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Title

**AI Chatbots as Cultural Mediators: Analysing Their
Role in Enhancing Intercultural Communication**

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Dedications

I dedicate this work to my father and mother,

To my dear sisters Melissa and Ouarda,

To all my family and friends for their love, support, and encouragement.

In memory of my late grandfathers,

And all the loved ones we have lost

You are always in my heart.

Lynda Ouadhi

To everyone who supported me, my dear parents, lovely sisters, and my brother.
All my beloved ones, friends, family and to a special presence whose
encouragement is precious to me.

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Abstract

The present dissertation investigates the role of AI chatbots as cultural mediators. It has two main objectives: first to examine how users perceive the feedback they receive from the AI chatbots; second, to identify the features users find most helpful for intercultural communication. This mixed-methods study relies on data collected from an online questionnaire and screenshots and uses Artificial Intelligence-Mediated Communication (AI-MC) theory by Hancock et al. (2020) to guide the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The results show that most participants are optimistic about the feedback they received from the AI chatbots, despite its inability to replace human interaction because of the absence of verbal cues and nuances. In addition, Chat GPT is selected by the participants as the most preferred chatbot due to its multilingual capabilities such as reliability, culturally aware responses and real time translation. The findings contribute to understanding the potential of AI chatbots in facilitating intercultural communication.

Key Words: AI chatbots, AI-MC, Artificial Intelligence, Intercultural Communication, Screenshots, Users.

List of Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence

AI-MC: Artificial Intelligence- Mediated Communication

CFO: Cues Filtered Out

ChatGPT: Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

ICT: Information Communication Technology

M1: Master 1

NLP: Natural Language Processing

QCA: Qualitative Content Analysis

UMMTO: University Mouloud Mammeri of Tizi-Ouzou

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General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Communication involves the transmission of information from the sender to the recipient (Khasawneh et al. 2023). Over the centuries, communication has evolved, notably allowing information and interaction to exceed the borders and reach the different corners of the world. This evolution helped people and cultures from all over the world to meet. Intercultural communication plays a crucial role in our world today (Shumand yazdanifard 2015). According to Issa, Ali Garga, Yunusa (2012), “Intercultural communication means communication across different cultural boundaries. This means that, when two or more people with different cultural backgrounds interact and communicate with each other or one another, intercultural communication is said to have taken place” (p. 45). While people once relied on traditional methods, advancements in the field of technology led to the use of new virtual tools in order to communicate, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered by Chatbots, due to several factors such as the increase of immigration, business globalization and multicultural interactions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is defined as “the field concerned with not just understanding but also building intelligent entities-machines that can compute how to act effectively and safely in a wide variety of novel situations” (Russell and Norvig, 2010, p.19). As AI technology has developed, it has led to the creation of practical tools like AI-powered chatbots. These chatbots use AI to understand and respond to user input in natural language, helping to improve communication. They have become increasingly useful in today’s world, where people need faster and more efficient ways to interact across different cultures and languages.

The classical definition of a chatbot is that of a computer program that processes natural-language input from a user and generates smart and relative responses that are then

sent back to the user. Currently, chatbots are powered by rules-driven engines or artificial intelligent (AI) engines that interact with users via a text-based interface primarily (Das and Khan, 2017). These past years, AI has received significant attention by scholars and researchers especially in the field of education. However, we have noticed that there are limited studies about how AI Chatbots specifically work as cultural mediators between people from different cultural backgrounds and what makes them effective in promoting meaningful intercultural communication. Therefore this study aims to explore this role and what makes AI Chatbots useful.

To explore the role of AI as a cultural mediator, previous studies were conducted. Khasawneh et al. (2023) investigated the prospective utilization of artificial intelligence in enhancing cross-cultural communication by means of translation. The research findings suggest that AI-based translation technology holds considerable promise in enabling cross-cultural communication, as per the perspectives shared by language experts and professional translators who were involved in the study. In another study, Fabian (2019) mainly focused on the possible usage of AI during mediation sessions by summarizing the latest practice in the USA. The findings show that AI cannot work as a mediator without the interference of human. Huang et al (2023) investigated how AI was integrated into language education by reviewing research trends and applications. The results indicate that AI was frequently used to assist students in learning writing, reading, vocabulary, grammar, speaking and listening.

At the level of the University of Tizi-Ouzou , a study by Lacete and Chelli(2024) was conducted about the role of Artificial Intelligence in promoting EFL learners' self-regulated learning skills. The findings revealed that students cognitively engage using AI by analyzing their tasks, designing plans, setting goals and self-reacting to their performance. Our study is different because it aims to explore the role of AI chatbots as cultural mediators and how they can help people communicate and what makes them effective.

Aims and Significance of the Study

This study explores the use of chatbots as mediators to enhance intercultural communication. This study has two objectives. The first one is analyzing AI chatbots users' perceptions of the feedback they receive from the chatbots in mediating intercultural communication. The second one is identifying which features of AI chatbots users think are effective and helpful for intercultural communication and contribute to their mediating role between people from different cultural backgrounds.

This study is significant because it provides insights into how these tools can serve as effective mediators in conversations, helping to bridge cultural gaps and promote better understanding. Ultimately, the finding can inform educators and researchers about the potential of AI chatbots to facilitate meaningful interactions in a multicultural environment.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to reach the aforementioned research objectives, the following research questions are raised:

1. How do users perceive the usefulness of cultural feedback provided by AI chatbots in intercultural communication?
2. Which features of AI chatbots enhance their effectiveness as cultural mediators between people from different cultures?

The following hypotheses are formulated as possible answers to the above asked research questions:

1. Users perceive AI chatbots' feedback as more useful when it provides suggestions for intercultural communication.

2. AI with multilingual capabilities and adaptive capabilities are perceived as more helpful for intercultural communication

Research Techniques and Methodology

The present study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. To gather data, an online questionnaire is designed as a research tool that contains both close-ended and open-ended items, in addition to screenshots collected from AI chatbots users. The data gathered are analyzed and interpreted using Hancock, Naaman, and Levy's (2020) Artificial Intelligence-Mediated Communication Theory.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation follows the traditional simple model, which includes four chapters in addition to a General Introduction and a General Conclusion. The General Introduction consists in presenting the topic, stating the aims and significance of the study, highlighting the research questions and hypotheses, and explaining the structure of the dissertation. The first chapter is the Review of the Literature; it reviews the important theoretical concepts and different previous definitions related to the topic provided by different scholars in addition to the theoretical framework of the study. The second chapter is the Research Design and Methodology. It starts by presenting the research tools, which consist of an online questionnaire and screenshots. It also explains the two methods of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter is devoted to the presentation of the findings that provides the results obtained from the questionnaire and the screenshots. The last chapter is the Discussion of the Findings where the results are discussed and interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and the review of the literature. Finally, the General Conclusion is the last part which synthesizes the whole work. It also provides answers to the research questions raised in the introduction and

confirms or rejects the suggested hypotheses. In addition, it highlights the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for further research on the topic.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter presents the key concepts that underlie this research. It includes three major sections. The first section explores the concept of intercultural communication, and highlights its evolution within the digital age. The second section emphasises on Artificial Intelligence in relation to intercultural communication. The final section focuses on Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) in addition to presenting our theoretical framework AI-Mediated Communication (AI-MC) (Hanckock et al., 2020).

1.1 Definition of Communication

According to Abu-Arqoub and Alserhan (2019), human communication is the process of interaction, playing crucial role in people's lives. It involves the exchange and sharing of ideas, emotions, feelings, and thoughts between the sender who generates the message and the receiver who receives it. This process can happen either verbally (the spoken or written language) or nonverbally (body language, facial expressions, gestures, signs). It takes place through different channels of communication, depending on the context. However, due to the globalization and the rapid advancement of information technology, communication has become increasingly complex. The process of communication and the sharing of information among people within a society is no longer limited to the national level. Instead, it has shifted to a global or an international level. As a result, intercultural communication has become more essential than ever before (Shum and Yazdanifard 2015).

1.2 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is defined by Issa, Ali-Garga and Yunusa (2012) as the process of communication among individuals from different boundaries and cultural backgrounds. That is, this process occurs when two people or more from different countries, different cultural perspectives, or with different languages interact with each other. It also refers to the ability to build, maintain and improve relationships with individuals from different cultural background taking into account many factors such as values, perceptions, manners, social structures, ways of making decision, and also understanding their communication style through spoken, written and body languages, in business and social contexts (McLaren, 1998 cited in Su Kei and Yazdanifard, 2015). Thanks to the development of new media in addition globalization people all around the world are now related and interculturally connected more than ever before (Chen, 2012).

1.3 Intercultural Communication in the Digital Age

Nowadays, advancement in information and technology, especially social media, made the process of communication across cultures easier, where people communicate interculturally in an effective way contrary to the past where communication required people to be physically present. Today, web-based and mobile technology tools such as email, teleconferencing and instant messaging enable individuals to share information and ideas online. AsMouhadjer, (2018) states, “They represent an ever-growing form of communication in our world today” (p.69). Despite new media advantages such as making people from all around the world interconnected, transforming the world into a small village, and enhancing intercultural communication, it still has some disadvantages. New media have disrupted traditional forms of communication and affected how people understand each other, especially with intercultural context. It influences both the content and meaning of the messages.

In addition traditional values such as face-to-face interaction, using formality when speaking with elders do not align with the new norms shaped by new media such as using memes emojis, or short videos to express emotions , which lead to misunderstanding, especially between generations. For example, older people using traditional methods such as face-to-face interaction may not understand how the new generations use emojis abbreviations such as “lol” which stands for laughing out loud or “brb” which stands for be right back . It also creates confusion in understanding people from different cultures. Moreover new media fosters a new type of culture that increase ambiguity and affects how people engage in intercultural communication and adapt to new norms (Chen, 2012).The continuous development of digital technologies has led to the emergence of Artificial Intelligence which, for its part, plays a significant role in enhancing and facilitating intercultural communication.

1.4 Artificial Intelligence and Intercultural Communication

1.4.1 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is nowadays one of the most promising fields in science, as it automates and optimizes tasks that used to be accomplished by humans only. Historically, AI is not new; it started after World War II when computers were being developed. In 1956, experts met at the Dartmouth Conference to study "thinking machines," marking the birth of AI as a field (Yang, Zhao, and Luo 2024). That was when the term "Artificial Intelligence" was first used. AI has been given several definitions by different scholars like Asif and Gouqing (2024) who define it as an imitation of the capacities of human brain for problem solving and decision making by using computers and other devices. Differently said, AI, or “Artificial Intelligence”, is the study of giving computers the ability to learn and make decisions on their own. Today’s media is giving robots the ability to act like agents in

users' interactions. Additionally, the Oxford English Dictionary (1955) defines AI as “the capacity of computers, or other machines, to exhibit intelligent behavior”. AI can be divided into two main types: weak AI and strong AI. Weak AI, like Siri or Alexa, is designed for specific tasks and follows pre-programmed rules. For example, it can play music when asked but can not think on its own. Strong AI, on the other hand, is more like human intelligence it can learn, adapt, and solve new problems without being programmed (cited in svAsif and Gouqing, 2024)

1.4.2 The Role of AI in Intercultural Communication

The use of AI in communication may generally be divided into two areas. The first area involves direct interactions between humans and AI while the second area is about using AI as a mediator to facilitate communication between people. ChatGPT was the first popular AI chatbot, but now there are many others like Google Bard, Microsoft Copilot, IBM Watsonx.ai, and China's Ernie Bot. One clear example of AI in communication is the use of chatbots (Asif and Gouqing, 2024). Derived from the words « chat » and « robot » these are programs that mimic human conversation, early version used text-based interactions; however, modern chatbots now use AI, natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (ML) (Md. Al-Amin et al., 2024). This technology is used in different fields and it differs from web-sites to applications. Chatbots are a good example of how AI can improve intercultural communication, since the arrival of the AI era the style of cultural communication has shifted from unimodal to multimodal communication technology which helps understand people from new and different perspectives.

