Scientia
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Research Article

Barriers and Solutions: International Students' Experiences in Intercultural Communication

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Abstract
As global student mobility expands, Intercultural Communication (IC) has become an essential aspect of the international student experience. In multicultural countries like India, international students often face challenges related to language, culture, and academic integration. Assam, an emerging educational hub in Northeast India, remains under-researched in this context, particularly regarding how well it supports the intercultural adaptation of foreign students. This study investigates the intercultural communication challenges faced by international students in Assam and explores the coping strategies they employ. It focuses on identifying barriers across sociocultural, educational, individual, and interpersonal domains. A mixed-methods design was used. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys from 39 students representing 25 countries. These surveys explored communication preferences, language use, and cultural adjustment difficulties. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with four students to provide deeper insights. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics by SPSS 27.0 version and thematic coding for the interview schedule. The study found that 51.3% of students faced IC challenges, despite some initially denying such experiences. English was the primary communication language (61.5%), but limited fluency in Hindi or Assamese hindered interaction with locals. Common issues included tone misinterpretation, gestures, and religious sensitivities. "Culture shock" was the most reported challenge (73.3%), particularly related to food, customs, and personal boundaries. Language barriers also impacted academic engagement. Students commonly responded by initiating open discussions (53.8%) or observing and analyzing situations (48.7%). The study highlights the critical role of language proficiency, cultural awareness, and adaptive strategies in improving intercultural communication. It urges institutions to promote inclusive, culturally responsive environments for international students.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, International Students, Assam, India, Language Barriers, Culture Shock, Intercultural Competence

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the importance of international educational experiences has grown as a result of globalization and cultural awareness-raising initiatives. While studying abroad, language learners use communication to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown, which has a tangible impact on how people view other people's lives and cultures (Almarza et al., 2015). Today's studies focus on intercultural communication as the foundation for fostering international relations and improving understanding between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

It's normal for people to have some trouble communicating across cultural boundaries, particularly if they live in an area where the culture differs. The challenges and experiences of students studying abroad have been the subject of several earlier studies (Li & Campbell, 2006; Shaftel & Ahluwalia, 2007; Sawir et al., 2008; Malakloluthu & Selan, 2011; Stepanovienė, 2011; Habib, Johannesen, & Øgrim, 2014; Eginli, 2016). Nonetheless, few studies have been done specifically about India as a host nation for international students.

Most research conducted in India concentrated on the issue of culture shock and involved a limited number of participants (Poedjiastutie, 2009; Turistiati, 2016). To better understand international students' behaviors, attitudes, and preferences, and even to avoid some conflict situations, it is important to investigate their challenges with intercultural communication. Focusing on those issues and looking for answers would establish a foundation for constructive and successful cross-cultural interaction. Additionally, it would promote the growth of intercultural competency and increase awareness of intercultural meaning-making.

This study aims to investigate the challenges that international students face when communicating across cultural boundaries, the causes of these challenges, and solutions. The following research questions were put forth in this context:

1) What communication barriers across cultures did international students face while studying in Assam state, India?
2) What factors are responsible for those challenges?
3) How do international students deal with the challenges of intercultural communication that arise while studying in Assam state, India?

The literature review is included below so that readers can examine the theoretical backdrop of the problem and earlier research pertaining to the setting mentioned. It covers the advantages of global experience, definitions of intercultural communication, and challenges in intercultural communication that have been previously studied.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Benefits of International Experience

Studying abroad typically improves students' global competency (Murphy et al., 2014). In other words, studying abroad produces "global citizens" equipped to handle the opportunities and difficulties presented by a rapidly interconnected world. Global awareness and world-mindedness increase when international students are exposed to different viewpoints, such as multicultural perspectives (Merrill et al., 2012; Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015).

Examining the benefits of studying abroad is crucial because it could be a decision that changes a student's life and destiny. Prospective international students frequently refer to the experiences of those who have studied overseas (Tamas, 2014). Veal (2013), who shared his experience of studying in China, said, "I learned so much about myself and the world," motivated by a passion for foreign languages and cultures. Given this, it is reasonable to believe that studying abroad could promote both intercultural and personal growth.

An earlier claim can be supported by the American Institute for Foreign Research (AIFS, 2013), which asked 1990–2010 graduates about their learning objectives and results. Study abroad "impacted my knowledge of another culture (92%); developed skills and intercultural competencies which contributed to obtaining my first job after graduation (56%); and my ability to adapt in diverse workplace environments (80%)," according to the findings. In addition, the results indicated that study abroad had a significant impact on their "self-development and personal values," which include tolerance, acceptance of differences, self-awareness, independence, self-confidence, and faith in them.

Students' intercultural competency, personal traits, and overall development are thus anticipated to improve as a result of their study abroad experience. In 2006, 40% of colleges included a reference to international education in their mission statement, according to Stearns's (2009) assessment on the impact of study abroad on education. Globalisation may have caused such figures to increase even further by now,

as they were raised from 2001 to 28%. This indicates that educational establishments encourage students to travel abroad and are certain that it will have a beneficial effect on the growth of their intellectual and personal traits. Braskamp et al. (2009) also emphasised that "student engagement in education abroad experiences enhances global learning and development, which we argue should now become an important and even the core of holistic student development, a goal of almost every undergraduate college or university."

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007), graduates who have a global perspective are more likely to find employment. This is in line with the pragmatic values of international education. Study abroad programs thus encourage students to pursue further careers or look for employment or volunteer possibilities in a global setting (Franklin, 2010; Paige & Fry, 2010; Tarrant et al., 2015).

Intercultural experiences, therefore, assist pupils greatly in terms of character development and future decisions. Intercultural communication is an essential component of every overseas encounter, though.

