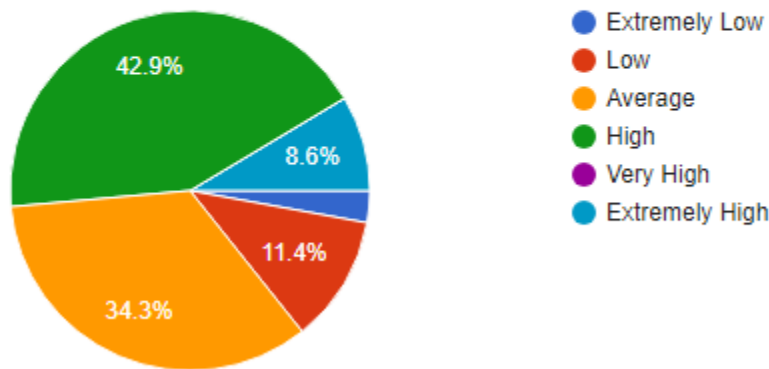
Graph.8. Response to “deal with my emotions and frustrations with the host culture (in addition to the pleasures it offered)”.



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8. deal with my emotions and frustrations with the host culture
(in addition to the pleasures it offered).

35 responses

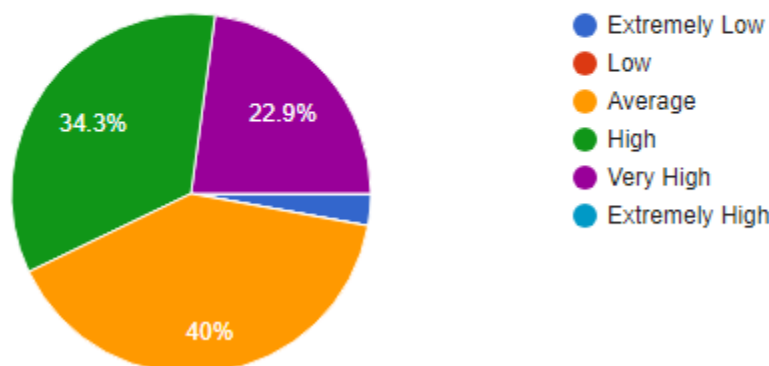


As data shown in the graph No.8 most of the students are in an average i.e 34.3% are agreed, 42.9 % of the students are highly agreed, 8.6 % are extremely agreed and rest of the students did not agree or have low knowledge of the statement i.e deal with my emotions and frustrations with the host culture (in addition to the pleasures it offered)”. The students have the courage to deal with their emotions and frustration while they interact in the host culture. They can easily adopt their accent and many things about the host culture.

Graph.9. Responses to “take on various roles appropriate to different situations (e.g., in the family, as a volunteer, etc.)”.

9. take on various roles appropriate to different situations (e.g., in the family, as a volunteer, etc.).

35 responses



Graph No. 9 shows most of the students are average i.e 40 % are agreed, 34.3 % are



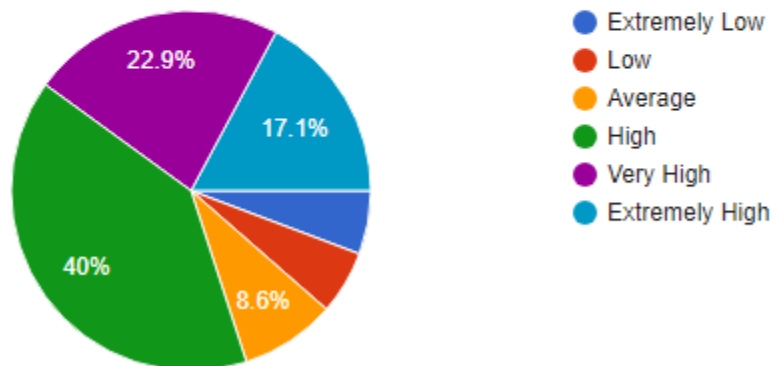
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highly agreed, 22.9% are very highly agreed, and the rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement take on various roles appropriate to different situations (e.g., in the family, as a volunteer, etc.)”. It means the students are engaged in different situations such as in the family, as a volunteer, etc. in the host culture. They feel the same while interacting in the host culture, because they know when to talk and how to talk in the host culture.