New AI chatbots like ChatGPT can now chat like humans. They translate languages, answer questions, and understand different cultures. These smart bots make conversations feel more natural, changing how we interact with technology. Scholars (Othman, 2023; Vieira et

al, 2021; Nie, 2021; Plocher et al, 2021; Liu, 2021) say AI has a large role in cross-cultural communication as AI-based translation tools can translate oral and written languages in real time, thus solving the language gaps between different speakers (cited in Khasawneh et al., 2023).

1.4.3 Chatbots in Intercultural Communication

Adamopoulou and Moussiades (2020) argue that smart bots, interactive agents, digital assistants, and artificial conversation entities are other names for chatbots that are not built to mimic human conversation and entertain users but they are useful in applications such as education, business and other fields. They became considerably popular because they have many advantages for users and developers as well.

Chatbots are classified based on the ease of user interface, algorithms and the underlying technologies used. Chatbots are mainly categorized into three types. To start with the most used and the simplest type of chatbots in the market menu are button-based chatbots. These chatbots follow the principles of decision trees, where you make your decisions to get the ultimate answers. While they are easy to use their performance is slower and cannot be completely reliable to get the desired answer. Then, we have the second type of chatbots called keyword recognition-based chatbots. This type recognizes a specific keywords in order to produce a wanted result. These chatbots will start to fail when similar words are used. For example if a user asked the question ‘How do I set up an auto-login authentication on my phone?’, the bot would likely use the keywords like ‘auto’, ‘login’, to determine which answer is the best to respond with. The last type of chatbots is contextual chatbots which are one of the most technologically advanced types of bots. They utilize Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence technologies like voice recognition, speech-to-text conversion algorithms to interpret the users’ feelings. These chatbots analyze the user’s perspective and

suggest recommendations based on consecutive orders and user's likings (Gupta, Hathwar and Vijayakumar, 2020)

1.5. Introduction to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

During this last decade Computer mediated communication (CMC) was considered globally a crucial process (Silvia et al. 2022). According to Bubaš (2001), computer mediated communication (CMC) is the transmission of textual, audio, and/or video information that are exchanged and mediated through the use of computer and telecommunication technology. For Yu (2011), Computer mediated communication is the exchange of information thoughts and feeling between people from all around the world, by using tools of communication such as email, video, audio or text chat. Hence, CMC includes any communication interaction that takes place through the use of two or more connected computers. In addition to that, they emphasize the essential role of humans in this system acting as creators, users, ameliorators. This combination between humans and technology gives CMC meaning and function. These definitions show that CMC is not only about the exchange of information between individuals through computers, but also about the important role that humans play in giving meaning to the communication process. According to Walther (2011), computer mediated communication consists of three main major and nine minor theories.

1.5.1 Cues-Filtered-Out Theories

1.5.1.1 Social Presence Theory

Social presence is considered as one of the first analytic frameworks applied to CMC (Walther, 2011). According to Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter and Thweatt (2020), social presence refers to the feeling of presence (the sense of being there) with someone even when you are in fact using technology. People may forget that they are using technology when they

become deeply engaged in a conversation, as it creates the same feeling of face to face communication. Social presence then is when people feel that the person they are talking to or discussing with is next to them even when in fact they are not. However, this depends on the type of media used and the social cues conveyed such as facial expression and body language. Reading an article from a website will not make you forget that you are using technology, while having a discussion with your favorite person through texts or a video call might make you forget about the technological medium, because you are so engaged in that conversation. (Wrench, Punyanunt-Carter and Thweatt, 2020)

1.5.1.2 Media Richness

Media richness tends to be one of the most known models of CMC (D'Urso and Rains, 2008 cited in Walther, 2011). This theory can be found under the name of information richness theory as well. It is defined as the ability of information to affect comprehension within a certain period. The communication that enables people having different views, to understand each other and clarify ambiguous issues quickly is considered rich; whereas, the communication that takes a long time is considered to be low in richness (Daft and Lengel, 1986). Suh (1998) argues that the richness of information in a communication medium is identified by the following characteristics: feedback capability, the use of communication channels, variation of a language and personal emphasis. The more the medium includes these characteristics the richer it is viewed. These media are classified from the richest to the lowest, starting from face to face communication which tends to be the richest medium as it allows rapid mutual feedback and enables the transmission of multiple cues such as: body language, facial expression, tone of voice, the use of high-variety of natural language, also expressing emotions. It is followed by a telephone, then addressed document such as notes, memos, letters finally unaddressed documents like bulletins, standard reports. (Suh, 1998).

1.5.2 Experiential and Perceptual Theories of CMC

1.5.2.1 Electronic Propinquity

Electronic propinquity is considered as one of the minor theories of CMC. Korzenny(1978) defined it as the sense of closeness, nearness which occurs between individuals while interacting with each other through the use of electronic media, and that “electronic propinquity refers then to electronic proximity, or electronic nearness, or electronic presence”(p 3)

Similarly, Walther (2011) stated that “The central construct in electronic propinquity theory is the psychological closeness experienced by communicators. Whereas physical closeness or proximity is generally associated with interpersonal involvement in face-to-face communication” (p 455) Korzenny highlighted that the degree of propinquity can be influenced by many factors that might either increase or decrease it. Factors that tend to increase the level of propinquity included a wider bandwidth (the ability of a certain medium to transmit set of frequencies), mutual directionality of a channel (immediacy of feedback), communication skills and the limited number of available media. Hence, factors such as the complexity of information and the presence of much communication rules tend to lower the propinquity degree.

1.5.2.2 The Social Influence Theory

Social influence theory was introduced in the field of psychology in the early 1950s by Herbert Kelman as a framework to explain how people change their attitudes and behaviors because of the social influence . It analyzed several types of influence situations and associated responses. According to Herbert (1958), people accept the social influence in three different ways. First, compliance which is when someone follows what others do

because they have no other choice. This happens when a person or a group of people have power over the others. Second, identification which is when people change their behaviors and attitudes in order to fit with others and be part of them. Third, internalization which is to adopt behaviors because they really match with your beliefs and out of conviction not influence. In the computer mediated-communication this theory focuses on the factors that change the users' perceptions about the capacities of CMC. Social influence theory rejects those aspects of media richness and it argues that the nature of media and their potentials are socially constructed, and the richness of a medium is affected by interaction with other individuals around us.

1.5.2.3 Channel Expansion Theory

The channel expansion theory focuses on internal and experiential factors (Carlson and Zmud, 1994). It argues that as individuals gain more experience with a particular communication medium, the medium becomes richer for them. Carlson and Zmud (1999) conducted two studies that found some support for channel expansion theory. In their first study with 362 university employees, richness perceptions were positively correlated with one's experience in using e-mail and one's experience with a communication partner. The findings from their second study with 63 business students provided additional evidence for the relationship between richness perceptions and experience with e-mail and a communication partner. Those who gained experience over the three measurement periods viewed e-mail as being significantly richer. Whereas those who did not gain experience, viewed e-mail as being slightly less rich over the three periods. Another study by D'Urso and Rains (2008) was conducted to test channel expansion theory in the context of new and traditional communication media. The results show that there are differences between the traditional and new media as they believe that experience with these newer channels, with one's communication partner, and the communication topic may be more important in

shaping richness perceptions of newer media than more established channels such as the telephone and face-to-face communication .

1.5.3 Theories of Interpersonal Adaptation and Exploitation of Media

1.5.3.1 Social Information Processing Theory

The social information processing theory is used to explain the differences between text-based CMC and off-line communication (Walther, 1992). Recent works are making efforts to expand its scope to include the new forms of online communication. Walther (1992) predicted that users could find other ways to communicate the meaning that was often conceptualized as being of a nonverbal nature, like using words or symbols to show their feelings. When scholars started to study computer-mediated communication, they found challenges with e-mails and online messaging as they were different from face to face communication that included facial expressions , gestures which helped better understand the exchanged messages (Sumner and Ramirez, 2017). Such as Culnan and Markus (1987) collectively labeled the Cues Filtered Out (CFO) approach asserted that the text-based nature of CMC led nonverbal and social cues (e.g., eye contact, gestures, vocal inflection) to be essentially filtered out, resulting in impersonal online interactions (Sumner and Ramirez, 2017). Walther reviewed previous studies and certain indicated that online interactions feel more impersonal compared to face to face interactions, while other showed that people are comfortable when forming friendships online.

1.5.3.2 Hyperpersonal Model

The hyperpersonal model of CMC (Walther, 1996) explains how online communication can create stronger relationships compared to face to face interactions. It is composed of four components namely: receiver, sender, channel and feedback. First, in CMC

without the physical and other cues, receivers often exaggerate in their perceptions of the sender filling in missing information. Second, the text-based CMC allow people to share what they want only and hide physical behaviors. Third, the channel focuses on how the communication channel itself helps people create messages. The last component is the feedback. The hyperpersonal model shows that in online communication, idealization, selective sharing, and the medium itself work together in a cycle. This makes interactions more intense and exaggerated over time. A study by Marjolijn et al. (2020) investigated the impact of audiovisual cues during conversations preceding a first face-to-face meeting among prospective daters on daters' perceptions of partners' social and romantic attraction. Their first meeting was via text-based CMC or videoconferencing and the second meeting was face to face. Results showed that people who used text-based felt more connected than those who used videoconferencing. After switching from online to in-person meetings, people still felt socially connected but their romantic feelings decreased after the second meeting, but this change was not moderated by the initial communication condition.

In addition to the previously mentioned theories, the last three CMC theories are: warranting, efficiency framework and Information Communication Technology Succession. To start with, warranting framework concerns whether the information about the other person we interact with is valid or not in online discussions. The warranting principle claims that people are less likely to lie about themselves online, as people judge others based on online information that the person cannot change or control. Then, the efficiency framework explains how satisfied and effective people feel with online communication compared to face to face one. The last and recent framework of CMC is Information Communication Technology (ICT) succession that uses multiple communication channels including traditional media, face-to-face channels, and newer forms of CMC and sees how combining these channels can improve communication. Stephens (2007) suggests that to accomplish different tasks that

are personal and social in nature, it is more effective to use different communication channels. He also posits that mass media will be more effective as a precursor channel in information tasks.

1.6 Theoretical Framework: Artificial Intelligence-Mediated Communication (AI-MC)

The aforementioned theories focus on human communication and how people perceive media, while our topic is about AI chatbots as cultural mediators. AI chatbots do not have human-like social experiences or perceptions, so these theories can not explain how chatbots can enhance intercultural communication. They are not designed for analyzing AI's role in cultural mediation. For this reason, we expanded our investigations and came across Artificial Intelligence–Mediated Communication (AI-MC) theory which was introduced by Hancock, Naaman and Levy in 2020. They define AI-MC as an interpersonal communication in which an intelligent agent operates on behalf of a communicator by modifying and generating messages to accomplish communication goals. That is, how technology shapes human communication. This framework is suitable for the current study as it provides information about how AI systems work to achieve communication goals, and it is relevant to understand how AI chatbots can bridge cultural gaps.

AI-MC consists of five dimensions. The five key dimensions of AI-Mediated Communication (AI-MC) are magnitude, media type, optimization goal, autonomy and role orientation. Magnitude refers to the extent of AI's involvement in modifying messages, from minor suggestions to full content generation. Media type involves the format AI operates in, such as text, audio, or video. Optimization goal focuses on the purpose AI is designed to achieve, such as to appear attractive, trustworthy and so on. Autonomy describes the degree

to which AI can operate on messages without the sender's supervision. Finally, Role orientation defines whether AI assists the sender or receiver.