2.2. Intercultural Communication

Depending on how culture and communication are defined, there are numerous definitions of intercultural communication. Grundy (2008) defines intercultural communication as communication between individuals who do not share a similar culture. Lingua franca is usually used as a communication tool when a representative of one culture meets someone from another in neutral territory. The author gives the following example of intercultural communication: a Brazilian and a Chinese individual who meet at a conference in Addis Ababa and use English as their common language.

Lingua franca is not often mentioned in definitions by researchers. Ting-Toomey (1999), for example, describes intercultural communication as when people who are impacted by various cultural communities communicate and negotiate meanings in interactions. Other sources offer more detailed definitions. For example, Judith and Thomas (2007) defined intercultural communication as that which occurs between people of different sexual orientations as well as between people of different ethnicities, religions, and regions. Furthermore, when persons from the same city or region engage with people who do not belong to the same social groups, it might be interpreted as intercultural communication (Arent, 2009). Even though they were reared in the same neighbourhood and share a street, a 14-year-old youngster and an 82-year-old senior citizen cannot speak in the same way because they belong to two distinct subcultures. As a result, they will also communicate across cultures.

Nonetheless, the majority of definitions lead us to the central notion that "intercultural communication considers those elements of culture that most influence interaction when members of two different cultures come together in an interpersonal setting" (Porter & Samovar, 1997). In accordance with Grundy's (2008) definition, the current study will take into account lingua franca issues. The study's participants are cultural representatives who use English and Hindi as their common language when speaking with other cultural representatives in the neutral country of India, namely the state of Assam. The disparate cultural mindsets may cause some challenges in this communication process.

2.3. Difficulties in Intercultural Communication

Numerous studies have been conducted to observe the challenges faced by international students in various circumstances when it comes to intercultural communication. For example, Eginli's (2016) study sought to investigate international students' experiences with intercultural communication during the intercultural adaptation process. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with international students studying in Turkey using the thematic analysis method. The investigation revealed a number of issues, including the inability of Turkish pupils to speak English, the impact of Turkish culture on everyday routines, and indirect expressions in the Turkish language and culture. Crucially, those pupils asserted that they did not suffer from cultural shock.

Stepanovienė (2011) carried out another research that examined the intercultural communicative skills of Lithuanian students enrolled in universities in the United States, Finland, the Czech Republic, and Germany. The author specifically investigated the frequency of encounters between exchange students and international students, as well as the challenges they faced and the blame they placed on them. According to the questionnaires and interviews, roughly 68% of students communicated with students from other countries on a regular basis, while 74% had trouble communicating with international students. Cultural differences were cited as the main cause of these communication problems. The majority of the challenges stemmed from cultural shock, politeness differences, misconceptions about other cultures, and miscommunications in nonverbal cues.

Achu (2019) investigated Nigerian students' intercultural communicative competence while they were studying in China. The author attempted to determine the causes of the issues encountered and the reasons given for them, the frequency of interactions with Chinese people, the reasons for the difficulties encountered, and the copying strategies of pupils through both practical and literary study. According to the findings, the majority of Nigerian students lacked prior sociocultural knowledge about China and struggled with social, academic, and personal adaptation issues. These issues impacted their understanding of intercultural communication and led to issues with culture shock, ethnocentrism, racial discrimination, and nonverbal communication differences.

Malaklolunthu and Selan (2011) attempted to uncover the difficulties overseas students face adjusting to private higher education institutions in the Malaysian context. The "International Student Problem Inventory" was a quantitative survey that the authors administered to a random sample of international students. Language and financial adjustment issues had the least influence, while academic, religious, personal, and social aspects were linked to the most highly ranked adjustment issues. These results demonstrated how several aspects of living overseas can make adjustment challenging.

But language is one of the issues that is frequently brought up. Since English is the primary medium of instruction in higher education, international students frequently struggle with language skills, including speaking, understanding, or accent (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011). Even though they can speak English, some students struggle because it is not their first language. However, language is one of the issues that is frequently brought to light. Because English is the primary medium of instruction in higher education, international students frequently need help with language skills, including speaking, understanding, or accent (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011). Despite their ability to speak English, some students struggle because it is not their first language.

Park et al. (2017) looked into the communication difficulties brought on by accented English as well as the techniques utilised by international students in an Australian setting, since one of the issues raised above was related to interpreting accents. 182 international ESL speakers who attended three South East Queensland universities were polled by the authors using a quantitative approach. The results showed that students faced challenges connected to their accents in the classroom and that the best ways for them to get past those challenges were associated with increased teacher awareness and assistance.

Thus, it is easy to conclude from a review of earlier research that international students frequently face various challenges in various contexts, locations, and circumstances. Numerous issues were cited, including linguistic and cultural disparities, academic, personal, social, cultural shock, etiquette, and nonverbal communication gaps, and stereotyping. Therefore, to identify the challenges that frequently arise in the Indian setting, this specific research took into consideration a portion of those.

3. METHODS

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of intercultural communication challenges faced by international students in Assam, India. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys, while qualitative insights were obtained via in-depth interviews. Both datasets were analyzed separately and then compared during the interpretation phase to triangulate findings and enhance the credibility of the results.

3.2. Participants

A total of 39 international students from 25 countries participated in the survey from June 2024 to December 2024, representing universities in Assam, India. These included institutions such as Gauhati University, Assam Down Town University, Tezpur University, Dibrugarh University, and others. The students were enrolled in Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral programs. The sampling strategy was purposive**,** targeting students with firsthand intercultural communication experiences. Demographic details included gender (61.5% female, 38.5% male), academic level (46.1% undergraduate, 46.1% master's, 5.1% doctoral, 2.5% diploma), and duration of stay in India (ranging from 1 to 6 years).

Additionally, four international students from Kyrgyzstan, South Sudan, Zambia, Lesotho, and Tanzania were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. They represented diverse cultural backgrounds and academic levels and were enrolled in various programs at Gauhati University, Assam Down Town University, Tezpur University, and Dibrugarh University.