Graph.10. Responses to “show interest in new cultural aspects (e.g., to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.)”.

10. show interest in new cultural aspects (e.g., to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.).

35 responses



The data in the graph No.10 shows that the most of the students are high in number i.e 40 % are highly agreed, 22.9% are very highly agreed, 17.1 % are extremely agreed, and rest of the students are agreed or have less or low knowledge regarding the statement i.e show interest in new cultural aspects (e.g., to understand the values, history, traditions, etc.)”. This graph depicts the interest of high number students of the post graduate level in interculture or new culture such as understanding the values, traditions, history etc. They are open to learn new things of the host culture which help them communicate in the host culture.

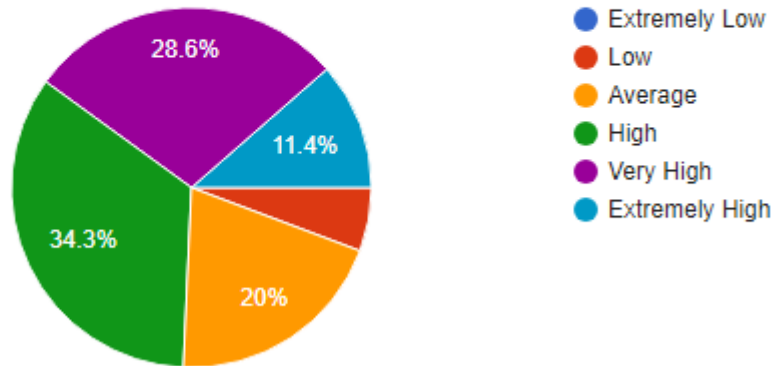
Graph. 1. Responses to” Try to understand differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles of host members”.



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1. Try to understand differences in the behaviours, values, attitudes, and styles of host members.

35 responses

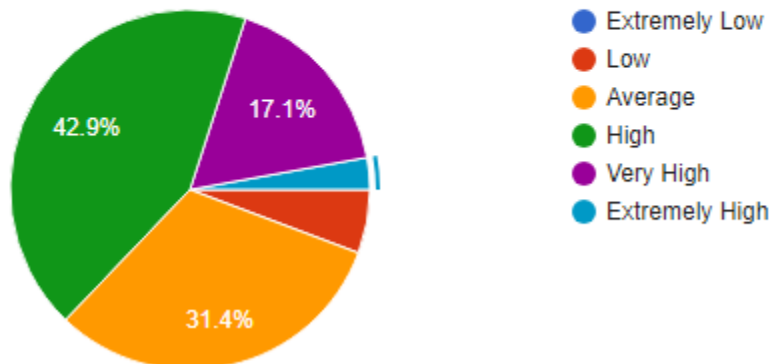


The data in the graph No.1 shows that most of the students are high in number i.e 42.9% are highly agreed, 31.4% are agreed, 17.1% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed while rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e Try to understand differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes, and styles of host members. It means most of the students understand differences in the behaviors, values, attitudes and styles of host members whereas, the rest of the students are not understanding it at the same rate.

Graph.2. Responses to “deal with different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving”.

2. deal with different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving.

35 responses





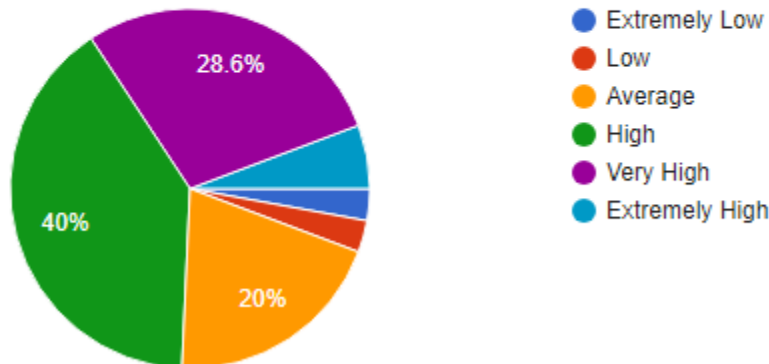
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The data in the graph No.2 shows that most of the students are high in number i.e 42.9% are highly agreed, 31.4% are agreed, 17.1% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed and rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e deal with different ways of perceiving, expressing, interacting, and behaving. It means most of the students are capable to understand the different ways to express language, as well as perceive language, i.e., (input and output) while average students feel difficulty in expression and perception of language in different culture.