In this work, the magnitude dimension is allowing an assessment of how well chatbots can modify or generate messages, media type can help us investigate whether cultural bridging is more successful through text-based communication or through multimodal strategies (e.g., visuals or voice). The optimization goal is related to how chatbots are intended to achieve particular intercultural objectives, such as building trust or reducing misunderstandings. Autonomy looks at how much a user can control the chatbot. Role orientation, however, is not applicable for the current study, as it does not relate to the focus of our topic, which is about the role of the chatbot mediating between cultures, not whose side it represents.

Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to the review of all the relevant literature that explains the major concepts of our study. At the beginning, it has provided definitions of communication and discussed intercultural communication in the digital age. Next, it has explained the concepts of Artificial Intelligence, the role of AI in intercultural communication and chatbots in intercultural communication. Eventually, it has thoroughly explained Hancock, Naaman and Levy's Artificial Intelligence Mediated Communication (2020), which is the analytical framework on which this study is based.

Research Design

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to the methodology adopted for this study which investigates the role of AI chatbots as cultural mediators. It is composed of three sections. The first section describes the research approach on which the research relies. The second section includes the tools through which the data have been collected. The last section introduces data analysis procedure, which explains how the data have been analyzed and interpreted both quantitatively and qualitatively.

2.1 Research Approach

The present study adopts the mixed-methods research to collect and analyze data. Using both types of data help to achieve a better understanding of this study's data. Mixed methods research is defined by Prohit and Devi (2023) as “an innovative and increasingly popular approach in the field of social sciences, designed to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms” (p.01). This approach saw the light since the 1980s (Simister & James, 2020) and was used since then by researchers when they have both quantitative and qualitative data, offering a better understanding of the research issue under investigation. . It is helpful because it combines both numerical and descriptive data, which helps to get deeper and more clear results.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

2.2.1 Online Questionnaire

Questionnaires are one of the most used tools for collecting data. They are defined by Gray (2004) as “research tools through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order” (p.187). Respondents are generally required to respond to these questions in one of two ways: either by developing their own responses (opened-ended

questions) or by choosing from pre-existing options (closed-ended questions). The information gathered from the questionnaire can be qualitative or quantitative. The information can be divided into three categories: factual information, which include the demographic details of the respondents (age, gender, etc.), behavioral information which include the respondents' past and present experiences, and attitudinal information, which include the respondents' ideas, opinions, attitudes, and interests about a given issue (Dornyei 2007). Among its various types, the online questionnaire is a research tool in which the internet has a role to play. There are two ways to distribute the online questionnaire: by email or via Web-based which is sent through the combination of an email "cover letter" and a URL embedded in the message. Nowadays online questionnaires are more useful to researchers than pen-paper ones due to the substantial advantages they may provide (Hadj, 2021).

For our study, an online questionnaire was designed using Microsoft Forms to gather information about users' perception of AI chatbots as cultural mediators. It consists of an introductory paragraph and four sections with a total of 20 questions. The introductory paragraph explains the objective of the study. The first section is for demographic information. The second section, entitled 'Communication and Intercultural Interactions', aims to know about people's cross-cultural interactions. The third section, entitled 'AI and Intercultural Communication' aims to investigate how AI chatbots such as chatgpt help users interact with people from different cultures. The last section is 'User Perception of AI Chatbots as a Cultural Mediator', which aims to know how the users perceive these chatbots as cultural mediators. This online questionnaire has 13 close-ended questions and 7 open-ended questions. The form was available online from April 2nd to April 20th, 2025. It was uploaded on social media (Facebook), specifically on the official page of the English Department as well, and it was answered by 46 participants. The participants were randomly chosen to complete the questionnaire as everyone had access to it. The respondents were

informed that their identities would remain anonymous. The participants were university students and AI chatbot users from different countries, and they were chosen because they represent people who use AI chatbots.

In order to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding, the questionnaire has first been sent to three EFL M1 students of different specialisms and another student studying abroad a week before sharing the final version of the questionnaire. Overall, the four students have found the questions of the questionnaire clear, straightforward and understandable. Since the students did not report any issues with the items, we have decided to retain the same questions and the same sections without any modifications.

2.2.2 Visuals

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2025), the term visuals refers to elements such as pictures, photographs, films, and maps that are used to clarify, remember information and create a specific impact on the viewer. The use of visuals is effective, because they illustrate and explain the written text in a clear way. Their use is not limited to one field but different domains such as education, communication and research. In the educational field, El Tigi, Lewis, and Mac Entee (1997) argue that “visuals serve as concrete clues to meaning. Concrete referents enhance communication and understanding through clarification of abstract concepts” (p. 45). In communication, Tilak (2020) highlights that “Visual communication is a mode of communication that persons get through the reading or seeing. It is one of the best techniques used by the people for communication and information sharing” (p. 963). Visuals can be integrated in ethnographic studies, as well as qualitative tools to collect information. They can be used as a primary source of information or secondary to support other data. In addition, the use of these tools in research dissemination is very crucial, helping to report findings in understandable and accessible ways rather than written

content(Herzog, 2019). Screenshots, more specifically, are a type of visuals used to illustrate, clarify and understand information easily.

2.2.3 Definition of Screenshots

Screenshots, also called screen captures or screen grabs, are defined as a simple technique of sharing and presenting the user experience on screens (Lassen, 2025). Screen captures can be taken either by using the computer's keyboard or the buttons on a smartphone. There is another possibility, consisting of installing a browser extension that could captures the whole page or web recording that could be used and may replace the static screenshots (Lassen, 2025). It is worth noting that these days screenshoting is not only used for storing memories or giving information about something but can also be used for other purposes such as collecting data. As Lassen (2025) states, "Once screenshoting has been used as a method to collect data,the captured screenshots function as data that can be analyzed. Depending on the research question" (p.5).

2.2.4 The Visual Corpus

The process of gathering data started in November 2024, when we began searching for ways and tools to contact language learners from all over the world to collect reliable data about the use of AI chatbots for intercultural and linguistics matters. We first began searching for websites about any platform or application to reach foreigners,which led us to discover Hello talk, an application for those who want to improve their level in a given language, especially English. We downloaded the application in October 2024 to check its functionality and avoid anyproblem or waste of time when the time for the collection of data would officially begin. After confirming its usefulness, the process of the collection has officially started in April 2025. After understanding the application's functionality, we participated in

voice based chat rooms where people from different countries spoke to each other in real life time about different topics to improve their linguistic levels.

We selected the chat room created by any user and asked them for participation, and once approved, we started engaging with them. The users were from different nationalities: Chinese, Indian, American and European. We introduced ourselves by stating how many languages we speak and which one do we need to ameliorate. Once we gained their trust and were allowed into the conversation, we asked them the following questions: do they use AI chatbots? for what matter ? if they have asked these bots about linguistic or cultural matters ? In case of positive responses, we moved to the next step which was to kindly ask them to screenshot their questions and the answers provided by the AI tool. ChatGPT was the most widely AI tool used by the research participants, thus, all screenshots gathered were taken from their interactions with this platform. In addition to this application, we have contacted some colleagues and asked them the same questions to collect more data.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the collected data, two data analysis procedures were used, the Statistical Descriptive Method to examine the quantitative data and Qualitative Content Analysis for the qualitative data.

2.3.1. Descriptive Statistical Method

According to Yellapu (2018),“Descriptive statistics are used to summarize data in an organized manner by describing the relationship between variables in a sample or population” (p, 60). This study used the rule of three to examine the quantitative data obtained from the online questionnaire and calculate their percentages. To analyze the quantitative data, we have used the following formula $X = Y \times 100 / Z$ in which, X refers to the

calculated percentage, Y refers to the obtained answers and Z is the number of participants. The results are presented in percentages diagrams in the following chapter.

2.3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

Qualitative Content Analysis is a research method that interprets the content of data through a systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. As Shava et al. (2021) explain, “It is an approach of empirical methodological controlled analysis of texts within their content of communication, following content analytic rules and procedures step by step without quantifications to generate theory” (p. 55). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) add that it is a method for analyzing textual data which consists of three types: conventional, directed, and summative, all of which “are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data and, hence, adhere to the naturalistic paradigm” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). In our study, we adopt QCA to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the questionnaire and screenshots relying on AI-Mediated communication (Hancock et Al., 2022) relying more specifically on the direct method which according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) “starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes” (p. 1277). This method helped us identify two major themes, intercultural and linguistic exchanges. Due to the dominance of cultural content, we focused on this latter more than the linguistic one while analyzing the data.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on presenting the research design used in our study. It comprised three sections. The first section included the description of the adopted research method. The second section detailed the tools employed for data collection while the last section explained the procedures followed to analyze and interpret the quantitative and qualitative data.

Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained from our investigation. It contains two main sections. The first section displays the results of the online questionnaire in pie and bar charts. The second section presents the results of screenshots obtained from AI chatbots users.

3.1 Results of User's Questionnaire

The following results have been obtained from the questionnaire that surveyed a sample of 46 people from different linguistic backgrounds including EFL students of the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou.

3.1.1 Results of Section One: Demographic Information

Question 1: What is your gender?

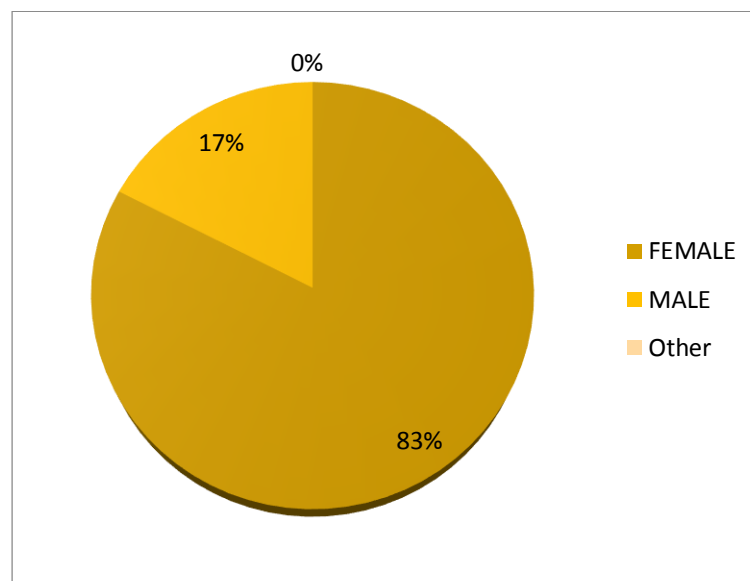


Diagram 01: Participants' Gender

Diagram 1 shows that the majority of the participants are females (83%), whereas the minority (17%) are males. The option "Other" was added to be more inclusive, since the questionnaire is sent to people from different backgrounds.

Question 2: What is your age?