3.3. Instruments

The survey instrument consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, divided into thematic sections: 1. Language Use in IC, 2. Socio-cultural Difficulties, 3. Individual Difficulties, 4. Educational Challenges, 5. Social Challenges, and 6. Coping Strategies

The questionnaire contained Likert-scale and multiple-choice items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results showed that 50 items were good, as seen in Table 1. The estimated completion time was 15–20 minutes.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.804	50

The interview instrument was semi-structured, containing guiding questions on students' experiences, perceived challenges, cultural misunderstandings, and strategies for managing IC issues. To enhance content validity, the interview guide was reviewed by two intercultural communication experts and piloted with two international students.

3.4. Procedures

Participants were recruited via direct email invitations and university networks. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Surveys were distributed both in-person and online, ensuring accessibility. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a quiet setting or via video calls, depending on participant preference and availability. Data were collected over a three-month period.

3.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) via SPSS software 27.0 version. These results provided a statistical overview of students' experiences and challenges.

Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. An inductive coding process was followed to identify recurrent themes and subthemes. NVivo software was used to support coding and manage data organization. To ensure trustworthiness, member checking was performed with two participants, and themes were peer-reviewed by a second coder for consistency. Triangulation between the quantitative and qualitative results further supported the credibility and confirmability of the findings.

4. RESULTS

According to the information gathered from the surveys and interviews, international students in India face a variety of challenges while interacting with students from other nations. The students' explanations for those challenges might be examined and contrasted with the conclusions drawn from the data analysis method. Additionally, students' methods for addressing the challenges were described.

4.1. Results from the Questionnaire

The percentage of students by gender was the first piece of general student data.
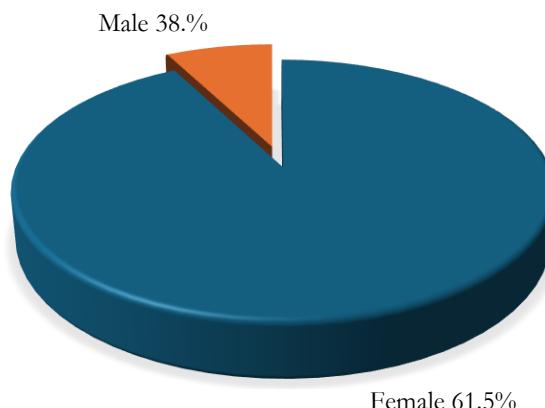
Figure 1. International Students' Gender

Female students completed 61.5% of the responses, compared to 38.5% of male students, as shown in the above chart. Other than Nigeria, which had eight students (20.5%), South Sudan had two students (5.1%), Thailand had five students (12.4%), and Kenya had three students (7.2%); most of the countries had one representative (2.1% apiece). Twenty-nine (74.3%) of the responders are AdtU students, followed by four (10.2%) from Dibrughar University, three (7.6%) from Tezpur, two (5.1%) from Cotton University, and one (2.5%) from Gauhati University. The two largest groups consist of 18 students (46.1%) enrolled in master's programs and another 18 students (46.1%) enrolled in Bachelor's degree language programs. Fewer numbers include one student (2.5%) pursuing a diploma and two students (5.1%) pursuing a doctorate. 17 students (43.5%) stayed in India for 3 years, 5 students (12.8%) stayed for 1 to 1.5 years, 10 students (25.6%) stayed for 2 to 3 years, and 7 students (17.9%) stayed for 4 to 6 years, according to the results.
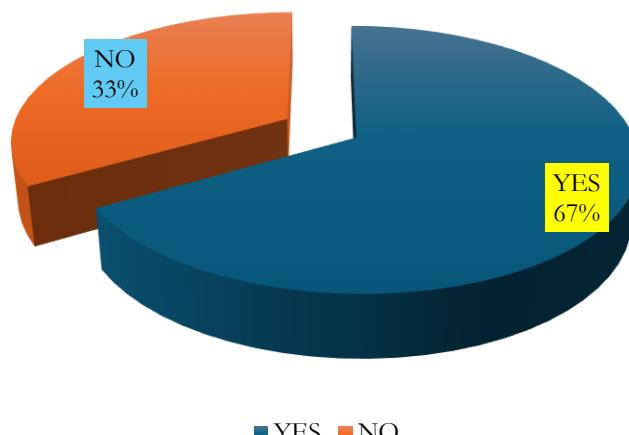

Figure 2. Intercultural Students' Previous Intercultural Experiences

According to Figure 2 above, 66.7% of students had prior experience with intercultural communication. This indicates that over half of them have had the opportunity to engage with other cultural representatives as a result of their involvement in study and exchange programs in other nations, including conferences or activities that may feature foreigners. However, in India, 33.3% of people had never interacted with someone from another culture.
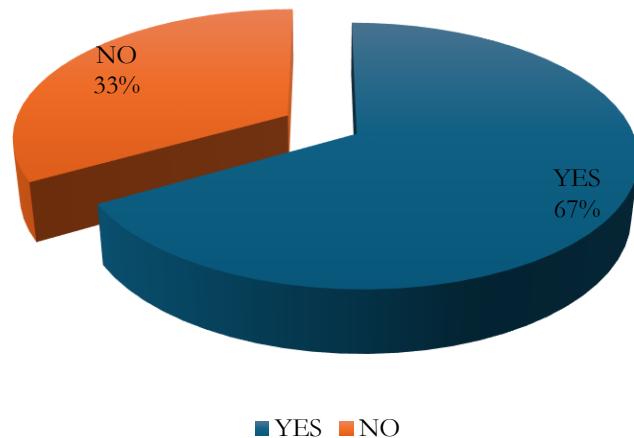

Figure 3. Intercultural Students Who Experienced Difficulties in IC

According to Chart 3, nearly half of the students (48.7%) said they have never encountered any issues with IC. In fact, based on their answers, a significantly higher percentage of students acknowledged that they had encountered difficulties. This question was retested in the following sections. 51.3% concur that they have challenges in IC.

