

Communication Culture Shock and Adaptation Strategies among Nigerian Undergraduate Students in Scotland, United Kingdom

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Abstract

This study explores the challenges faced by Nigerian undergraduate students in Scotland, UK, focusing on communication culture shock and adaptation strategies. Addressing a gap in literature, it examines the communication techniques used by these students to navigate cultural differences. Anchored in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Social Identity Theory, the study analyses how students adjust their communication styles and how group identity influences adaptation. Utilising a survey research design, data from 381 Nigerian undergraduate students reveal various adaptation strategies, such as speaking clearly and embracing feedback, to overcome barriers. A survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study was made up of Nigerian undergraduate students in Scotland, United Kingdom. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023), the number of Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom between the years 2018/2019 through to 2022/2023 is 73,716. Keyton's formula for sample size determination was used to and the sample size of this study was 381. The snowball sampling was used in different stages. Data were gathered using the copies of the questionnaire which were administered on the respondents virtually. Quantitative data analysis was adopted in this study such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), percentages and inferential statistics Chi. The findings revealed that the importance of effective communication in navigating cultural differences, with a consensus on the efficacy of specific techniques. Speaking more slowly and clearly, using less slang and idioms, being more direct and open to feedback and criticism are considered beneficial for effective communication in the UK. The study recommended that Universities in the United Kingdom should foster collaborations with community organizations, Nigerian consular services, and Nigerian cultural associations.

Keywords: *Communication, Culture Shock, Adaptation Strategies, Nigerian Undergraduate Students, Scotland United kingdom*

Introduction

The phenomenon of culture shock is a critical aspect of the international student experience, particularly for Nigerian undergraduate students studying in the United Kingdom. Culture shock refers to the psychological and social disorientation that individuals experience when they encounter a new and unfamiliar cultural environment (Akanwa, 2016). This disorientation can manifest in various ways, impacting communication styles, social interactions, and overall adaptation to the new environment. For Nigerian undergraduate students, the transition to life in the UK involves navigating significant cultural differences, which can affect their academic performance, social integration, and personal wellbeing. Culture shock typically occurs in stages beginning with the honeymoon phase, where students may feel excitement and fascination with their new surroundings. This is followed by the crisis phase, characterised by feelings of frustration, anxiety, and homesickness as the reality of cultural difference sets in. During this phase, students might struggle with the differences in communication styles, social norms, and educational systems (Ober, 2016). For Nigerian students, who came from a culture with distinct communication patterns and social hierarchies, adjusting to the more individualistic and direct communication style prevalent in the UK can be particularly challenging.

The preferences for international degrees by Nigerian employers of both the public and private sectors have also fuelled the quest for the acquisition of overseas certificates by Nigerian students. A visit to foreign embassies and high commissions in Nigeria reveals that many of the visa seekers are youngsters who are seeking for admission to study in European, American or Asian universities. Many parents go out of their ways to ensure that their wards get sponsorship to travel abroad to learn to the extent that universities in neighbouring African countries are also sought after. It is believed that an international degree can almost guarantee entry into Nigeria's growing middle class. For instance, a company looking for an electrical engineer will likely employ one with a certificate from a university abroad than one with a certificate obtained from a Nigerian University. This is due to the assumption that the quality of education acquired abroad is better than the Nigerian standard.

An Undergraduate is a student who has successfully completed an undergraduate degree level course at a college or University and is undertaking further study at a more advanced level. Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom are students who have successfully completed an undergraduate degree in a Nigerian college or University and is now undertaking further study at a more advanced level in the United Kingdom.

Equally, the euphoria of studying in the UK soon gives way to uncertainty as the students suddenly face with some cultural differences that they must deal with in order to achieve their mission of acquiring the degree for which they have been in the country. As a person who sojourned in the United Kingdom in search of a foreign certificate, I got a first-hand experience of what it is like to be in a foreign land. Although one was told about the cold weather for which preparations were made through the acquisition of some winter coats to keep warm, the first shock was the cold wind that greeted first-time visitors upon alighting from the aeroplane. According to Monguno (2017), human beings are regularly exposed to the influence of atmospheric changes, whether indoors or outdoors, which have an overwhelming impact on the physiological functioning of one's body. The disorientation associated with the cold weather was enough discouragement as one became instantly homesick.

The World Climate Guide (2020), stipulates that the temperatures in Nigeria vary remarkably depending on the climatic zones. In the North, winter is warm and dry; it can get uncomfortably hot during the day, up to 40 °C (104 °F), but it is usually cool at night, and it can even get cold in the northern hilly areas, where cold records are around freezing (0 °C or 32 °F). By February, the heat increases in all the inland areas, and it becomes scorching in the North from March to May, when temperatures can easily reach 40 °C (104 °F). On the contrary, in the South, the increase in temperature is limited, both because of the proximity to the ocean and because the rain showers begin earlier. The rains increase in intensity and frequency and gradually move to the North until they affect everywhere in June. In the area where the wet front advances, clashing with the existing hot and dry air mass, small tornadoes may form. From June to September, the air is humid, and the sky is usually cloudy throughout the country; temperatures are uniform and are everywhere around 28/30 °C (82/86 °F); the daytime temperatures are lower than in winter, but relative humidity is higher compared to the UK. For someone who is used to a warm southern Nigeria climate, adjusting to the cool temperature in the United Kingdom pose a great challenge and has far reaching effects in the academic activities of the student.