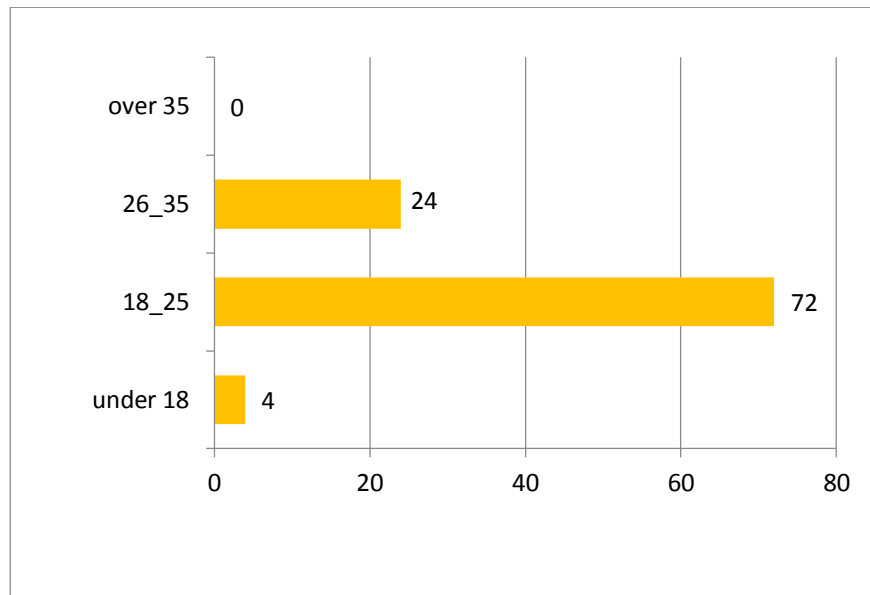


Diagram 2: Participants' Age

Diagram 2 indicates that most of the participants (72%) are aged between 18 and 25. (24%) of them are between 26 and 35 years. Only (4%) are under 18 and no participants over 35.

Question 3: Which will best describe your status?

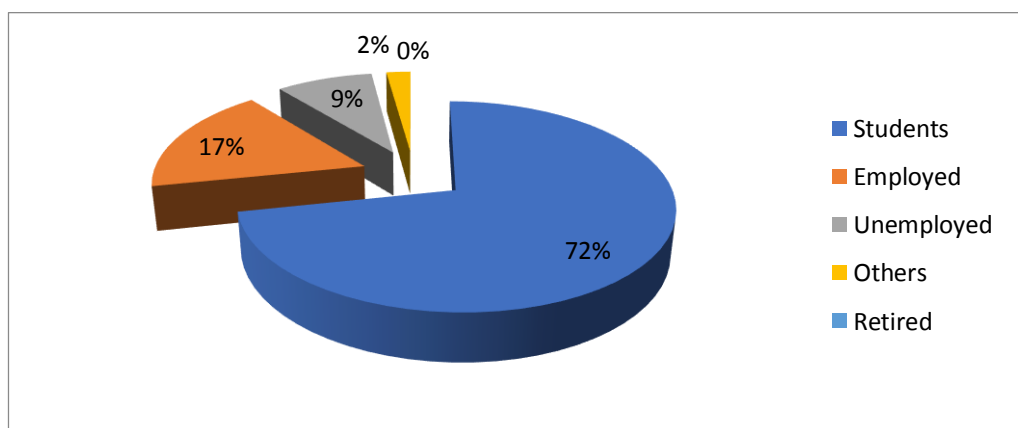


Diagram 3: Participants' Status

Diagram 3 indicates that a significant majority of the participants (72%) are students, (17%) are employed, (9%) are unemployed. (2%) of the participants did not specify their status while no one of them are retired.

3.1.2 Result of Section Two: Communication and Intercultural Interaction

Question 4: How often do you communicate with people from different cultures?

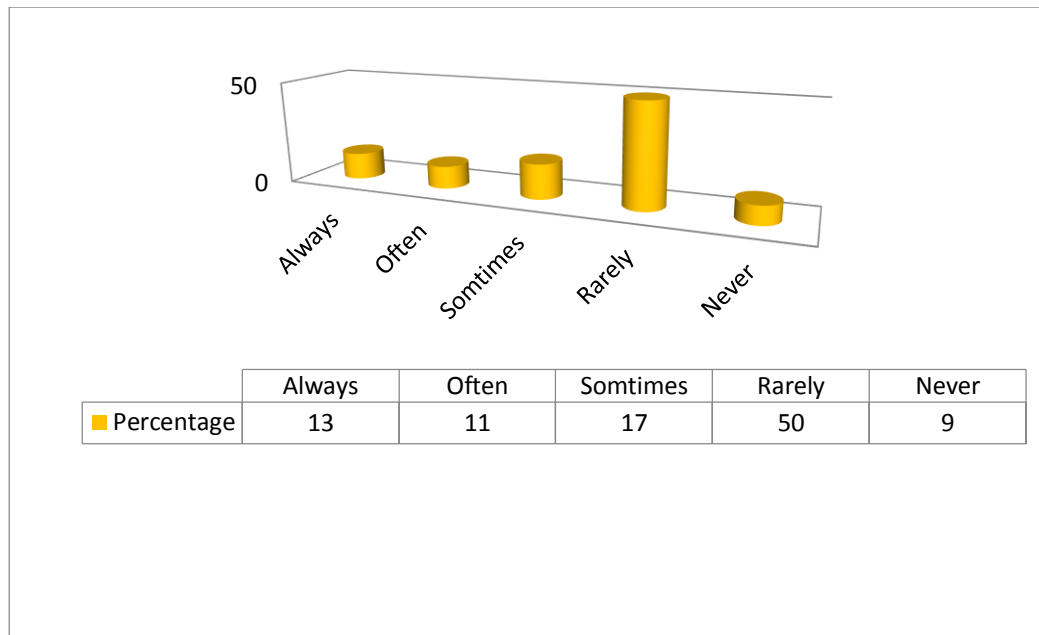


Diagram 4: Intercultural Interaction Rates among the Participants

Diagram 4 shows that half of the participants (50%) rarely communicate with people from different cultures, (17%) sometimes communicate with people from different background, while (11%) often do that, (9%) never communicate with people from other cultures, and (13 %) of them always exchange with people from different backgrounds.

Question 5: What challenges do you face when you interact with people from different cultures?

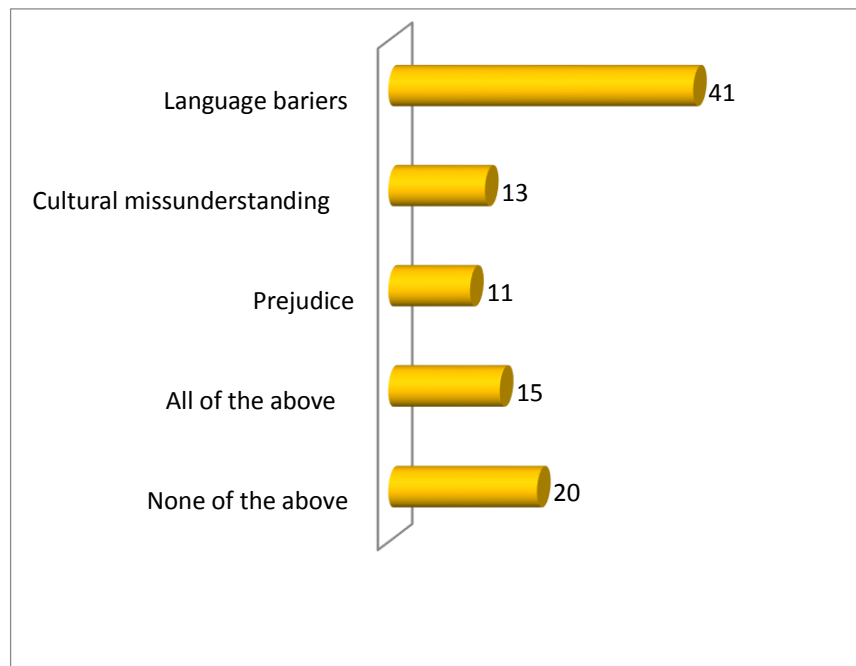


Diagram 5: Challenges in Intercultural Communication

Diagram 5 shows that (41%) of the participants reported facing language barriers when communicating intercultural, while (13%) faced cultural misunderstanding and only (11%) reported prejudice as the challenge they faced, (15%) reported that they have faced all of three challenges including prejudice, cultural and language barriers, meanwhile none of the above was reported by (20%) of the sample.

Question 6: For what purpose do you communicate with people from different cultures?

The majority of the participants reported that they communicate intercultural to learn more about other cultures and traditions. In addition, getting familiar with the native speakers as one of the participants stated “To learn new languages, discover their traditions and to share ideas”. While other participants said that they engage in such communication to improve their general knowledge and linguistic skills. For example, one of the users reported

“In order to master my speaking skill as well as to cultivate myself more”. Other respondents communicate for business, travel, exploration, work and studies matters, as reported by a participant “Travel and exploration, business and collaboration”. A few mentioned that their aim was to build relations, make friends or for entertainment.

Question 7: Did you learn about different cultures through interactions with different people?

A large number of the participants (40) reported that they did learn about different cultures by interacting with foreigners and people from different backgrounds. Many of them stated that these real life conversations and shared experiences allowed them to gain deeper insights into cultural values, customs, and ways of thinking. As one of the participants reported, “Yes, I’ve learned a lot about different traditions, customs, and ways of thinking through conversations with people from other cultures. It helped me become more open-minded and understanding”. On the other hand, a few participants (6) stated these interactions did not help them or were not enough, as claimed by this participant “Yes”, but never enough for integration”, “not really”. In addition, it was reported that they learned about foreigner cultures from the press and through internet and social media such as YouTube Facebook, TikTok and YouTube, as some participants said “no, mostly from the internet”

3.1.3 Results of Section Three: AI Chatbots and Intercultural Communication

Question 8: Where did you hear about AI chatbots for the first time?

Most of the participants (20) reported that they first learned about AI chatbots from social media such as TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and from the press. Other participants (17) stated that they heard about them for the first time from people like their family, friends, classmates and teachers. However, a few of them (9) reported to not remember.

Question 9: When did you start using AI chatbots such as (Google Translate, Google Assistant, ChatGPT) to communicate and understand people from other cultures?

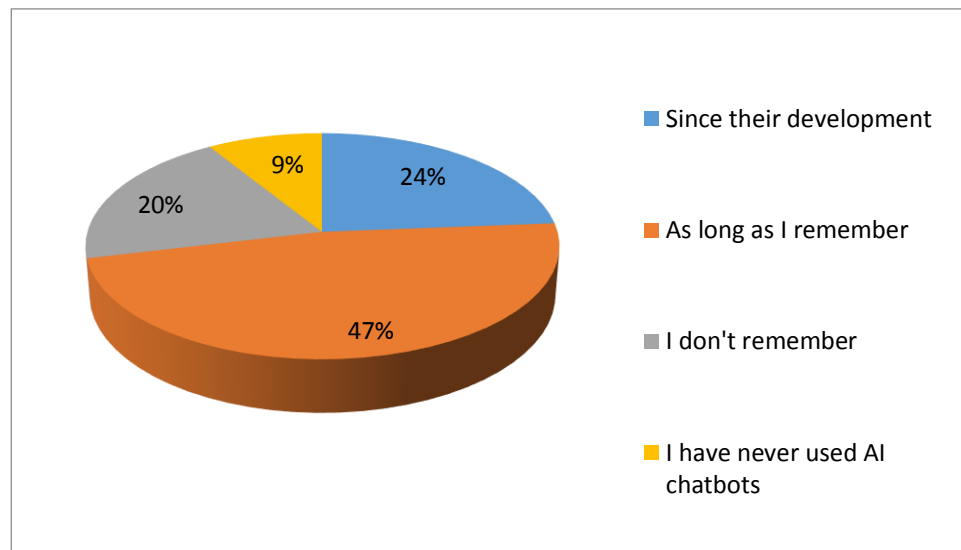


Diagram 6: First Use of AI chatbots for Intercultural Communication

Diagram 6 shows that nearly half of the participants (47%) stated that they have been using AI chatbots for intercultural communication as long as they can remember, while (24%) of them reported that their first use of these tools goes back to the time of their development. A minority (9%), however, claimed to have never used them for this matter.

Question 10: How often do you use AI chatbots for intercultural communication?