Graph.3. Responses to “I demonstrated flexibility when interacting with persons from the host culture”.

3. I demonstrated flexibility when interacting with persons from the host culture.

35 responses



The data shown in the graph No.3 shows most of the students are high in number i.e 40% are highly agreed, 20% are agreed, 28.6% are very highly agreed, 5.7% are extremely agreed while rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I demonstrated flexibility when interacting with persons from the host culture. It means that this graph conclude that majority of the students show adaptability in their attitude manners and gestures to the host cultures. They let themselves free not to judge anyone but to learn in the host culture.

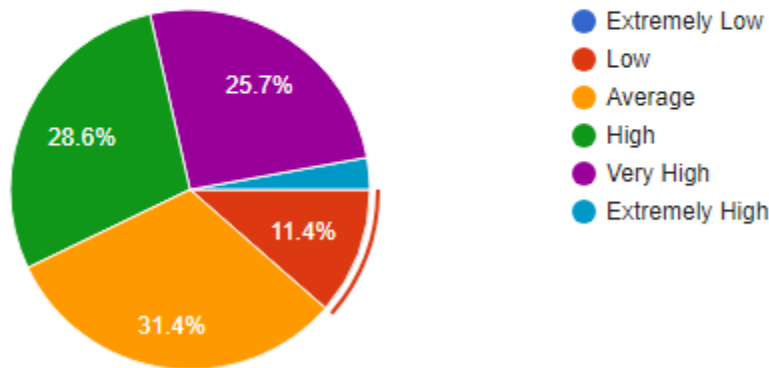
Graph.4. Responses to “I adjusted my behaviour, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending my hosts”.



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4. I adjusted my behaviour, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending my hosts.

35 responses

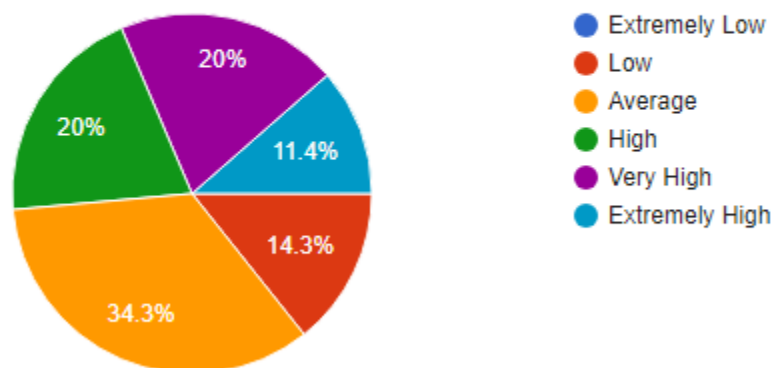


The data shown in the graph No. 4 shows that most of the students are an average i.e 31.4% are agreed, 28.6 % are highly agreed, 25.7% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed, and the rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I adjusted my behaviour, dress, etc., as appropriate, to avoid offending my hosts. According to this response, most of the students are interested to maintain their physical appearances. e.g. (dress, facial expression, non-verbal language) to avoid resentful situation.

Graph.5. Responses to “I was able to contrast the host culture with my own”.