Students proceeded to the Language Use in Intercultural Communication portion after answering the following question:
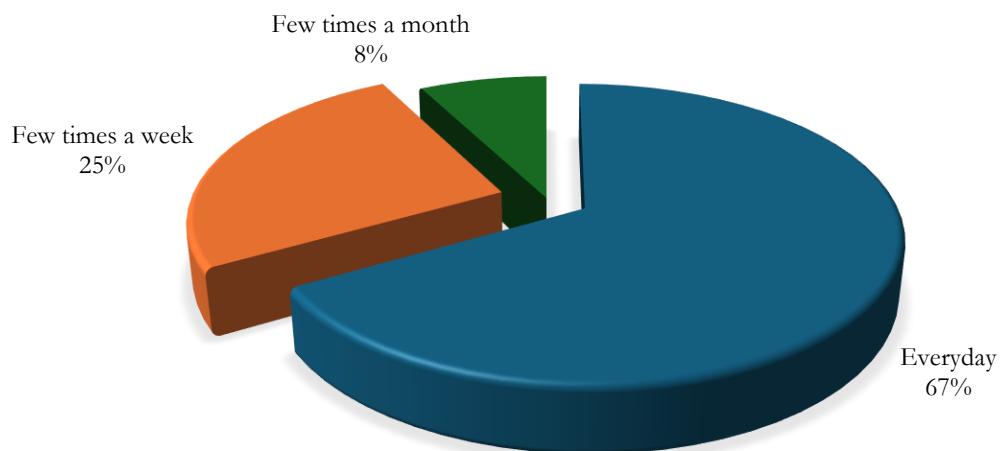

Figure 4. How Often Do You Communicate with Students from Other Countries?

From Figure 4 above, 66.7% of students claim that they communicate with foreign students every day, 25.6% - a few times a week, and 7.7% - a few times a month.
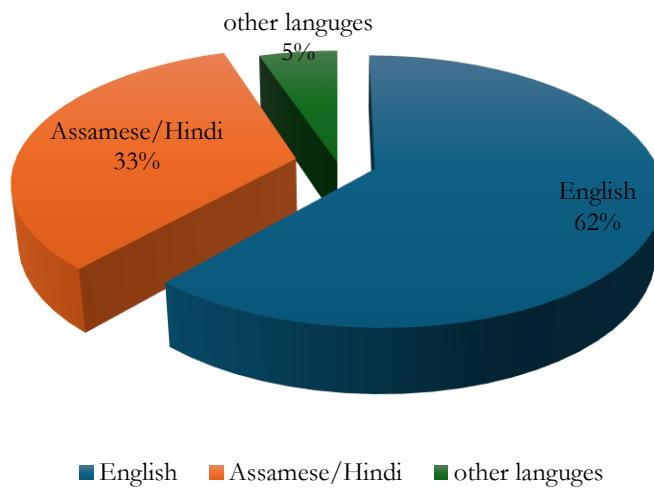
Figure 5. What Language Do You Prefer to Use in Intercultural Communication?

According to Figure 5 above, 33.3% of students surveyed selected the Assamese/Hindi language, while 61.5% picked the English language as the IC language. Two additional participants (2.6% per response) offered their own choices: the South Korean student favoured using English, Chinese, and Indian, while the Thai student favoured using Thai and Malaysian.

Students proceeded to the section on socio-cultural challenges in intercultural communication, where they were given multiple choices to respond to the same question, beginning with the following one:
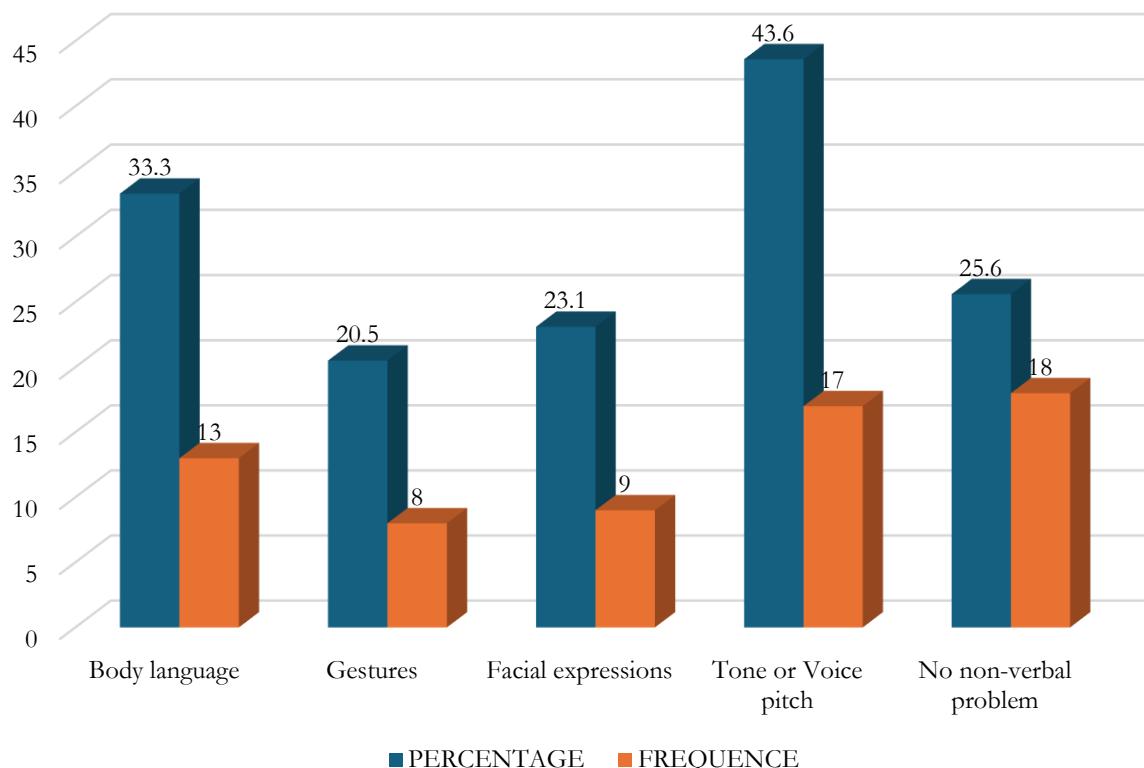