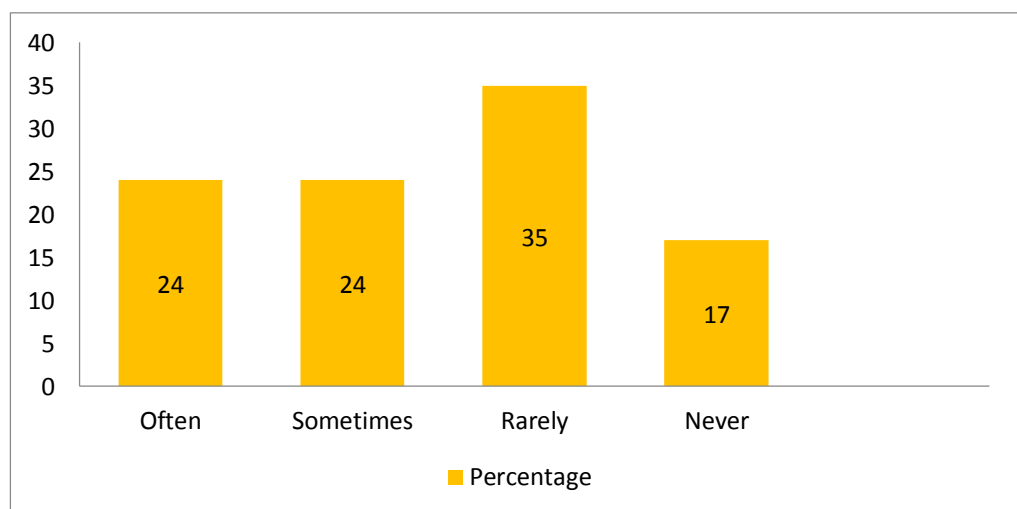


Diagram 7: Frequency of AI Chatbot Use for Intercultural Communication

Diagram 7 demonstrates that 35% of the participants reported that they rarely use AI chatbots for intercultural communication. The same portion (24%) is shared by those who sometimes and often do that, while (17%) of the them never use them for this matter.

Question 11: If you have used more than one chatbot, which one do you think is the best for intercultural communication?

The data revealed that ChatGPT is the most preferred chatbot for intercultural communication by the participants (18). According to them, it gives clear, respectful and culturally aware answers. Very few others mentioned tools like Google Translate, Gemini, Perplexity and Deepseek. Some of the participants had not used more than one chatbot.

Question 12: How do you find the use of these chatbots in intercultural communication?

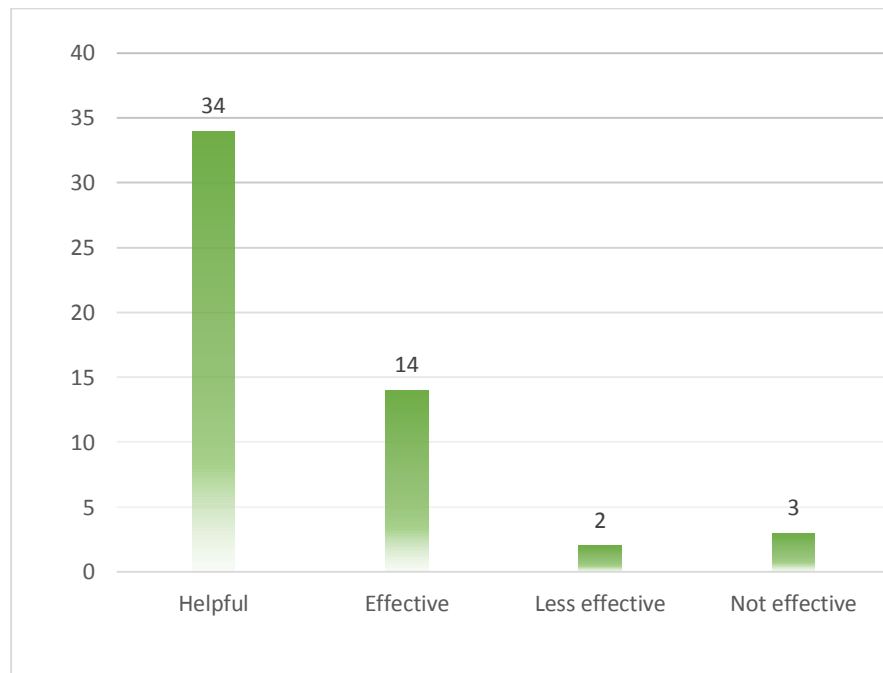


Diagram 8: Perceptions of Chatbots Use in Intercultural Communication

Diagram 8 shows that 34 participants (64%) find chatbots helpful for intercultural communication. 14 consider them to be effective (26%), whereas the minority 2 of them find it less effective (4%) and 3 find them not effective at all (6%).

Question13: If you think that AI chatbots are helpful, can you explain in few words how they served you for intercultural communication?

The majority of the participants said that AI chatbots helped them understand the other cultures better by giving them a general idea about these cultures and providing them with real-time translation. They also found AI chatbots helpful in avoiding misunderstandings, breaking language barriers and, most importantly, facilitating access to information.

3.1.4 Results of Section Four: User Perception of AI Chatbots as a Cultural Mediator

Question 14: What type of AI chatbots do you use for communication?

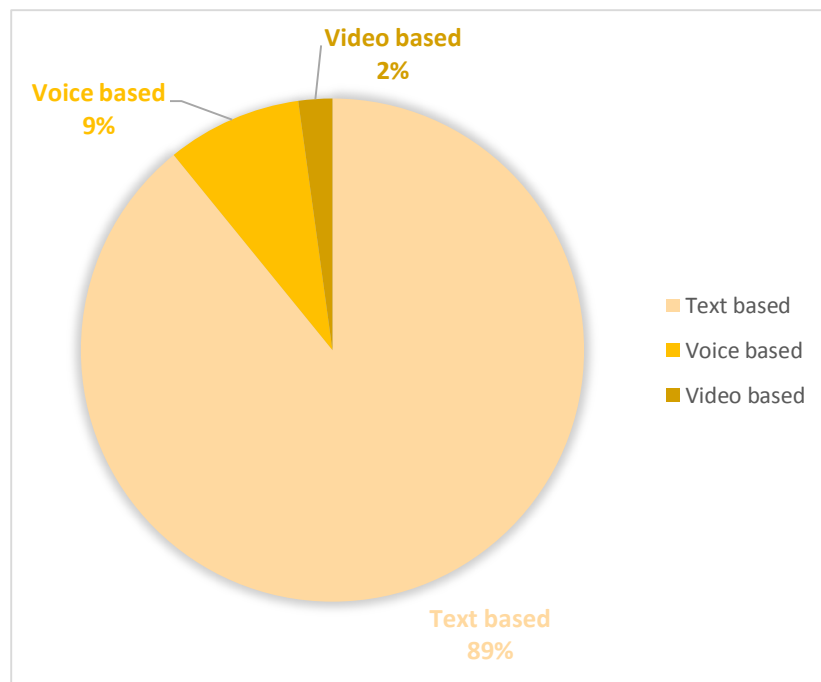


Diagram 9: Types of AI Chatbots Used for Communication

Diagram 9 above shows what type of AI chatbots are most used by the users. Over three quarters (89%) use text-based AI chatbots. In the second place we have voice based chatbots used by (9%) of the participants while (2%)use video-based chatbots.

Question 15: Do you rely on AI chatbots completely or partially?

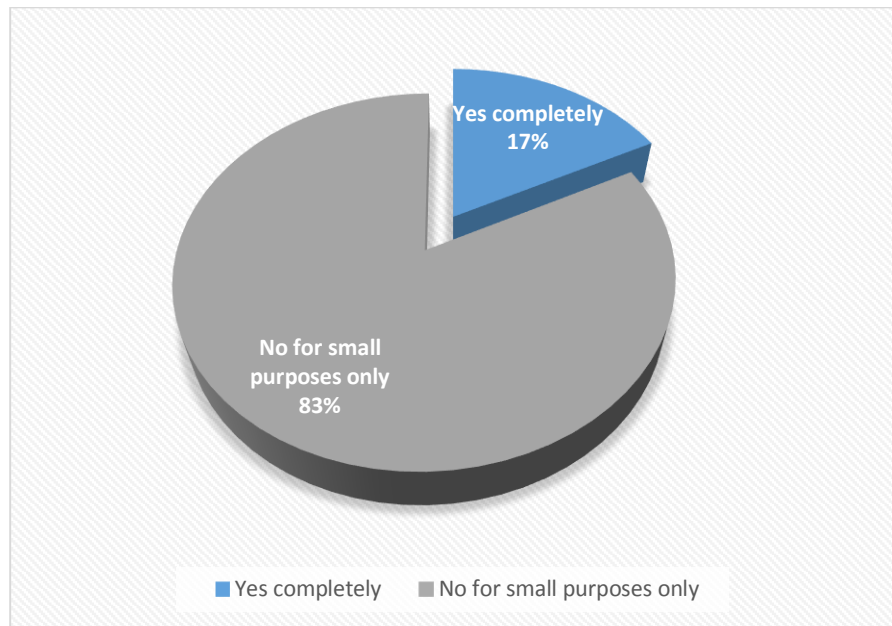


Diagram 10: Users Reliance on AI Chatbots

As indicated in Diagram 10, a significant number of the participants (83%) rely on AI chatbots for small purposes only, while a tiny fraction (17%) rely on them completely.

Question 16: Do you think AI chatbots are reliable?

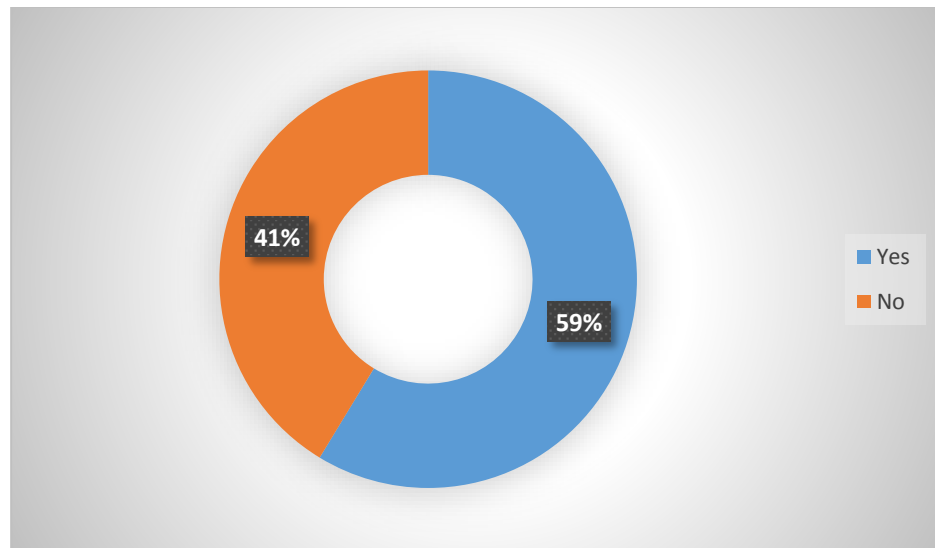


Diagram 11: Perceptions about AI Chatbot Reliability

Diagram 11 reveals that users' perceptions about AI chatbots reliability are nearly close, with (59%) who think that these tools are reliable while (41%) who think the opposite.

Question 17: How much control do you prefer to have over AI chatbots response?