A first-time Nigerian graduate arriving in the UK for undergraduate studies will experience a difference in communication between the Nigerian and the British speakers. Even though English language is the primary language of interactions and taught in the United Kingdom, a Nigerian has difficulty catching up with the intonation and speed at which the Britons speak. One has to constrain one's ears to engage in meaningful communication, and this has negative consequences for learning as it impacted on follow up classes. Differences in language and interaction patterns are one of the most obvious but important factors which can lead to culture shock and a serious intercultural misunderstanding and adversity between the UK culture and undergraduate Nigerian students who grew up in the Nigerian culture. According to He & Shi (2008), most international students can pass standardized tests of proficiency but they cannot understand lectures, express ideas, or write reports. Language skills are a major factor in international students' academic success (Selvadurai, 1991).

There is also a difference in context while speaking. This largely affects the issue of cognitive knowledge, which means that Nigerian post graduate students need to be familiar with certain local aspects to effectively communicate with local UK people, including their history, their laws, and regulations, their perceptions, customs, beliefs, and rules of social commitments. The UK culture is usually more familiar, concise, straightforwardly and in-depth whilst communicating with one another. Hall (1997), also classifies the UK as a low-context category meaning they have more direct verbal communication and it is needed to properly understand a message being communicated and relies heavily on explicit verbal skills while Nigeria uses the high-context type of communication. High context cultures often exhibit less direct verbal and non-verbal communication, utilizing small communication gestures and reading more meaning into these less direct messages. This shows that context plays a significant role in communication, and should not be taken for granted, particularly when communicating in an alien culture.

The efficiency of the transportation system comes as a shock to most Nigerian undergraduate students visiting the United Kingdom. This form of easy, unified transport system is entirely different from what is available in Nigeria where one sometimes had to struggle to get into vehicles that are not road worthy just to get to their various destinations. In Nigeria, we do not

have cards like the popular Oyster cards used in London to get by with trains and buses efficiently. Also, some exciting aspect about the transportation system in the UK is the option to monitor and track the movement of a train or bus in real-time. Be rest assured that if you get to the bus stop 5 minutes later than when your bus was supposed to stop at that stop, you will miss that bus and will wait for the next bus which would be there on time.

People living in the United Kingdom are very polite. Almost everyone says please, thank you and sorry most of the time. An example of how polite Brits are would be saying thank you when a Bus stops at their bus stop and they have to come down, they always say thank you to the driver. In Nigeria, someone being polite is not the most visual experience you will encounter. We use the adverb “please” to imply the way we phrase things. An example is a polite way of asking a customer assistant at a counter, can I have a bottle of soda please? Britons may easily get offended if you just walk into a coffee shop and ask, “can I have a cup of coffee?”.

This experience will be shocking at an earlier time for first timers going into the United Kingdom after being exposed to the aggressive nature of Nigerian bus drivers and their assistants’ overtime. The adjective “Sorry” is not left out. Almost everyone in the UK says sorry, even if it is really not their fault. It goes further than that. There are different kinds of sorry, the passive aggressive sorry, the inquisitive type of sorry and so on. The idea of self-checkouts at retail stores and other business sectors in the UK is a completely new experience as a Nigerian just moving to the UK. In Nigeria, no retail store owner operates with the self-checkout systems. Nigerians must always meet a cashier to sort out their payments.

The narration so far, depicts the experience of culture shock. Zhou et al. (2008), describe the experience as a situation whereby individuals find themselves faced with challenges to their deeply held beliefs and understandings. This, in turn, poses potential threats to their sense of identity and sense of wellbeing (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008). Conceptualised by Kalvero Oberg in 1960 as a consequence of strain and anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture, culture shock also describes the feeling of loss, confusion and impotence resulting from loss of accustomed cultural cues and social rules. It describes the feeling of a multifaceted experience resulting from numerous stressors which occur in contact with a different culture (Winkelman, 1994). It also explains what occurs for emigrant groups like international students and many more, when they undergo massive technological and social change.

As a corollary to above, the communal lifestyle of a Nigerian who wakes up to ask a neighbour how his night went is utterly alien to the average British citizen who seldom exchanges pleasantries and when this happens does not go beyond the good morning, afternoon or evening, depending on the time of the day. That personal touch, interest and intimacy are generally lacking, and any attempt to enquire about family wellbeing is rebuffed. Another communication shock is how almost everything in the UK is named differently. What we know as a “sweater” is referred to as a jumper, bathing suit referred to as swimming costume, sidewalk referred to as a pavement, potato chips referred to as “potato crisps”, a cotton candy is referred to as a cotton floss, an “underwear” is referred to as “knickers” and so much more. These differences completely change the way you interact with people in Britain. With these above-mentioned factors, culture shock has long been of great concern regarding the wellbeing of mental health of international students and how they applied communication to overcome this initial setback is the motivation for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The influx of Nigerian students to British universities to acquire undergraduate degrees has come with some communication complexities, given the cultural differences between the Nigerian cultures and the British cultures. A first-time visitor to the United Kingdom experiences some cultural disparities in language, food, dressing, mannerism and even communication. These cultural variations between the Nigerian and the British societies present the international students with some adjustment problems occasioned by the disorientation associated with culture shock. Communication plays a very necessary role in bridging the gap in understanding between people. It has been credited with providing a common ground for people of different orientations, experiences, race and creed to share meanings and oneness.

It is through communication that people understand the cultures in other climes adapt to the new environment. The Nigerian students in the United Kingdom would need to adapt to their new environment for them to succeed in their academic pursuits in that country. Despite the increasing number of Nigerian students studying in the UK, little research has been conducted to understand the specific experiences and needs of this population in relation to culture shock, and how universities can provide support to mitigate its effects. This research highlights the specific population (Nigerian undergraduate students) and the specific context (studying in the United Kingdom) in which culture shock is occurring. It also highlights the lack of research in this area and the need for further investigation to understand the experiences and needs of this population, and how universities can provide support to mitigate the effects of culture shock.