Figure 7. Difficulties That You Encounter in the Case of Non-Verbal Intercultural Communication

Figure 7 shows the challenges that students faced when using nonverbal IC. Most students selected "Tone or voice pitch" (43.6%) out of all the variables, followed by "Body language" (33.3%) and "No non-verbal problem" (25.6%). With regard to facial expressions and gestures, the options are the fewest.
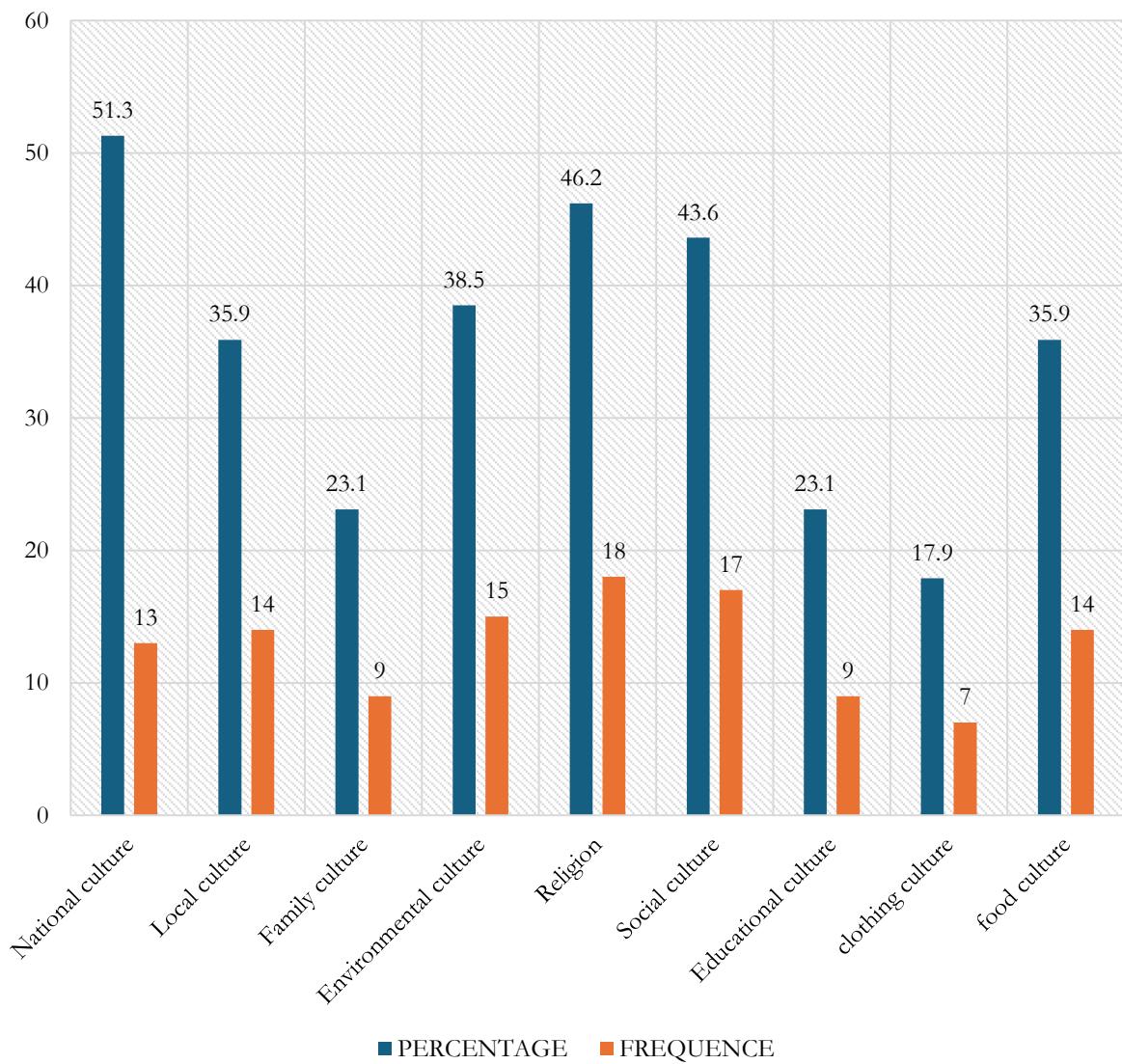
Figure 8. Some Factors That Have Impact on Your Intercultural Interaction

Figure 8 shows some of the most common factors influencing international students' IC. The majority of the students (51.3%) stated that "National Culture" has the greatest influence, followed by "Religion" (46.2%), "Social Culture" (43.6%), "Environmental Culture" (38.5%), "Local Culture" (35.9%), and "Food Culture" (35.9%). Other solutions were selected less than ten times.