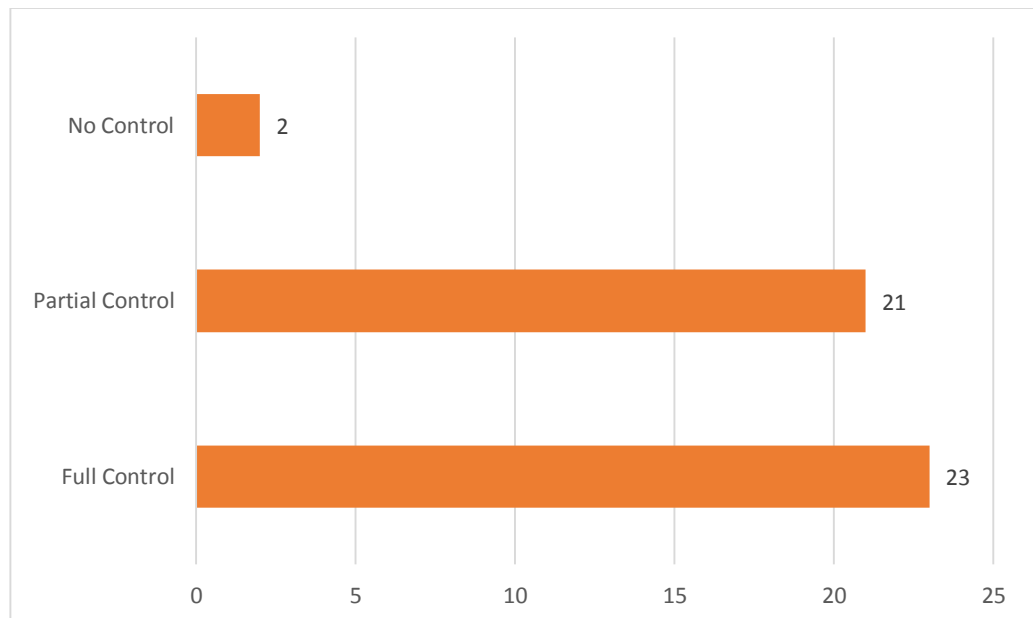


Diagram 12: The Extent of Control over Chatbots Responses

The results in Diagram 12 show that half users (50%) prefer to have full and (46%)prefer partial control over chatbots responses. On the other hand, having no control was the least preferred choice (4%)

Question 18: For what matter do you use AI chatbots in intercultural communication?

Users said that they use AI chatbots when communicating across cultures to translate languages, learn cultural norms and improve understanding between cultures as one of the participants mentioned: “To look up an information or translate words” . They also use them to search for unfamiliar words or phrases and to acquire basic information about foreign cultures. Another user said that they use them “When I didn't understand the meaning or the signification of words and cultures in order to have some ideas about the topic”.

Question 19: In terms of the provided information, is AI chatbots' intercultural exchange the same as that with real people?

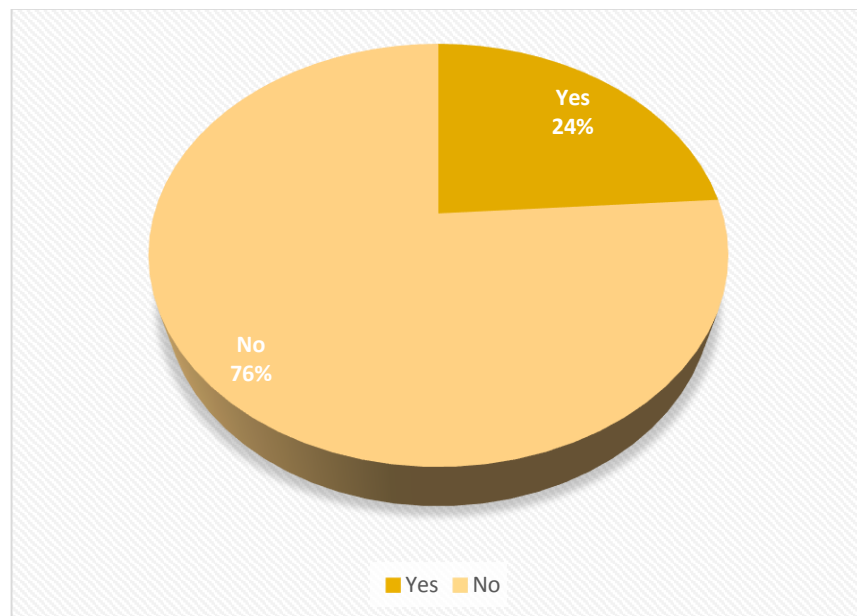


Diagram 13: Chatbots versus Human Communication

Diagram 13 indicates that a little more than three quarters of the population (76%) said that AI chatbots do not exchange in the same way as real people, while (24%) of them think that the exchange is similar.

Question20: Can you explain why?

The users who answered “yes” think that AI chatbots are helpful, give clear answers and answer everything they ask. However, the participants who answered “no” think that these chatbots lack emotions, body language, and that communication with real humans is deeper and more natural.

3.2 Screenshots Results Analysis

We have noticed that most of screenshots sent by the users of AI chatbots were from ChatGPT, which according to them, helps answer all cultural questions and provide them with the answers they need. The screenshots gathered contained several information in relation to traditions of different cultures, such as the Algerian, French and Chinese cultures.

The first screenshots were sent by an American blackman, who was speaking with a Chinese girl and wanted to know more about her culture to visit her country as seen in screenshot (1): Understanding Chinese Traditions. From the screenshots sent, he asked ChatGPT: “How to understand Chinese traditions better?”. Thus, ChatGPT provided him with the necessary information and gave him a number of possibilities of how to understand the Chinese culture as follow: “watch Chinese films or dramas”, and “use cultural exchange platforms to connect and practice with native speakers”. These were some answers provided by ChatGPT, showing ways that people can follow to understand other cultures.

Other screenshots(2,3,4,5) were about the Algerian culture an Indian asked “Tell me about the Algerian culture and practices and what is Algeria famous for?”. The answers

provided by ChatGPT from separate screenshots were as follows: the location and people “Algeria is located in North Africa, the majority of people are Arab berber”. The second screenshot was about their traditional clothing “Men often wear djellabas (long robes) and women may wear haiks or karakous ”; and also food “Couscous- a staple made from semolina, often served with vegetables and meat”. The third screenshot was related to music and dance “traditional music include rai (modern folk music with rebellious tone) ”, art and architecture “strong Islamic and Berber influence is visible in mosques, old cities (medinas), and mosaic”. The last screenshot included hospitality and customs : “family is the center of life and elders are highly respected”. These four screenshots summarized the Algerian culture, traditions, and what Algeria is famous for.

Other screenshots culture (6, 7, 8, 9, 10) provided information about the French which were requested by another Indian user who wanted to visit Paris. The first screenshot provided information about France’s social customs such as the use of formality as a sign of respect like “monsieur” “madame”. In addition to Art and customs citing the most known artists such as (Monet and Renoir) also writers such as Victor Hugo and Voltaire. Moreover, the second screenshot provided information about their festivals and holidays by citing Christmas and Bastilleday, a French revolution that the French celebrate each year on July 14th. Finally, screenshot was related to values such as “liberté”, “égalité”, “fraternité” which stand for “liberty, equality, and brotherhood” in English. These gathered screenshots show the usefulness of AI chatbots and the major role they play to facilitate mutual understanding between global users, regardless of their differences. AI chatbots can bridge this gap to avoid cultural misunderstanding.

The data revealed that AI chatbots help people understand different cultures by providing clear information about their daily life and traditions. From the screenshots sent by another participant, we noticed that the virtual tools explain that “French people tend to be

formal, especially when meeting for the first time. Politeness (like saying *bonjour*, *merci*) is very important". They also mention food saying "Meals are social events. Lunch and dinner are taken seriously, often lasting over an hour". Explaining these facts makes people more open to the French people's mindset and cultural habits. This can also make interactions easier by preparing these users to be respectful in social situations. This can help users understand, respect and enjoy these festivals when they get a chance.

In another screenshot (11), the user asked about the Xi'an culture whether it is convenient and easy for foreigners to adapt with this culture and its tradition. ChatGPT replied "Xi'an is generally convenient and welcoming for foreigners", and that Halal food is easy to find thanks to the large muslim population. ChatGPT shared other facts about Xi'an culture and mentioned that they appreciate who respect their traditions, and that the city is safe for living.

The last two screenshots (15 and 16) were more about linguistic clarifications as they highlighted how small language mistakes can create misunderstandings between people. The first screenshot explained the difference between "day off" which is a planned break and "off day" which is unplanned bad day. If people misused these words this can lead to misunderstandings between them. The second and last screenshot. It explained that saying "me neither" is incorrect when you agree with a negative statement as it suggested the right options which is "me neither" or "neither do I". So, if someone says "I don't like coffee" you should respond with "Me neither" or "Neither do I" not "Me either".

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key findings of the study conducted with 46 participants responding an online questionnaire and screenshots gathered from chatbots' users. The results provide insights into how users perceive AI chatbots in facilitating intercultural communication, and which of their features they find more helpful.

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the interpretation and discussion of the findings, with the aim of answering the research questions and confirming or refuting the hypotheses. The findings are analyzed relying on the dimensions of AI-mediated communication theory introduced by Hancock et al. (2020).

4.1 Users' Perceptions of AI Chatbot Feedback

This section discusses the elements from the online questionnaire and screenshots related to the first research question. It discusses the research participants' perception of AI chatbots as cultural mediators.

The findings obtained from questions 12 and 13 revealed that the majority of the participants find AI chatbots helpful and effective for intercultural communication. From the results, we notice that many users said that AI chatbots helped them understand more other cultures, avoid misunderstandings, confusion and overcome language barriers by providing easy access to information. For example, one of the participants said, "It helped me understand different cultural perspectives through conversations, it allowed me to practice languages and learn about cultural customs". Another one said "AI chatbots helped me understand cultural differences by providing quick information, translating languages, and suggesting respectful ways to communicate with people from different backgrounds".

Additionally, the results from question 16 revealed that more than half of the participants consider chatbots to be reliable and explicitly showed their trust in them as their source of information to a certain extent. This indicates that the users are optimistic and happy with the obtained answers from the chatbots. In the screenshots, we see that users seek information about other countries, their life style and tradition by asking the chatbots. For example, one of the users asked about Xi'an culture (China) and whether it welcomes

foreigners as seen in screenshot (11). This shows the users' trust in these chatbots to provide accurate and clear information that meet their needs. This aligns with the optimization goal, as defined by Hancock et al. (2020) "self-presentation goals of appearing attractive, likable, or competent are important interpersonal functions that AI could conceivably be trained to optimize communication for" (p.91). This means that AI can help people appear in a better way also appear as they want to. Users see chatbots as an optimization tool that provide quick and clear answers.

The results from question 15 explain that despite the fact that some users find AI chatbots helpful and effective in intercultural communication, some other do not completely trust or rely on them. Indeed, the majority of participants confirmed that they do not fully trust AI chatbots, yet they still prefer to ask chatbots instead of real people or Google for cultural information, which may explain why users feel more comfortable asking this type of questions to a chatbots rather than humans. They use them for small purposes like linguistic matters. In this case, we can say that these users use AI chatbots as a supportive tool.

In addition to this, results obtained from question 19 about whether AI chatbots exchange the same as real human indicate that the majority of the participants (76%) do not think that these chatbots exchange in the same way as real human. The screenshots, however, show that users ask open-ended questions about different cultures such as "What are some unique French festivals or traditions that reflect the country's history and identity?" screenshot (7) or "Is it convenient and easy for a foreigner to adapt culture and tradition of Xi'an?" screenshot (11), indicating that they trust the chatbots to generate reliable answers about their inquiries. The findings of questions 15, 19 and the screenshots reflect the autonomy dimension of AI-MC that is about the operation of AI on messages without the users' supervision. As Hancock et al. (2020) explain, the autonomy dimension is a "key dimension in which the human communicator is the principal who delegates some authority

and autonomy to the AI agent” (p.92). They mean that people use chatbots but they still want to have control over them and that they limit their use for small purposes only.