Objectives of the Study

The study objectives, however, are to:

1. find out what resources are available for the Nigerian undergraduate to adapt with culture shock in the United Kingdom
2. find the communication techniques applied in adapting to the culture of the United Kingdom by Nigeria undergraduate students
3. Examine the constraints to the application of communication in adapting to the culture shock among Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom.

Literature Review

Concept of Culture

The concept of culture needs to be discussed to enhance understanding of the cultural shock and the fundamental role played by culture in the learning and acclimation experiences. Conceptualizing or defining culture is not an easy task (2000) since its very subjective and complex nature makes the definition of culture difficult and varying. Kroeber & Kluckohn, for example, compiled culture definitions back in 1952 and produced over 160 definitions (Jones, 2008). Cohan (2009) also recognized how "exceptionally tricky" is defining culture (p.194), because culture comprises several components, including material, subjective, and social cultures (ideas and knowledge). In other words, surface and deep hidden) levels and explicit and implicit elements are needed to understand culture. The cultural measurement is also complicated because it includes different analytical levels including individuals, groups, organisations, regional, national and even global cultures (Erez & Gati, 2004).

It also shows that the way to define culture is generalized (Walker & Dimmock, 2000). For example, "almost all researchers see some aspects as culture characteristics on the basis of the work of Triandis (2007). First, culture emerges in adaptive human-environment interactions. Secondly, there are common elements in culture. In addition, Walker & Dimmock (2000) listed six common features derived from literature (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The cultural is collectively charged, emotional, historically based, symbolic, dynamic and flourishing. Third, culture is spread throughout time periods, generations" (Cohen, 2009).

Impacts/Implication of Culture Shocks

The cultural shock phenomenon has numerous effects on the resident. Some are negative and some positive. These effects have been summed up in the disease model and the growth model in two models. The two models focus not only on the short-term effect but also on the longer-term development of the individual according to Dongfeng (2012) (to cultivate intellectual competence).

1. Psychological Impact (disease model)

As an appalling surprise to many residents and psychologists, mental disorders have been suggested as a result of the shock of culture. The culture shock model of the disease emphasizes too highly the negative impact of cultural shock. It is designed to address emotional disorders and suggests that an emotional disorder is a disease since moving outside can be difficult for the stay's health. In the event of a cultural shock, psychological confusion always follows. Therefore, physical stress begins. But not all are affected in the same way by a cultural shock. Studies believe that the different behaviour of residents compared with natives disturbs their intellect, making them unable to protect themselves from mistakes. Cultural fatigue is the result. This approach is based on studies on mental health. This approach is mainly supposed to be driven by uncertainty and by reducing or controlling fear. Four factors may be reduced by the emergence of anxiety: equivalency, cooperative, authoritarian interdependence, and interactions with members of other groups.

Emotional responses pose three fundamental challenges, two of which are based on the model of medical conditions: loss of familiar information, breakdown of communication, and identity crisis. First of all, familiar indications make people comfortable; signs facilitate communications; their familiar indications are not clear when an individual contacts foreign nationals that lead to ambiguity and confusion. It involves the production of stress. Second, disruption of both conscious and unconscious communication leads to frustration, anxiety, and alienation from others. The emotional reactions involve a different aspect of the shock. The disease model believes several symptoms that can be cured of an emotional disorder.

The U-curve refers to the time adjustment of stays. It describes very generally how the resident tends, shortly following the entry into a foreign culture, to experience a decline in adjustment. For four stages, Oberg argues. Later on, the theory was developed by Lewis & Jungman (1986). It offered six phases of cultural shock that illustrated the development of an affective experience of the resident:

- 1) Preliminary stage (events that occur before departure)
- 2) The spectator stage (the first weeks or months of living in a foreign culture)
- 3) The increasing participation stage

- 4) The adaptation stage
- 5) The re-entry into home culture

If culture shock is conceptualized over the course of the stay as a process of emotional changes, many people know that it is very painful. This model makes it possible to understand the variations of emotional responses as a cultural learning process.

2. Intellectual Impact (the growth model)

Cultural shock and other stresses of cross-cultural adaptation can be a positive and creative power, which can stimulate, encourage, and improve the intercultural communication ability of culture travellers. The ability to adapt successfully across various cultures is cultural intelligence; it comprises three dimensions, including emotional, motivational, and physical, as well as cognitive ones. People are motivated to reinterpret the signs they experience. Travellers have to rely on their knowledge and passion for the understanding and the adaptation of a new culture.

Adler (1975) believes that culture shock leads to a greater awareness of self and personal growth as an intercultural learning process. As part of the culture learning process, Furnham and Bochner (1986) understand the potential positive impact of a cultural shock. In this way, they advocate an approach to the social skills of culture shock, in which culture tourists learn the skills, regulations, and roles needed in a new culture. Cultural shock can help people develop communication skills and achieve self-existence on a long-term basis.