Students proceeded to the part on Individual Difficulties in Intercultural Communication, where they were given multiple choices to respond to a single question, beginning with the following question:
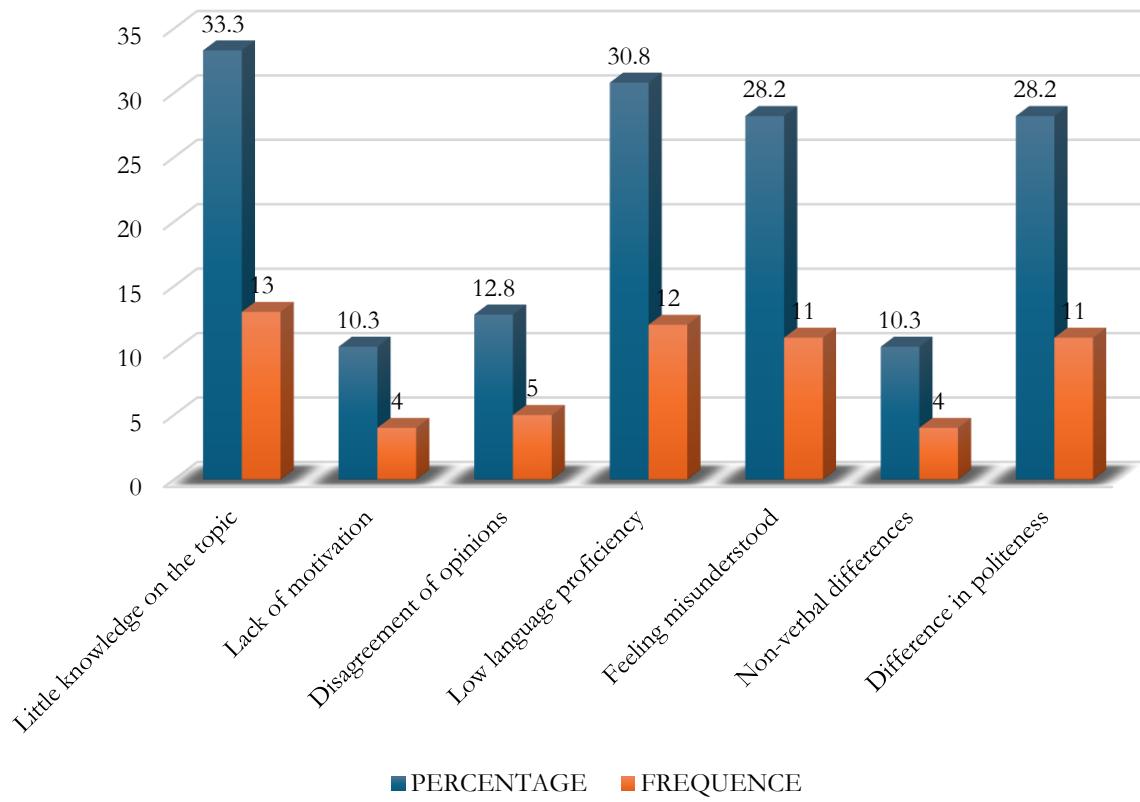
Figure 9. What Are Your Individual Reasons of Difficulties in Intercultural Communication?

The main causes of IC difficulties for overseas students were "Little knowledge of the topic" (33.3%), "Low language proficiency" (30.8%), "Differences in politeness" (28.2%), and "Feeling misunderstood," as shown in Chart 7. Less than ten people selected other options.

By responding to the following query, students proceeded to the part on educational challenges in intercultural communication:
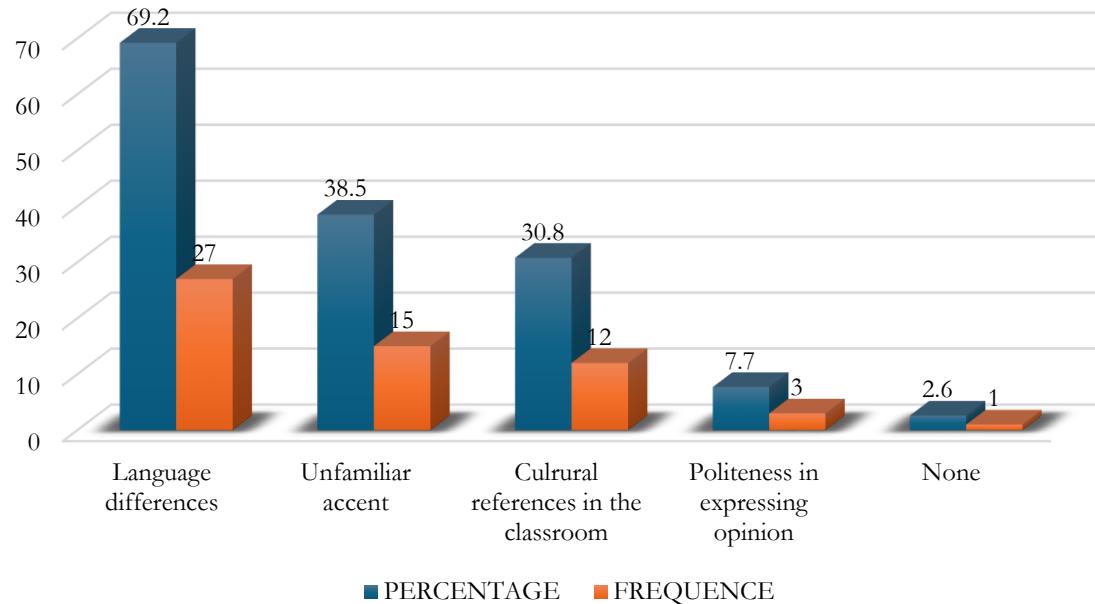

Figure 10. What Are Your Difficulties in Intercultural Communication within Educational Setting?