5. I was able to contrast the host culture with my own.

35 responses



Graph No.5 shows that majority of the students are an average i.e 34.3% are agreed, 20% are highly and very highly agreed, 11.4% are extremely agreed, and the rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I was able to contrast the host



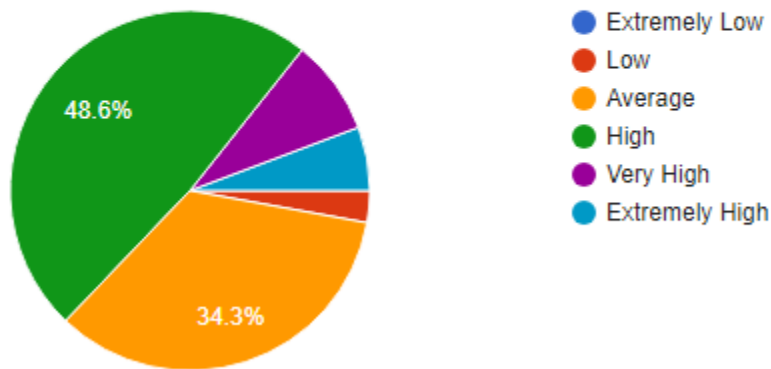
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culture with my own. It means that majority of the student aware about similarities and differences of intercultural competence. They knew the differences and similarities of their own and the host culture.

Graph.6. Responses to “I used strategies for learning the host language and about the host culture”.

6. I used strategies for learning the host language and about the host culture.

35 responses



The data in the graph No.6 shows that majority of the students are high in number i.e 48.6% are highly agreed, 34.3% are agreed, 8.6% are very highly agreed, 5.7% are extremely agreed, while rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I used strategies for learning the host language and about the host culture. It means high number of students adopt different plan for learning the host language and their culture. They students used different strategies for learning the host culture's pros and cons.

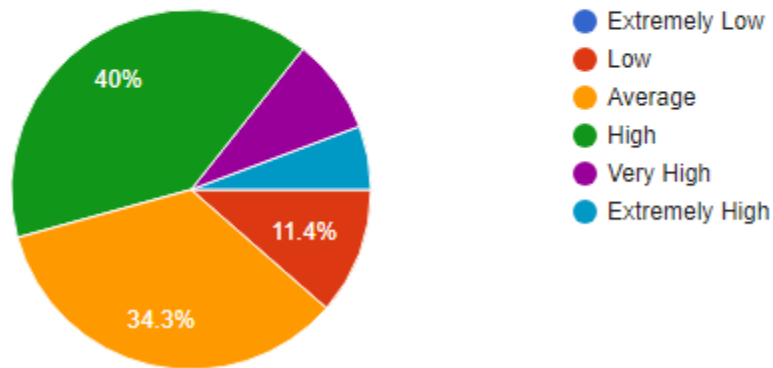
Graph.7. Responses to “I demonstrated a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations in the host culture”.



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7. I demonstrated a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations in the host culture.

35 responses



The data in the graph No.7 shows that majority of the students are high in number i.e 40% are highly agreed, 34.3% are agreed, 8.6 % are agreed very highly agreed, 5.7% are extremely agreed, while the rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e I demonstrated a capacity to interact appropriately in a variety of different social situations in the host culture. It means this graph describes high number of students are able to interact with cultural context.i.e social status and professional. As the status element is present in every culture, they easily get it, how to talk to a high-status personality and with the middle and low status personality.

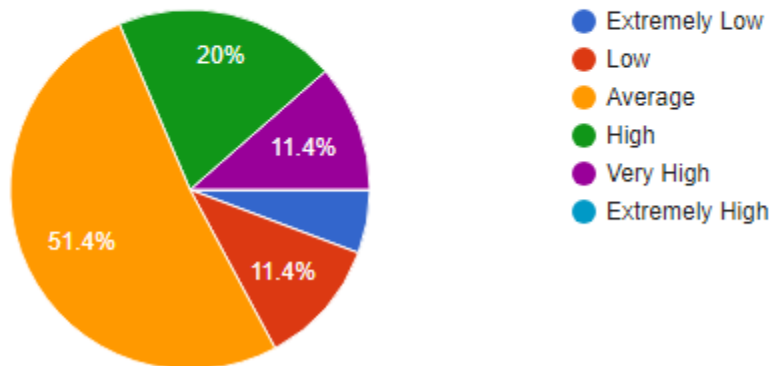
Graph.8. Responses to “My choices and their consequences (which made me either more, or less, acceptable to my hosts).”