3. Attempts at Managing Culture Shock

- 1) Winkelman (1994) suggests a combined cognitive and behavioural approach to successfully manage cultural shock because cultural shock is caused by cultural shock
- 2) a) cognitive overload because the new culture requires the newcomer to think consciously of things which the native population knows unconsciously of behavioural inadequacies because new arrivals cannot immediately know the behaviour (Winkelman, 1994).
- 3) b) People from abroad should be aware of the experience of cultural shock and have a cognitive focus which helps to adapt behavioural abilities efficiently and develop them to lessen the impact or resolve cultural shock. The degree to which the individuals arrive to manage the cultural shock and successful cultural adaptation are generally evaluated
- 4) c) A new culture adapts to the general environment, interacts with the host nationals, and works for various reasons (Harrison et al., 1996).
- 5) d) Winkelman (1994) proposes certain strategies for a successful general adjustment that could help prevent serious problems. It recommends that those entering a new culture prepare for changes before leaving and learn about resources to help them cope and adapt to the new environment. To reduce misunderstandings and learn appropriate cultural behaviour, inter-cultural training might be useful to help them to learn skills and acquire cultural knowledge. Newcomers must be aware of the value conflicts and willing, by identifying the benefit of living in a new nation instead of denying their experience of feeling inferior and the differences between themselves and their home

country, to change their attitudes to the New Culture. It is important to manage stress to help individuals deal with the ambiguity of cross-cultural adaptation and maintain their sense of cultural identity. The newcomer can establish satisfactory relations and friendships after adequate adjustment to the general environment, but the nature of the cultural social relations of the foreign country needs to be understood, including social/cultural rules. Newcomers need to understand the behaviours and inevitable conflicts of the host culture and recognize that cultural compartments have always to be seen within the context of each culture (Winkelman, 1994). Workplace adjustment studies have demonstrated that low-adjusted workers often return from overseas jobs at 16-40% early rates, while well-adjusted workers are usually more effective and accepted. These findings can also apply to immigrant and international students.

4. Reverse Culture Shock

The reverse shock or re-entry shock is the shock experienced by residents when they go home. A shock of culture should be recognized to better understand and define the shock of other cultures. The shock of culture. However, in reverse culture, the process of adjustment focuses on the barriers to adapting to the home culture following the return from abroad. The first one is similar to the second one in the definition. Both Lysgaard and Oberg studied the cultural shock phenomenon and depicted the adaptation process with a U-curve pattern describing phases of cultural shock. The experiences of some new students were studied by Gullahorn and Gullahorn in 1963. They introduced the reverse shock in culture and the W-curve-hypothesis which includes the re-entry stage as a result of their studies. They suggested that the reverse cultural shock pattern of adjustment to home culture is similar to the adaptation curve, which describes the stages of the culture shock, which Lysgaard and Oberg introduced.



Figure 1.3. Gullahorn & Gullahorn W-curve hypothesis.
(Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)

The main difference between the reverse cultural shock and the cultural shock is the expectations of residents, according to Gullahorn and Gullahorn. The travellers were often expected as unchanged people to return to an unchanged home, which was not the case. In other words, when entering a new culture one can expect cultural differences to minimize the effects of a shock. There was a mistake (Gaw, 1999). Gaw refers to this phenomenon as the

process of reconfiguration, re-acculturation, and reassimilation into your home for a substantial period, after living in another culture" (1999: 83). Boredom, reverse homesickness, feeling of alienation, misinterpretation, and relationship change with family members and friends are key signs of reverse culture disorder.

5. Variations of the Culture Learning Concept

Some culture shock researchers broadened the perspective of culture shock to include many additional models as a learning process during that time. This section discusses three of the alternative concepts. The first is the notion of Bochner's "lodging" (1982), the other is Church's "residential assumption" (1982), and the third is Juffer's development model; (1986). A new concept of cultural accommodation is not an adaptation but rather accommodation, proposed by Furnham and Bochner. "A residence is not adapted to the new culture but to learn about its outstanding characteristics" is presumed by the concept of accommodation (Bochner, 1982). Based on Bochner's conception of cultural learning, cultural accommodations modify cultural adjustment and open a wider avenue for the development of cross-cultural studies because accommodations instead have no "ethnocentric overtones" it releases a stay-home fear that his known values will be surrendered. If residents realize that accommodation is only a temporary requirement and an opportunity to learn something to be added to their social skills, they will learn more naturally and willingly.

Moreover, Furnham and Bochner argue that their social performances will only be noticed and assessed if people do not have the appropriate social skills or act wrongly in a strange environment. The very intense emotions a visitor might experience, and a complex set of social and psychological influences that a visitor may have during a long period are the result of a resident's level of ability under an appropriate circumstance to balance their inner world. The emotional response of individuals is therefore diverse from one person to another to the challenges of cultural differences and the meaning derived from affective experiences in a cross.

Process of Cultural Adaptation

Adapting to different cultures is crucial. It requires individuals to develop an understanding of the customs, values, and beliefs of other communities. This process enables individuals to communicate effectively and build positive relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, adaptation to culture is essential for success in international business, as it facilitates cross-cultural collaboration and helps avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Therefore, individuals must acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to different cultures, which would not only enhance their personal growth but also contribute to the success of their organisations. The term adaptation refers to the process of adjusting oneself according to the surrounding environment, particularly its cultural norms and practices. Cultural adaptation is a lengthy process of becoming used to and eventually comfortable in a new environment (Wang, 2006).

Cultural Shock of International Students

Cultural shock was put forward by American anthropologist Oberg as early as 1960. As a metaphor, cultural shock refers to a psychological state of anxiety and depression caused by a person's social isolation (Oberg, 1960). This psychological state is often caused by sudden

exposure to a foreign cultural life environment or long-term separation from the original cultural environment and later return to their own original cultural environment. When foreign students first arrive in China and live in a new cultural context, they will encounter cultural conflicts and psychological fluctuations due to the differences in living habits and values. Cultural shock is a pervasive problem, it exists not only in the contact between national culture and foreign culture, but also in the cultural contact of the same country, different regions, different languages and different social strata. Oberg (1960) divided cultural shock into four stages: the honeymoon stage; the uncomfortable stage; the acceptance stage; and the adjusted and autonomous stage.