As illustrated in Figure 10 above, 69.2% of students selected "Language differences" as their response to the challenge of IC in an educational setting, followed by "Unfamiliar accent" with 38.5%, "Cultural references in the classroom" with 30.8%, and "Politeness in expressing opinions" with 7.7%. One student selected "None" (2.6%) as their response to the following question, which took them to the section on Social Difficulties in Intercultural Communication:
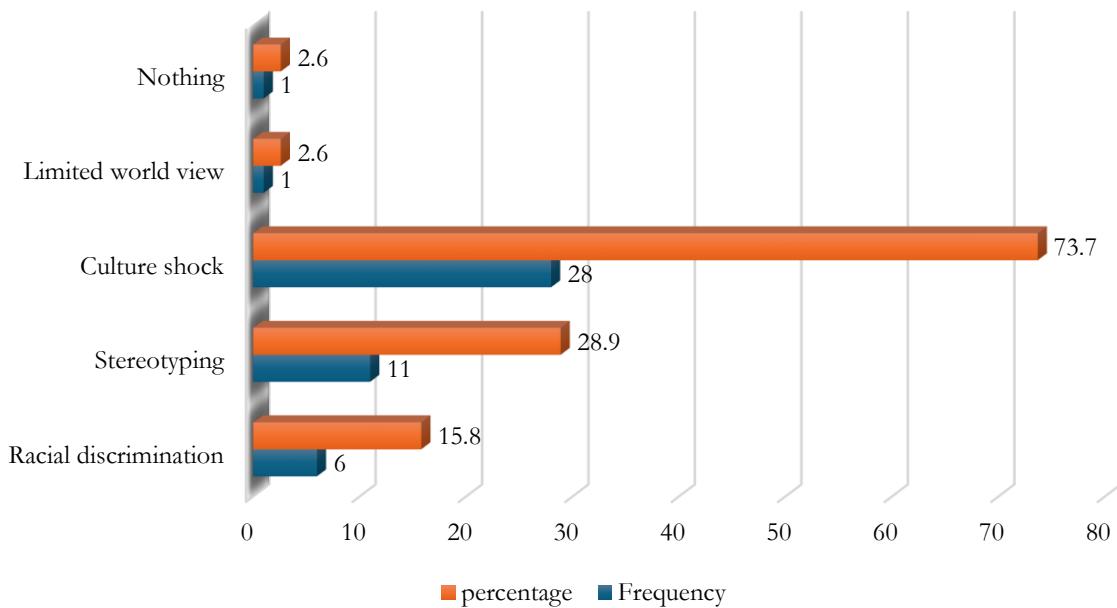

Figure 11. The Issues That You Ever Experienced in Intercultural Communication

The above Figure 11 presents the issues experienced by international students in IC. 73.3% of the students experienced 'Culture shock' when they came to India, another 28.9% encountered 'Stereotyping', and finally, 15.8% - 'Racial discrimination'. Only one student did not experience any of the stated issues.

With the last question, students moved to the final section of strategies to overcome difficulties in intercultural communication.
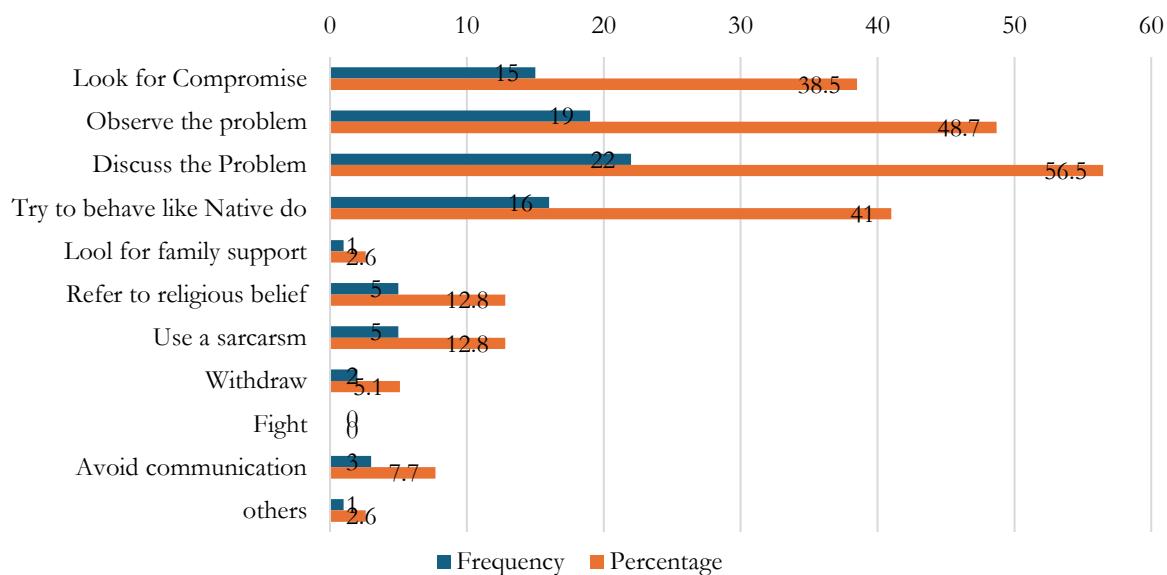

Figure 12. Strategies to Overcome Difficulties in Intercultural Communication

According to Figure 12 above, "Discuss the problem" is the most often used tactic by international students to get past IC challenges (56.4%). "Observe the problem" (48.7%) is the second most common method, followed by "Try to behave as natives do" (41%) and "Look for compromise." Responses to other variations have been the fewest. It is evident from these charts that the majority of students have a tendency to view challenging circumstances positively. The Moroccan student who responded to the survey stated that one of their own strategies is to "promote appreciation of cultural differences," demonstrating their high degree of intercultural communicative ability.

4.2. Results from the Interviews

Four international students, a male student from Tanzania (Student 2), another male student from South Sudan (Student 3), a female student from Zambia (Student 4), and a female student from Kyrgyzstan (Student 1) were interviewed in-depth, as was indicated in the Methodology section. Two were enrolled in a bachelor's degree program; one was a PhD student, and one was a master's degree student. Two years is the duration of stay in Assam state, India. Overall, the contrastive comments they received during their interviews allowed for four distinct viewpoints on the issues. The Discussion section included more detailed interview responses. It was carried out in order to compare the responses with quantitative findings and provide a more thorough study of the responses.

5. DISCUSSION

This study sheds light on the multifaceted challenges international students face while navigating intercultural communication (IC) during their studies in Assam, India. The findings suggest that while most students are willing to adapt, linguistic, cultural, and individual barriers often hinder their communication experiences and integration.