The findings from question 20 about explaining whether the participants think that AI chatbots exchange the same way as human or not, showed that some of them answered “Yes” confirming that chatbots exchange better with them. One of the users justified saying “because AI chatbots are using more advanced methods and techniques rather than humans”; another one added that “it explains everything, every detail, any questions and it could never be the same as people”. For those who answered “No”, they clearly explained that chatbots lack emotions and facial expressions as one of the AI chatbots users claimed “AI lacks the spontaneous unpredictable actions and reactions that humans have”; “It is objective no point of view no emotions” said another. From the screenshots, we notice that chatbots provide information about any given culture, and this shows the ability of chatbots to generate whole paragraphs rather than correcting small mistakes only. These findings illustrate the magnitude dimension of AI-MC which is about the extent of change that AI enacts on messages from correcting small mistakes to generating full messages as was in the case of the examples discussed above. As Hancock et al. (2020) argue, “these changes can range from minimal suggestions (e.g., change in wording) to full content generation”(p.91).

The results from questions 13 and 20, and the screenshots are a strong evidence of the magnitude dimension of AI-MC showing the chatbots’ ability to generate full meaningful responses on their own rather than just correcting small mistakes allowing, hence, the users to not only use them as a tool but as an assistant that creates and generates any information they need.

Our study showed that most users see AI chatbots as helpful and effective tools to learn about different cultures and traditions. Many participants use chatbots to ask about

customs, festivals and life styles of various cultures, and, infact, many said that chatbots helped them overcome language barriers also avoid misunderstandings as far as intercultural communication is concerned. However, while some users are optimistic about the information provided by the chatbots, others still feel that chatbot interactions are yet not the same as those real human conversations because according to them chatbots lack emotions and body language. When we compare these results to the study by Villanueva et al. (2025), we notice some similarities and differences. Villanueva et al. explored how AI chatbots can affect intercultural empathy across cultural groups. Their findings showed that AI chatbots increased empathy among American users, but not for Latin American users who felt that the chatbots were not culturally accurate. Both their study and ours agree that AI chatbots are useful and helpful with sharing cultural information. Also, they highlight important limits of these AI tools especially when it comes to emotions and authentic cultural information. This suggests that while AI chatbots are useful tools for learning about other cultures, they still cannot completely replace real human interaction.

- 3.** This section answers the first research question mentioned in the General Introduction which is “How do users perceive the usefulness of cultural feedback provided by AI chatbots in intercultural communication? ” and partially confirms the first hypothesis that Users perceive AI chatbots’ feedback as more useful when it provides suggestions for intercultural communication, as they facilitate communication but cannot entirely replace human interaction due to their absence of emotional understanding and none-verbal cues.

4.2 Users' Perception Regarding AIChatbots Features

This section discusses elements from the questionnaire and screenshots in relation to the second research question. It deals with the AI chatbots features that facilitate intercultural interaction for its users. The results obtained from question 11 indicate that ChatGPT is the most preferred tool by participants, because of its features such as multilingual translation, cultural awareness, clarity of explanation and personalized responses. This tool enhances intercultural communication, especially by providing its users with answers that serve their cultural interest and goal. This is confirmed by some of these users saying “i prefer ChatGPT because it provides detailed and well structured responses” and “i have used several chatbots, like ChatGPT, Google bared, and BingChat. I think ChatGPT is the the best for intercultural communication because it gives detailed, respectful, culturally sensitive responses”.

Moreover, the results from question 16 reveal that (59%)find it reliable. This shows that the reliability feature is very crucial for the users because it provides accurate and culturally appropriate responses that reduce misunderstandings and consider it as an essential element in enhancing the effectiveness of the AI tool in interaction. This is further supported by the screenshots we gathered, which show different users asking questions about intercultural context and considering the chatbot reliable. In fact, the answers obtained from question 11 and 16 support the optimizational goal of AI-CMC, which is defined by Hancock et al. (2020) as “the goal for which AI is optimizing the message”(p.91). Users perceive these boots as being reliable and meet their communicative purpose, providing them with respectful, culturally aware appropriate answers, and immediate multilingual translation. This helps them understand other cultures in an effective way, avoid misunderstandings and break language barriers. Furthermore, the results obtained from the screenshots prove the extent to

which AI chatbots answer the users' questions and adopt their responses in a way to meet their own interests and goals.

For instance, in screenshot 1, a user asked how to understand the Chinese culture, the chatbot suggested appropriate and personalized answers such as “ watching Chinese drama, joining Cultural exchange platforms.”. In screenshots 2, 3, 4 and 5, a user asked about the Algerian culture and traditions, the chatbot provided detailed answers in an organized way about religion, traditional clothing, food, music, hospitality and included other information that could help the user understand this culture in an effective way. Similar with the French culture, ChatGPT explained in a well understandable way values like “liberty”, “brotherhood” and “equality” and how to interact respectfully with the French people by saying for instance “monsieur” or “madame” and also highlighting their festivals and holidays such as Christmas and Bastill celebrating the French Revolution. In screenshot 11, ChatGPT explained for one of the users, who was curious about the Xian culture (China), how to welcome foreigners and that halal food is available in addition to details that could help the users adapt with that culture. These screenshots showed that the feedback from these bots meet their users' goals through explaining and providing them with detailed and culturally aware answers about how to understand anyone's culture in an effective and satisfying way, and, preparing them to have a good interaction with people of that culture in a respectful and a confident way.

The results from question 14 revealed that the majority (89%) use text-based AI chatbots while only a small minority preferred vocal and based AI chatbot type. This shows that users are generally more comfortable with text based features and find them very useful for intercultural interaction. This is directly linked to media type dimension of AI-MC, which according to Hancock et al. (2020) is “the media in which AI operates the messages (eg. text, audio, video)” (p.91). In this context, the text-based type is the media through, which AI

conveys the message. Furthermore, all of the collected screenshots from the participants were from ChatGPT which is a text based media type which serves as concrete evidence that the text based type is widely used by the participants.

The results obtained from question 13 show that the majority of chatbot users see that these bots are helpful, especially in understanding other cultures because they help avoid misunderstandings, offer multilingual translation breaking language barriers and, most importantly, facilitate access to information. One of the participants reported that “ChatGPT gives us a lot of opportunities translation writing speakingall what we need”; another participant said that “ChatGPT gives a lot of details about anything without making a lot of effort”. In addition, the screenshots gathered from participants demonstrate the different features of ChatGPT that answer and explain fully the questions of users based on minimal input, which shows that the AI tool does not only focus on translation or correcting mistakes but also provide deep cultural explanations. These findings, also reflect the magnitude dimension showing the extent the AI chatbot can contribute in the communication process whether by making small adjustment or generating full and deep answers (Hancock et al. 2020).

Considering the answers obtained from question 17 which sought to reveal how much control do users prefer to have over AI chatbots responses, the findings suggest that most of the users prefer to have full or partial control over chatbots responses, where users prefer to guide the AI chatbot based on their own goal or let this tool add some additional suggestions. This shows that participants prefer a feature that provide supervision and control over responses. This supports the autonomy dimension Hancock et al. (2020) because it highlights the level of control that users expect to have from the used AI chatbot. Furthermore, the autonomy dimension is identified in the screenshots where the AI tools were able to produce personalized detailed and rich answers without being guided by the user,

(except for the question asked). As an instance for that, one of the users asked about the French culture and the AI chatbot provided deep and detailed responses related to the French culture: cuisine, art, fashion also highlighting the importance of politeness and formal greeting in society. Therefore, this proves that ChatGPT is an independent tool which provides detailed and rich answers without the users' guidance.

Our study demonstrates that AI chatbots features are effective and help users to communicate with people from different linguistic backgrounds. The presented results indicate that the most used and preferred chatbots are the text based ones such as ChatGPT because of their reliability feature and the way they provide clear, respectful and culturally aware responses without being guided by the user. Additionally, these tools offer a multilingual real time translation feature which breaks language barriers and prevents cultural misunderstanding. When comparing these results to the study by Orossoo et al. (2024), we notice some similarities that align with our study. They have investigated how to improve AI chatbots ability to adapt to different linguistic patterns through the use of machine learning in order to enhance intercultural communication. As a result, the findings highlighted that AI chatbots are reliable and effective for intercultural communication. Thus, both studies agree on the reliability and the effectiveness of AI chatbots to enhance intercultural communication and other shared features between them such as cultural understanding and avoidance of language barriers.

This section answers the second research question mentioned in the General Introduction which is “Which features of AI chatbots enhance their effectiveness as cultural mediators between people from different cultures?” and completely confirms the second hypothesis that AI with multilingual capabilities are more effective and helpful from users from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and this is shown in the results obtained from the AI Chatbots users

that multilingual AI tools helped avoid misunderstandings and made conversations clearer and more natural.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed and interpreted the results following Hancock et al.'s AI-MC dimensions (2020). It has answered the two research questions based on the findings of the questionnaire and the screenshots gathered from global users and students of the English department at the University of Mouloud Mammeri of TiziOuzou. The results' analysis had highlighted that the majority of the AI users are optimistic about the feedback they receive from AI chatbots and preferred the use of ChatGPT as an AI tool to interact interculturally with global users. Therefore, this chapter partially confirms the first hypothesis and fully confirms the second.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The present research aimed to investigate the role of Artificial Intelligence Chatbots as intercultural mediators. This study had two main objectives. First, it analyzed AI chatbots users' perceptions of the feedback they receive from these bots. Second, it identified which features of AI chatbots do users think are effective and helpful for intercultural communication. For this study, we relied on Hancock et al.'s Artificial Intelligence-Mediated Communication Theory which was introduced in 2020 as a theoretical framework. It is composed of five dimensions: Magnitude, Media Type, Optimization Goal, Autonomy and Role Orientation. However, for our study, we have relied on the first four dimensions only and exclude the fifth one Role Orientation.

We have adopted a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyze both the quantitative and qualitative data. We have collected data using an online questionnaire which was answered by 46 participants, in addition to screenshots sent by AI chatbots users. We have received a considerable number of screenshots; however we analyzed only those that were relevant to our research topic, specifically, the ones that illustrated intercultural communication through language translation or cultural exchange. The data analysis relied on a Descriptive Statistical Method for the quantitative data gathered from the online questionnaire, in addition to a Qualitative Content Analysis for the open-ended items of the questionnaire along with the screenshots.

Through answering the research questions and partially confirming the first hypothesis and completely confirming the second hypothesis mentioned in the General Introduction, this study has highlighted the potential of AI chatbots in enhancing intercultural communication. The results indicated that AI users who communicate interculturally are optimistic about the feedback they receive from AI chatbots, highlighting its contribution to learning about

different cultures and traditions, also, overcoming language barriers and avoiding intercultural misunderstanding. Moreover, the study revealed that AI chatbots multilingual capabilities especially text based tools such as ChatGPT, which according to the data tends to be more helpful and effective for global users. These chatbots provide clear, respectful and culturally aware answers, allowing the users to explore traditions, customs, festivals of other cultures and avoid misunderstandings with these cultures' people. Therefore, these findings partially confirms the first research hypothesis that users perceive AI chatbots' feedback as more useful when it provides suggestions for intercultural communication. They find these bots as helpful and effective to learn about different cultures. Also the findings confirm the second research hypothesis about AI chatbots with multilingual capabilities being effective for intercultural communication, highlighting ChatGPT as the most preferred chatbots, and this particularly is due to its particular features such as multilingual capabilities, cultural awareness, personalized responses, multilingual translation in addition to its reliability.

Like every research work, our study has faced a number of limitations, mainly in relation to the data collection process. During the data collection process, especially with the screenshots collection, some participants reported to not use AI chatbots for intercultural matter. Other participants refused to send us screenshots because they considered it to be something private which obliged us to look for other participants, making the period of our data collection a lengthy one. It is true that we have gathered a considerable number of screenshots; however, the small sample size (46 participants), makes it difficult for the findings to be generalized. Some of them had no connection with culture and, with some others, we have faced some linguistic limitations as their content was written in a language that we do neither read nor write such as Chinese which unfortunately made it impossible for us to understand and analyze them.