Theoretical Framework

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), developed by Howard Giles in the 1970s, is a theory in sociolinguistics that explores how and why individuals adjust their communication behaviours during interactions. This theory posits that speakers modify their speech, vocal patterns, and non-verbal behaviours to either converge or diverge from their interlocutor's style. Convergence involves adapting one's communication to be more like the other person, often to gain social approval or increase communication efficiency. Divergence, on the other hand, involves accentuating the differences in communication styles to maintain social distance or asset identity (Giles, 1973).

The theory also shows how Nigerian students navigate their interpersonal relationships. Through convergence, students might seek to reduce social distance and foster positive relationships with British peers and faculty members. Conversely, divergence can be used to maintain their cultural identity and connect with fellow Nigerian or African students, forming a support network that mitigates feelings of isolation and culture shock. The theory elucidates how students might strategically switch between these modes to negotiate their identity, asserting their Nigerian cultural background while also embracing aspects of the British culture to enhance their academic and social experience.

Culture shock, characterised by feelings of disorientation and stress when encountering a new culture, can be partly alleviated through effective communication adaptation. CAT explains how by adjusting their communication strategies, Nigerian students can better understand and be understood within the UK context, reducing misunderstandings and fostering a sense of belonging. This adaptation can help the move through the stages of culture shock, from the initial honeymoon phase to eventual adjustment. Effective communication is vital for academic success. CAT provides insights into how Nigerian students can adapt their communication to meet the academic expectations in the UK, from participating in class discussions to writing assignments. By converging with the academic norms, students can improve their academic performance and gain positive evaluations from their instructors. This theory helps to illuminate the strategies to navigate culture shock, build interpersonal relationships, balance cultural identities, and achieve academic success. Thus, CAT is instrumental in comprehensively studying the communication and adaptation challenges faced by Nigerian students.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that there are three mental processes involved in evaluating others as “us or them” (i.e. —in-group and —out-group). These take place in a particular order. When it comes to defining a nation, group boundaries and social allegiances are particularly important. Social identity theory thus provides a useful framework for explaining and predicting social identity processes related to national identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to Kriesberg (2010), for an inter-group (e.g., racial, ethnic, or religious) conflict to occur, the opponents must have a sense of collective identity about themselves and about their adversary, each side believing the fight is between "us" and "them." In this vein those conflicts become intractable, persisting destructively for a very long time, despite efforts to resolve them. Thus, in some such conflicts the antagonists seem to be fighting each other about the identities that they hold about themselves and those they attribute to the other side. Such conflicts are sometimes called identity-based conflicts and regarded as particularly prone to becoming intractable.

This theory is highly relevant as it emphasises the importance of group membership in shaping an individual’s identity. Nigerian students in the UK may experience culture shock as they navigate the transition from their home culture to a new cultural environment. Their identification with Nigerian cultural groups can provide a sense of belonging and support, which can be crucial in managing the stress and disorientation associated with culture shock. The theory highlights the distinctions between in-group (groups individuals identify with) and out-groups (groups they do not identify with). Nigerian students might perceive themselves as part of an in-group (Nigerian community) while viewing the local British population as an out-group. this distinction can influence their communication patterns, adaptation strategies, and overall integration experience. They may seek support and validation from fellow Nigerians, which can help mitigate feelings of alienation and promote a smoother adaptation process.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey research design was considered appropriate because original data had to be collected and used to describe the characteristics of a population too large for the researcher’s direct observation. The population of this study is made up of Nigerian undergraduate students in Scotland, United Kingdom. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023), the number of Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom between the years of 2018/2019 through to 2022/2023 is 73,716. This data was obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in July, 2024. According to Keyton’s (2001) recommendation, the sample size of this study is 381. For a population size of 73,815 that fell between 50,000 and 100,000, as suggested levels in the Keyton’s table, the corresponding sample of 381 respondents for a population of 73,716 is applicable to this study.

The snowball sampling was used in different stages. Applying snowball sampling to the population of Nigerian undergraduate students across the entirety of the United Kingdom, including England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, will be executed through: 1) Identify Initial Participants: Seek a small group of Nigerian undergraduate students from diverse UK regions. 2) Obtain Referrals: Request these initial participants to refer other Nigerian undergraduate students who might be interested in participating in the study. 3) Contact Referrals: Once referrals are received, reach out to these students and ask them to take part in the study. 4) Iterative Process: Continue this iterative process of referral and data collection

until a satisfactory sample size is obtained. 5) Final Checks: Ensure that the final sample represents the wider population of Nigerian undergraduate students across the UK.

Data were gathered using the copies of the questionnaire which were administered on the respondents virtually. This included emails, Google form document as well as online surveys application. Quantitative data collection and analysis was adopted in this study and computation such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentages were used determining the values to the responses. Inferential statistics Chi square was also be used to test hypothesis, the following is the calculated Chi square which is expressed as equal to the sum of the squared value in the difference between the observed frequency and the expected frequency which is divided by the value of the expected frequency. Nwodu (2010) expressed the formula thus:

$$x^2 = \sum \left(\frac{(F_0 - F_E)^2}{F_E} \right)$$

Where x^2 = Chi square values calculated

= Sum of values

F_0 = Observed Frequency

F_E = Expected Frequency

It is the Chi square values as calculated, in relation to the table value of Chi square, at a specific degree of freedom (df) and a particular probability level that was used to test the hypothesis. The degree of freedom was obtained by subtracting the value one, from the number of rows in the used table. The following according to Wimmer and Dominic (1998) is expressed as follows:

df = k-1

Where df = degree of freedom

k = Number of categories

I = Constant

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Requested for Support or Assistance to Help Adapt to Culture Shock