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8. my choices and their consequences (which made me either more, or less, acceptable to my hosts).

35 responses

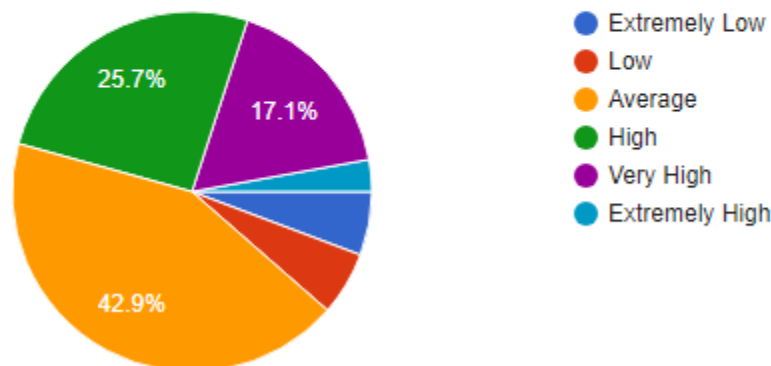


Graph No.8 shows that most of the students are an average i.e 51.4% are agreed, 20% are highly agreed, 11.4% are very highly agreed, while rest of the students have no and vague response regarding the statement i.e My choices and their consequences (which made me either more, or less, acceptable to my hosts). It means that most of the students are aware about their cultural choices (dress, behaviour) and language style (diction, accent) to deal with different situation which either acceptable to host.

Graph.9. Responses to “varying cultural styles and language use, and their effect in social and working situations”.

9. varying cultural styles and language use, and their effect in social and working situations.

35 responses



The graph No.9 shows that high number of students are an average i.e 42.9% are agreed, 25.7% are highly agreed, 17.1% are very highly agreed, 2.9% are extremely agreed and



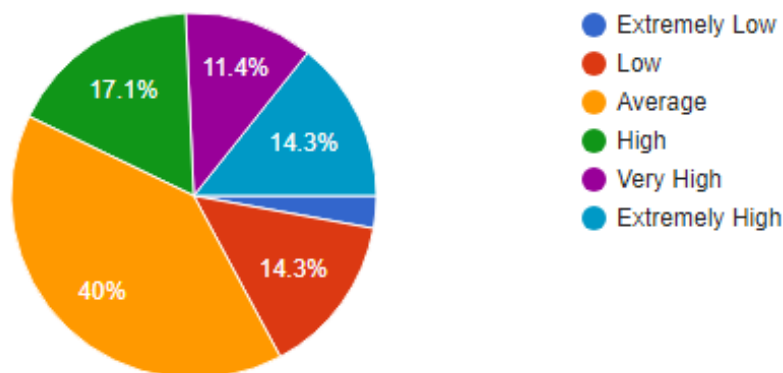
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rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e varying cultural styles and language use, and their effect in social and working situations. It means most of the students change their code and cultural style and different social context. Whereas, the rest of the student are not able to do this at the same rate.

Graph.10. Responses to “my own level of intercultural development”.

10. my own level of intercultural development.

35 responses



The data shown in the graph No.10 shows that most of the students are an average i.e 40% are agreed, 17.1% are highly agreed, 11.4% are very highly agreed, 14.3% are extremely agreed, and the rest of the students have no opinion regarding the statement i.e my own level of intercultural development. It means the graph clarifies that most of the student are fully understand their cultural competence.

Themes

Theme No. 1 Cultural Awareness and Understanding

The data suggests that postgraduate students demonstrate a high level of cultural awareness and understanding. They are able to recognize and appreciate the differences between their own culture and the host culture. This is evident in Graph 1, which shows that most students have average or high intercultural competence, indicating that they have knowledge of the host culture’s norms, values, and customs. Additionally, Graph 5 reveals that most students are able to contrast the host culture with their own, demonstrating an understanding of the similarities and differences between the two cultures. This theme highlights the importance of cultural awareness and understanding in facilitating effective communication and interaction across cultural boundaries.