5.1. Language Use in Intercultural Communication (IC)

Most respondents (66.7%) reported daily interactions with students from diverse cultural backgrounds, while 25.6% engaged in such interactions several times a week. These findings reflect the inherently intercultural nature of studying abroad. The preference for English (61.5%) as the primary communication language is not surprising, as English serves as the de facto lingua franca in many international education contexts (Gruber, A. et al, 2023).

Student testimonies illustrate that this preference is largely pragmatic. As Student 1 explained,

"...English is the only language I can confidently rely on during communication in a multicultural environment."

Similarly, Student 2 noted,

"....Sometimes, I try to integrate a bit of Assamese, but I'm not very fluent in it, so most of the time, I default to English."

These reflections support findings from Kim (2020) and Khanal and Gaulee (2019), who observed that while international students may have the desire to learn local languages, limited time and formal instruction often hinder meaningful acquisition.

Leong (2021) also emphasizes that language barriers not only constrain everyday communication but can also limit students' opportunities to build deeper social connections with local peers. In Assam, the linguistic diversity adds complexity, and without institutional support for language acquisition (e.g., Assamese or Hindi), students often remain socially isolated from local communities.

5.2. Socio-Cultural Challenges in Intercultural Communication

Nonverbal miscommunication was among the most salient socio-cultural challenges. Students reported struggling with tone of voice, gestures, and body language. These difficulties are consistent with Arasaratnam-Smith and Deardorff (2022), who underscore that nonverbal cues are culturally constructed and often misunderstood in intercultural settings. Student 1 recounted how her culturally familiar gestures were misinterpreted:

> *"...When I nod my head and say 'hum,' it signals agreement, but here, people often misunderstand it as disagreement."*

Further, cultural norms surrounding religion and food were identified as major challenges by 51.3% of respondents. India's high-context, religiously expressive culture can be unfamiliar to students from more secular or individualistic societies. As Student 2 explained,

> *"...Back home, we usually don't place much emphasis on religion, but in India, it is a core aspect of life."*

These sentiments are echoed in Jambo's (2024) work, which found that international students in religiously vibrant host countries often struggle to balance politeness with personal boundaries. Ting-Toomey's (1999) face-negotiation theory helps explain these interactions. Students consciously monitor their language and behavior to maintain social harmony and avoid offending others, demonstrating intercultural sensitivity, but also highlighting the emotional labor of adjusting.

5.3. Individual Challenges in Intercultural Communication

In addition to socio-cultural barriers, several students cited "low language proficiency" (30.8%) and "little knowledge of the topic" (33.3%) as individual factors that hindered effective communication. These findings are in line with Guo-Brennan (2022), who argues that intercultural competence requires not only language skills but also sociocultural awareness and topical knowledge.

Student 3's strategy

> *"...I use my phone to translate, just so that I can participate more effectively."*

This demonstrates proactive coping behavior. This aligns with recent research highlighting the role of individual agency in overcoming IC barriers (Chang et al., 2022). However, it also underscores the limitations students face in environments where institutional language support is minimal.

Civility and politeness emerged as another challenge. Students often feared offending locals due to differences in norms around personal disclosure or refusal. Student 4 elaborated:

> *"...……When I don't like the food, I'm afraid to say it outright because I know it can be taken very personally here."*

She also reflected on being asked personal questions like "Are you married?" questions that felt intrusive but were later understood as culturally normative. This adjustment process reflects Hofstede's (2022) cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism, where collectivist cultures prioritize relational closeness, often expressed through direct questioning.

These experiences demonstrate that intercultural competence is not simply about language, but about understanding implicit norms and navigating social expectations. As such, institutions need to recognize and support both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of intercultural adaptation.

The findings offer valuable implications for university stakeholders, particularly in any multicultural and multilingual environments like Assam:

- Teaching practices: Educators should be trained in culturally responsive pedagogy that acknowledges diverse communicative norms. For instance, explicit clarification of classroom expectations, inclusive examples, and linguistic scaffolding can reduce the educational disadvantages caused by unfamiliar accents or culture-specific references (Park et al., 2017).

- Institutional policies: Universities must move beyond passive diversity and invest in structured IC support programs. Orientation modules on local customs, religion, and language basics could be integrated into student induction. Peer mentoring between domestic and international students can also promote two-way learning and smoother social integration.

- Student advising: Advisors and counselors should adopt a culturally empathetic framework, being mindful of the discomfort many students feel in addressing topics like religion, food, or personal boundaries. Routine intercultural communication workshops can empower students to navigate these differences with confidence rather than apprehension.

This study reaffirms known intercultural barriers such as language challenges and cultural misunderstandings while bringing attention to specific dynamics in the Northeastern Indian context. Addressing these issues is not only a matter of academic success but also of social well-being and long-term integration for international students.

6. CONCUSION

This study sought to provide answers to three questions. The first is: what linguistic barriers did overseas students face while studying in Assam, India? According to the findings, 51.3% of international students acknowledge having trouble communicating across cultural boundaries. Language barriers, culture shock, and nonverbal communication tone caused the majority of communication problems. Religious beliefs and national culture both have an impact on students' intercultural communication.

The second question asked, "What are the reasons attributed to those difficulties?" Students gave a variety of answers, including low language proficiency, which is in line with language differences in educational settings and personal topics (age, religion, etc.) discussion. Also, more than half of the students surveyed felt more comfortable using English as a lingua franca in intercultural communication. Finally, because of the differences in politeness, international students tend to think before.

The third question was: What techniques do international students employ to navigate intercultural communicative challenges faced during their studies in Assam, India? It was determined that, among many possibilities, the majority of international students choose the least aggressive or contentious approach. This demonstrated their effort to maintain a positive outlook in challenging circumstances. Two predominantly employed tactics centred on observation and discourse around the issue. This signifies the willingness of international students to examine cultural differences and engage in discussions to resolve misunderstandings.

Future research should consider using a larger participant pool and narrowing the focus to one or a few specific issues to facilitate a more in-depth analysis.

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