Items (n=381)	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Contacted your university's international student office.	110(28.9)	48(12.6)	223(58.5)	0(0)	2.70	0.888	Agree
You have joined a club or organization for international students.	126(33.1)	128(33.6)	127(33.3)	0(0)	3.00	0.816	Agree
You have spoken to a therapist or counsellor.	122(32)	112(29.4)	40(10.5)	107(28.1)	2.65	1.197	Agree
Engaging in intercultural activities or events.	122(32)	238(62.5)	21(5.5)	0(0)	3.27	0.553	Agree

Total	480(31.5)	526(34.5)	411(27)	107(7)	2.90	0.926	Agree
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In Table 1, results revealed that respondents agreed that they contacting their university's international student office, joined a club or organization for international students, spoken to a therapist or counsellor and engaging in intercultural activities or events are some form of requested for support or assistance to help adapt to culture shock because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. The overall result indicates that Nigerian undergraduate students actively seek out and engage with various forms of support to adapt to culture shock in the UK. The high mean scores and the agreement decision across all items reflect a positive attitude towards utilizing available resources and support systems. This proactive behaviour is crucial for their successful adaptation and overall well-being in a new cultural and academic environment.

Table 2: Any University/Institution Cultural Integration Programs or other Resources on Arrival of Undergraduate Students

Status (n=381)	Frequency	Percentages (%)
No	108	28.3
Yes	273	71.7

Results in Table 2 revealed that resources available for Nigerian undergraduate to adapt to culture shock in the United Kingdom are University counselling services and online resources because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, respondent do not agree that community resources, and Nigeria consular services are useful resources available because these means are less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 3: Effective Methods Nigerian Undergraduates change their Communication Style in United Kingdom.

Items	SA(%)	A(%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Speak more slowly and clearly	94(24.7)	287(75.3)	3.25	0.432	Agree
Use less slang and idioms	126(33.1)	255(66.9)	3.33	0.471	Agree
Be more direct and less indirect	97(25.5)	284(74.5)	3.25	0.436	Agree
Being open to feedback and criticism:	99(26)	282(74)	3.26	0.439	Agree
Total	416(27.3)	1108(72.7)	3.27	0.446	Agree

According to Table 3, the use of slang and idioms in everyday language can constitute a form of culture shock because these expressions often don't translate directly and require an understanding of local culture, context, and nuances. They are a significant part of communication and can be key to fully understanding conversations and feeling integrated into a society. On being open to feedback and criticism, Nigerian culture is more hierarchical than British culture. This means that Nigerians are more likely to defer to authority figures, and to avoid criticizing them. In British culture, it is more common to be open to feedback and criticism, even from authority figures, speak more slowly and clearly: Nigerian English has its own unique accents, slang, and idioms that may be unfamiliar to British people, and be more direct and less indirect: Nigerian culture is more indirect than British culture. This means that Nigerians are more likely to avoid saying what they mean directly, and to instead use hints and suggestions. In British culture, it is more common to say what you mean directly.

Table 4: Specific Cultural Differences in Communication Nigerian Undergraduates need Awareness

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Tone of voice	125(32.8)	244(64)	12(3.1)	3.30	0.522	Agree
Physical touch	124(32.5)	249(65.4)	8(2.1)	3.30	0.504	Agree
Verbal communication	251(65.9)	124(32.5)	6(1.6)	3.64	0.512	Agree
Nonverbal communication	126(33.1)	127(33.3)	128(33.6)	2.99	0.818	Agree
Total	626(41.1)	744(48.8)	154(10.1)	3.31	0.645	Agree

In Table 4, respondents opined that the specific cultural differences in communication that Nigerian undergraduates need to be aware are verbal communication: in Nigeria, people tend to speak more loudly than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered rude to speak too loudly, tone of voice: In Nigeria, people tend to speak with a more expressive tone of voice than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered more polite to speak with more neutral tone of voice, physical touch: In Nigeria, it is common for people to touch each other when speaking. In the UK, it is considered rude to touch someone unless you are close to them, and non-verbal communication: In Nigeria, people tend to use more hand gestures and facial expressions when speaking than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered rude to use too many hand gestures and facial expressions.

Results also shows that respondents do not agree to have modified communication style such as tone of voice and use of non-verbal cues like keeping or avoiding eye contact whilst interacting, because the means are less than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, respondents agreed to the use of formal language and pace of voice: speed in talking, because the means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 5: Modification/ Changed of Communication Style

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Tone of Voice: change accent	127(33.3)	1(0.3)	126(33.1)	127(33.3)	2.34	1.249	Disagree
Use of formal language	128(33.6)	127(33.3)	126(33.1)	0(0)	3.01	0.818	Agree
Pace of voice: speed in talking	127(33.3)	0(0)	254(66.7)	0(0)	2.67	0.944	Agree
Use of non-verbal cues like keeping or avoiding eye contact whilst interacting	0(0)	127(33.3)	126(33.1)	128(33.6)	2.00	0.819	Disagree
Total	382(25.1)	255(16.7)	632(41.5)	255(16.7)	2.50	1.042	Agree

In Table 5, respondents opined that the specific cultural differences in communication that Nigerian undergraduates need to be aware are verbal communication: in Nigeria, people tend to speak more loudly than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered rude to speak too loudly, tone of voice: In Nigeria, people tend to speak with a more expressive tone of voice than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered more polite to speak with more neutral tone of voice, physical touch: In Nigeria, it is common for people to touch each other when speaking. In the UK, it is considered rude to touch someone unless you are close to them, and non-verbal communication: In Nigeria, people tend to use more hand gestures and facial expressions when speaking than in the UK. In the UK, it is considered rude to use too many hand gestures and facial expressions.