Theme No. 2 Language Proficiency and Communication

The data indicates that language proficiency plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and interaction across cultural boundaries. Graph 3 shows that most students have average or high linguistic competence, indicating that they have the knowledge and techniques necessary to communicate effectively in the host language.



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Additionally, Graph 6 reveals that most students are able to interact with host culture members, demonstrating their ability to communicate effectively in social situations. This theme highlights the importance of language proficiency in facilitating communication and interaction across cultural boundaries.

Theme No. 3 Adaptability and Flexibility

The data suggests that postgraduate students demonstrate a high level of adaptability and flexibility when interacting with the host culture. Graph 9 reveals that most students are able to take on various roles appropriate to different situations, demonstrating their ability to adapt to different social contexts. Additionally, Graph 3 shows that most students are able to demonstrate flexibility when interacting with persons from the host culture, indicating their ability to adjust their behavior and attitude to suit different cultural contexts. This theme highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in facilitating effective communication and interaction across cultural boundaries.

Theme No. 4 Learning and Development

The data indicates that postgraduate students are proactive in learning about the host culture and language. Graph 7 reveals that most students are interested in learning from their hosts, their language, and their culture, demonstrating their desire to learn and develop their intercultural competence. Additionally, Graph 6 shows that most students are able to cite various learning processes and strategies for learning about and adjusting to the host culture, indicating their ability to reflect on their own learning and development. This theme highlights the importance of learning and development in facilitating intercultural competence.

Themes No. 5 Self-Awareness and Reflection

The data suggests that postgraduate students demonstrate a high level of self-awareness and reflection when interacting with the host culture. Graph 10 reveals that most students are able to reflect on their own level of intercultural development, demonstrating their ability to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, Graph 8 shows that most students are able to recognize the consequences of their choices and behaviors in the host culture, indicating their ability to reflect on their own actions and decisions. This theme highlights the importance of self-awareness and reflection in facilitating intercultural competence and effective communication across cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

This study explored the correlation between intercultural competence and linguistic competence among postgraduate students. The findings suggest that students demonstrated a good understanding of host culture norms, values, and customs, and were able to interact appropriately in various social situations. The study also found that students showed adaptability and flexibility when interacting with the host culture, and



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were able to adjust their behavior, dress, and language use to avoid offending their hosts. Furthermore, students demonstrated self-awareness and reflection, recognizing their own level of intercultural development and understanding the impact of their choices on their relationships with their hosts. The study highlights the importance of intercultural competence and linguistic competence in facilitating effective communication and interaction across cultural boundaries. The findings of this study have implications for educators, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to promote intercultural understanding and competence in educational settings. Therefore, this study contributes to our understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of intercultural competence and linguistic competence, and highlights the need for further research in this area.

Recommendations

It is suggested to explore the complex and multifaceted nature of intercultural competence and linguistic competence. Future research studies could employ mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between intercultural competence and linguistic competence. This could involve combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and perceptions of intercultural competence and linguistic competence. Furthermore, research could explore the impact of technology on the development of intercultural competence and linguistic competence, and examine the effectiveness of online intercultural education and training programs.

Moreover, area for future research is the examination of the relationship between intercultural competence and linguistic competence in different academic disciplines. For instance, how do students in fields such as business, engineering, or medicine develop intercultural competence and linguistic competence, and what are the specific challenges and opportunities they face? Answering these questions could provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to promote intercultural understanding and competence in higher education.

Additionally, future research could explore the long-term effects of intercultural competence and linguistic competence development on students' career outcomes and personal lives. How do students who develop high levels of intercultural competence and linguistic competence fare in the job market, and how do they navigate complex cultural contexts in their personal and professional lives? Investigating these questions could provide a more complete understanding of the benefits and outcomes of intercultural competence and linguistic competence development.

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