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interacting, because the means are less than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, respondents agreed to the use of formal language and pace of voice: speed in talking, because the means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 6: Constraints to the Application of Communication in Adapting to the Culture Shock

Items	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Accent barrier	44(11.5)	104(27.3)	233(61.2)	0(0)	2.50	0.694	Agree
Cultural differences	65(17.1)	208(54.6)	108(28.3)	0(0)	2.89	0.665	Agree
Self-confidence	77(20.2)	193(50.7)	111(29.1)	0(0)	2.91	0.698	Agree
Fear of judgment	54(14.2)	201(52.8)	120(31.5)	6(1.6)	2.80	0.692	Agree
Total	240(15.7)	706(46.3)	572(37.5)	6(0.4)	2.77	0.706	Agree

Looking at Table 6, the respondents acknowledge accent barriers as a significant aspect of culture shock, with 61.2% agreeing. The mean score of 2.50 indicates a moderate level of agreement. This suggests that differences in accents pose a notable challenge in understanding and being understood, reflecting the influence of linguistic nuances on communication adaptation. Cultural differences are identified as a key constraint, with 54.6% strongly agreeing. The mean score of 2.89 suggests a relatively higher level of agreement. This highlights the profound impact of disparities in cultural norms, customs, and behaviours on communication adaptation during the experience of culture shock.

Respondents also recognize the impact of culture shock on self-confidence, with 50.7% strongly agreeing. The mean score of 2.91 indicates a substantial level of agreement. This underscores the psychological dimension of culture shock, where adjusting to new cultural norms can affect individuals' confidence in social interactions. The fear of judgment is acknowledged as a common aspect of culture shock, with 52.8% strongly agreeing. The mean score of 2.80 reflects a notable level of agreement. This finding underscores the social apprehension that individuals may experience when navigating a new cultural context.

Discussions and findings

Research Question One: what resources are available for the Nigerian undergraduates to adapt to culture shock in the United Kingdom?

The findings for research question four highlight the importance of universities providing accessible and culturally sensitive support systems for Nigerian undergraduates to adapt to culture shock in the United Kingdom.

From the data gathered, respondents ranked university counselling services and online resources highest as available for adapting to culture shock. This highlights the importance of universities providing readily accessible and culturally sensitive support systems within their own structures.

According to Giles and Cooper (2011), this aligns with Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) by emphasizing the university's role in facilitating communication and cultural adjustment for Nigeria undergraduate students.

This finding also suggests a need for: Strengthening partnerships with relevant community organizations: Collaborating with Nigerian community groups, cultural associations, and religious institutions to offer support and connect students with familiar cultural anchors. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they sought support from the university's international student office, joined student clubs, spoke to therapists or counsellors, and engaged in intercultural activities. This demonstrates a proactive approach to seeking help and utilizing various campus resources for managing culture shock. This finding suggests the effectiveness of these existing support mechanisms and the importance of maintaining and

expanding university-organized clubs and events for international students. It is also by encouraging intercultural interaction and dialogue through workshops, exchange programs, and social events. Promoting mental health awareness and access to counselling services on campus.

Research question Two: What communication techniques do Nigerian undergraduate students apply in adapting to the culture of the United Kingdom?

From the data displayed in Table 4.15, the analysis of communication techniques employed by Nigerian undergraduate students in adapting to the United Kingdom revealed several noteworthy findings. Respondents recognize the importance of effective communication in navigating cultural differences, with a consensus on the efficacy of specific techniques. Speaking more slowly and clearly, using less slang and idioms, being more direct and open to feedback and criticism are considered beneficial for effective communication in the UK. This is consistent with study by Gudykunst (2005), who emphasises the value of communication abilities in cultural adaptation. These findings suggest a general agreement among respondents that these approaches are beneficial for effective communication by Nigerian undergraduates in the UK.

The study identifies specific cultural differences in communication between Nigeria and the UK that require adaptation. Notably, differences in verbal communication, tone of voice, physical touch, and non-verbal communication are acknowledged by respondents. This aligns with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), who discuss cultural variations in these communication aspects. The findings underscore the significance of understanding and adjusting these aspects to facilitate smoother interactions within the UK cultural context.

Moreover, respondents express a willingness to modify their communication style to align with British norms. The agreement on adopting practices such as speaking more slowly and clearly, using less slang, being more direct, and embracing feedback demonstrates a conscious effort to bridge cultural gaps. However, certain aspects, like modifying tone of voice and the use of non-verbal cues, elicit disagreement, indicating a nuanced approach to adaptation.

The analysis reveals a nuanced approach adopted by Nigerian undergraduate students in adapting their communication techniques to the UK culture. While recognizing and embracing certain cultural differences, such as in verbal communication and non-verbal cues, respondents demonstrate a willingness to modify their communication style to align with British norms. This nuanced approach to communication adaptation, where students balance between maintaining their cultural identity and integrating into the host culture, is well-explained by Social Identity Theory. By understanding the dynamics of group membership and identity, SIT provides a comprehensive framework for analysing how Nigerian undergraduate students manage culture shock and adapt their communication techniques to thrive in the UK.

The study's findings on communication techniques are consistent with Gudykunst's (2005) emphasis on the value of communication abilities in cultural adaptation and align with Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner's (1997) discussion on cultural variations in communication. These theories collectively underscore the importance of adaptive communication strategies in facilitating effective cross-cultural interactions.

Research question Three: What were the constraints to the application of communication in adapting to the culture shock among Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom?

Respondents acknowledge significant challenges, highlighting the multifaceted nature of adapting to a new cultural environment. Respondents also recognize the impact of accent barriers as a substantial constraint to effective communication during the adaptation process.

Approximately 61.2% agree that differences in accents pose a challenge. The acknowledgment of this constraint emphasizes the role of linguistic nuances in contributing to culture shock, affecting both understanding and being understood in the new cultural context. This is consistent with studies by Lysaker (2002), who highlights the significance of accents in cross-cultural communication comprehension. The study underscores the prominence of cultural differences as a constraint to effective communication. Over half of the respondents agree that disparities in cultural norms, customs, and behaviours contribute significantly to culture shock. This finding reflects the complexity of navigating cultural nuances and adapting to new social dynamics in the United Kingdom. A substantial portion of respondents agrees that self-confidence is a constraint to effective communication, this aligns with Ward et al. (2001), who discuss the link between culture shock and decreased self-confidence in communication.

This highlights the psychological and emotional dimensions of culture shock, where individuals may grapple with a sense of uncertainty and self-doubt. The fear of negative judgment by others in the new cultural context emerges as another constraint to effective communication. Over half of the respondents acknowledge the fear of judgment as a significant aspect of culture shock. This fear can hinder open communication and engagement, contributing to a sense of unease and social discomfort.

The mean score further reinforces the agreement on the challenges faced by Nigerian undergraduate students in adapting to the culture shock in the United Kingdom.

The Communication Accommodation Theory provides a framework for understanding how Nigerian undergraduates adapt their communication in response to cultural and linguistic differences in this study. The theory's concepts of convergence, divergence, and accommodation offer insights into the nuanced communication strategies employed by Nigerian undergraduate students as they navigate culture shock in the United Kingdom. The researcher highlights the intricate interplay of linguistic, cultural, psychological, and social factors that shape the communication challenges faced by Nigerian undergraduate students in a new cultural setting. Recognizing these constraints is crucial for developing targeted support mechanisms to enhance effective communication and promote a smoother cultural transition for Nigerian undergraduate students in the UK.

Conclusions

This study explores the differential effectiveness of various support mechanisms in aiding the adaptation of undergraduate students. While university counselling services, online resources, and specific social activities were perceived as beneficial, community resources and consular services were not deemed significantly supportive. This disparity suggests that institutional support structures within the university play a crucial role in facilitating students' adjustment. To enhance the overall adaptation experience, it is necessary that universities continue to strengthen their internal support services and explore ways to better integrate external community and consular resources. By doing so, educational institutions can provide a more comprehensive support network that addresses the diverse needs of their internal undergraduate students population.

The study establishes that Nigerian undergraduate students in the UK adapt to communication-related culture shock by modifying their communication styles, specifically by employing clearer and slower speech patterns. This adaptive strategy highlights the proactive efforts of these students to overcome language barriers and enhance mutual understanding in their interactions. To further support their adaptation, educational institutions can consider offering

tailored communication skills training and cross-cultural workshops. Such initiatives can empower students with effective communication strategies, thereby improving their academic and social integration and fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The study highlights the predominant challenges faced by undergraduate students, which include issues related to self-confidence, cultural differences, fear of judgement, and accent barriers. These challenges significantly impact the students' academic and social experiences, often hindering their ability to fully participate and thrive in the university environment. To address these issues, it is crucial for educational institutions to implement comprehensive support systems that focus on boosting self-confidence, fostering cultural sensitivity, and reducing accent-related obstacles. By providing resources such as mentorship programmes, cultural competency training and language support services, universities can create a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere, thereby, enhancing the overall wellbeing and success of their international undergraduate students.

Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusion reached in this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities in the United Kingdom should foster collaborations with community organizations, Nigerian consular services, and Nigerian cultural associations. Establishing partnerships will provide Nigerian undergraduate students with external support systems, including community events, cultural gatherings, and relevant resources. This can create a sense of community and a familiar cultural anchor for Nigerian students.
2. Universities in the UK hold the main responsibility for conducting faculty training sessions to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by international students, particularly regarding culture shock. Institutions should actively listen to verbal and non-verbal cues, avoiding assumptions about communication styles. Clear and concise language is important, with jargon and unfamiliar idioms avoided. Cultural sensitivity to communication style differences, such as directness, is necessary. The universities should train lecturers to be willing to repeat information or clarify concepts. Providing context for unfamiliar topics or concepts is helpful. Nigerian Post graduate students should be encouraged to ask questions in a safe space for clarification.
3. Based on the findings about the constraints faced by Nigerian undergraduate students: Universities should develop programs or workshops that help students improve their comprehension of British accents and pronunciation, potentially including resources for faculty to enhance their understanding of Nigerian accents. Organize workshops or training sessions that explore cultural norms, customs, and behaviours in the UK. This can help students navigate social situations more confidently and reduce misunderstandings. Develop workshops or support groups that address the psychological and emotional challenges of culture shock. This could involve strategies for building self-confidence and managing anxieties around communication.

The Universities should also create a more welcoming and inclusive environment within the university. This could involve promoting intercultural interaction through events or programs that allow students to connect with faculty and peers from different backgrounds.

These recommendations aim to address the linguistic, cultural, psychological, and social factors that hinder communication for Nigerian undergraduate students experiencing culture shock. By implementing such initiatives, universities can create a more supportive environment and promote smoother cultural transitions for their students.

These recommendations aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Nigerian undergraduate students in the UK, addressing the specific challenges identified in the study. Implementing a combination of cultural, legal, and psychological support measures will contribute to a smoother transition, improved academic performance, and enhanced overall well-being for Nigerian undergraduate students in the United Kingdom.

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