Despite its limitations, the findings open up new opportunities for future research. The inability of AI chatbots to replace humans interaction especially in transmitting emotions, Nonverbal cues and cultural nuance is an essential issue that grabs attention worldwide: that is why we suggest further research in the Algerian context to explore how this absence of Nonverbal cues within AI chatbots can affect intercultural communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Hello, We are Master 2 students, We are conducting a research on the use of AI Chatbots (ChatGPT, Google Gemini) as facilitators and mediators between people from different cultures. We kindly ask you to answer the following questions and share your experiences and thoughts, we are conducting this research for academic purposes and we promise to keep your identities anonymous.

Section one: Demographic Information

Q1- What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other

Q2- What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- Over 35

Q3- Which will best describe your status?

- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other

Section two: Communication and Intercultural interactions

Q4- How often do you communicate with people from different cultures?

- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always
- Never

Q5- What challenges do you face when you interact with people from different cultures?

- Language barriers
- Cultural misunderstandings
- Prejudice
- All of the above
- None of the above

Q6- For what purpose do you communicate with people from different cultures?

➤

Q7- Did you learn about different cultures through interactions with different people?

➤

Section three : AI chatbots and Intercultural Communication

Q8- Where did you hear about AI chatbots for the first time?

➤

Q9- When did you start using AI chatbots such as (google translate, google assistant, chatgpt) to communicate and understand people from other cultures?

- Since their development
- As long as I remember
- I don't remember
- I have never used AI chatbots

Q10- How often do you use AI chatbots for intercultural communication?

- Sometimes
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

Q11- If you have used more than one chatbot, which one do you think is the best for intercultural communication?

➤

Q12- How do you find the use of these chatbots in intercultural communication?

- Helpful
- Effective
- Less effective
- Not effective

Q13- If you think that AI chatbots are helpful, can you explain in few words how it served you for intercultural communication?

Section four: User perception of AI chatbots as a cultural mediator

Q14- What type of AI chatbots do you use in communication?

- Text based such as (google translate)
- Voice based such as (google assistant)
- Video based such as (google meet Ai)

Q15- Do you rely on AI chatbots completely or partially?

- Yes completely
- No for small purposes only (correcting grammar, mistakes, reformulating ideas)

Q16- Do you think AI chatbots are reliable?

- Yes
- No

Q17- How much control do you prefer to have over AI chatbots response?

- Full control
- Partial control
- No control

Q18- For what matter do you use AI chatbots in intercultural communication?

➤

Q19- In terms of the provided information, is AI chatbots intercultural exchange the same as that with real people?

- Yes
- No

Q20- Can you explain why?

Appendix B: Screenshots

Screenshot 1 : Understanding chinese traditions



3. Traditional Clothing

- Men often wear **djellabas** (long robes) and women may wear **haiks** or **karakous**, especially for celebrations.
 - The clothes are usually loose, flowing, and modest, often with beautiful embroidery and bright colors.
-

4. Food

- Algerian cuisine is a rich mix of **Arab, Berber, Mediterranean, and French** influences.
- Popular dishes:
 - **Couscous** – a staple made from semolina, often served with vegetables and meat.
 - **Chorba** – a hearty soup made with meat, vegetables, and spices.
 - **Merguez** – spicy lamb or beef sausage.
 - Sweets like **makroud** and **baklava** are

5. Music & Dance

- Traditional music includes **Raï** (modern folk music with a rebellious tone) and **Chaabi** (popular urban music).
 - Instruments like the **derbouka** (drum) and **ghaita** (flute) are widely used.
 - **Folk dances** vary by region and are often performed during weddings and festivals.
-

6. Art & Architecture

- Strong Islamic and Berber influence is visible in **mosques, old cities (medinas), and mosaics.**
 - Cities like **Algiers, Constantine, and Tlemcen** showcase a mix of **Ottoman, Moorish, and French colonial architecture.**
-

6. Art & Architecture

- Strong Islamic and Berber influence is visible in mosques, old cities (medinas), and mosaics.
 - Cities like Algiers, Constantine, and Tlemcen showcase a mix of Ottoman, Moorish, and French colonial architecture.
-

7. Hospitality & Customs

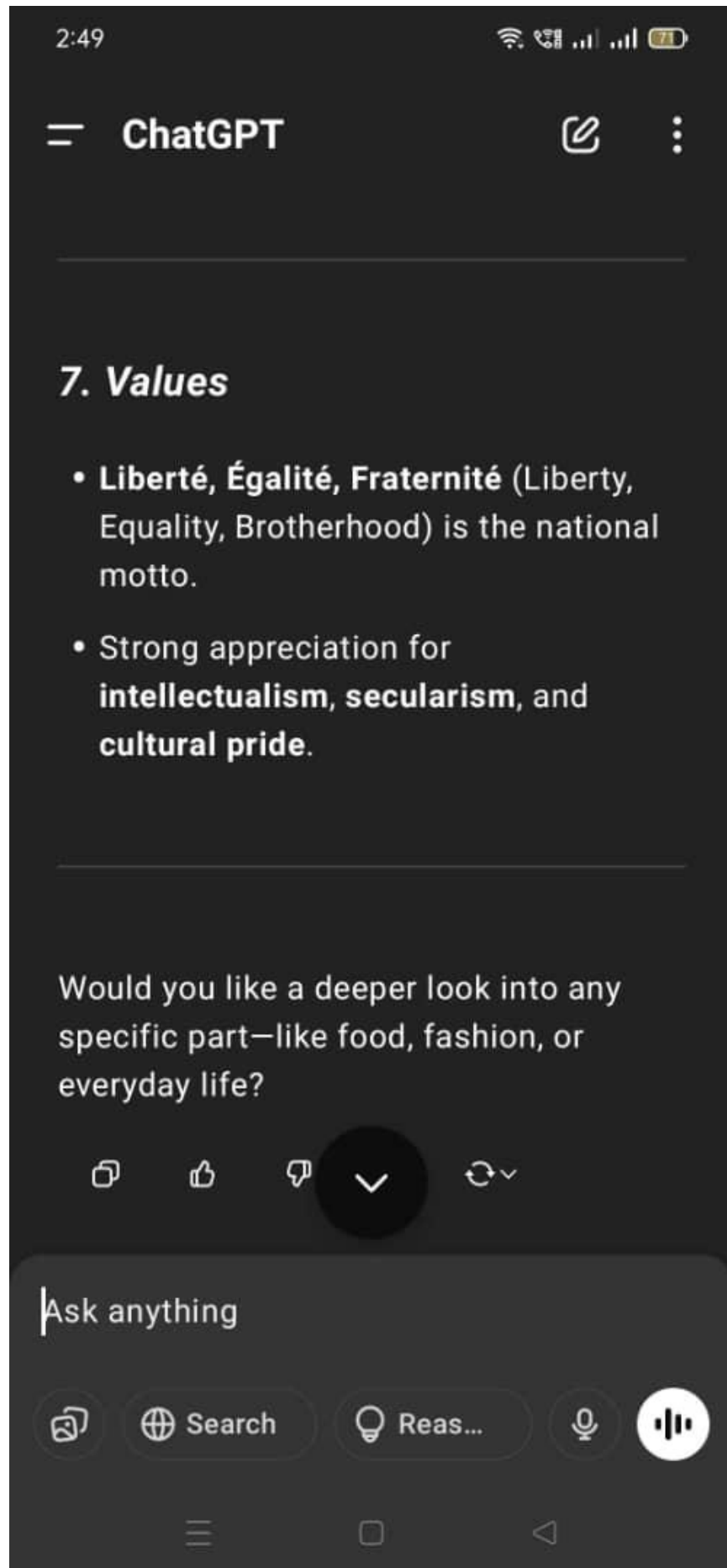
- Algerians are known for being very hospitable. Guests are treated with great respect and offered tea, coffee, or sweets.
- Family is the center of life, and elders are highly respected.

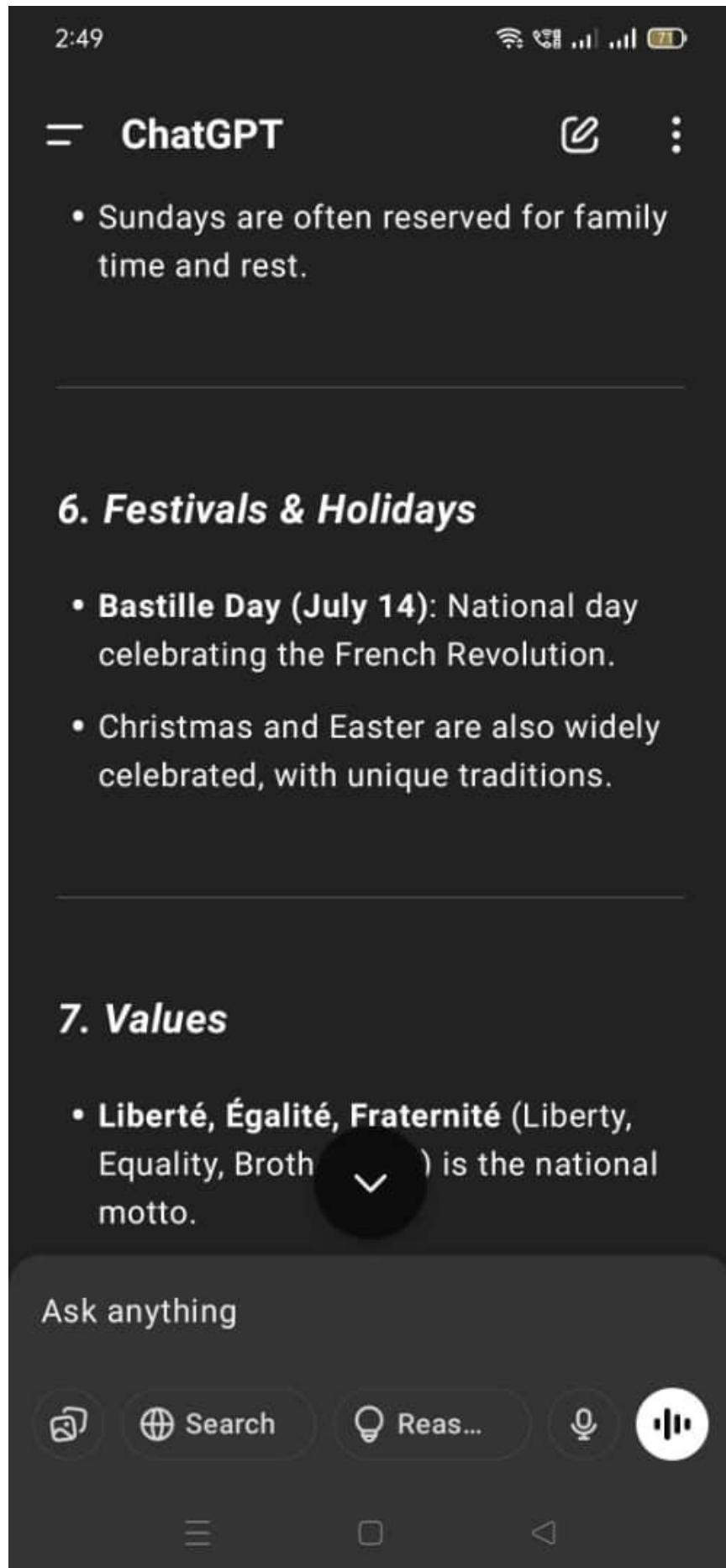
1. Location & People

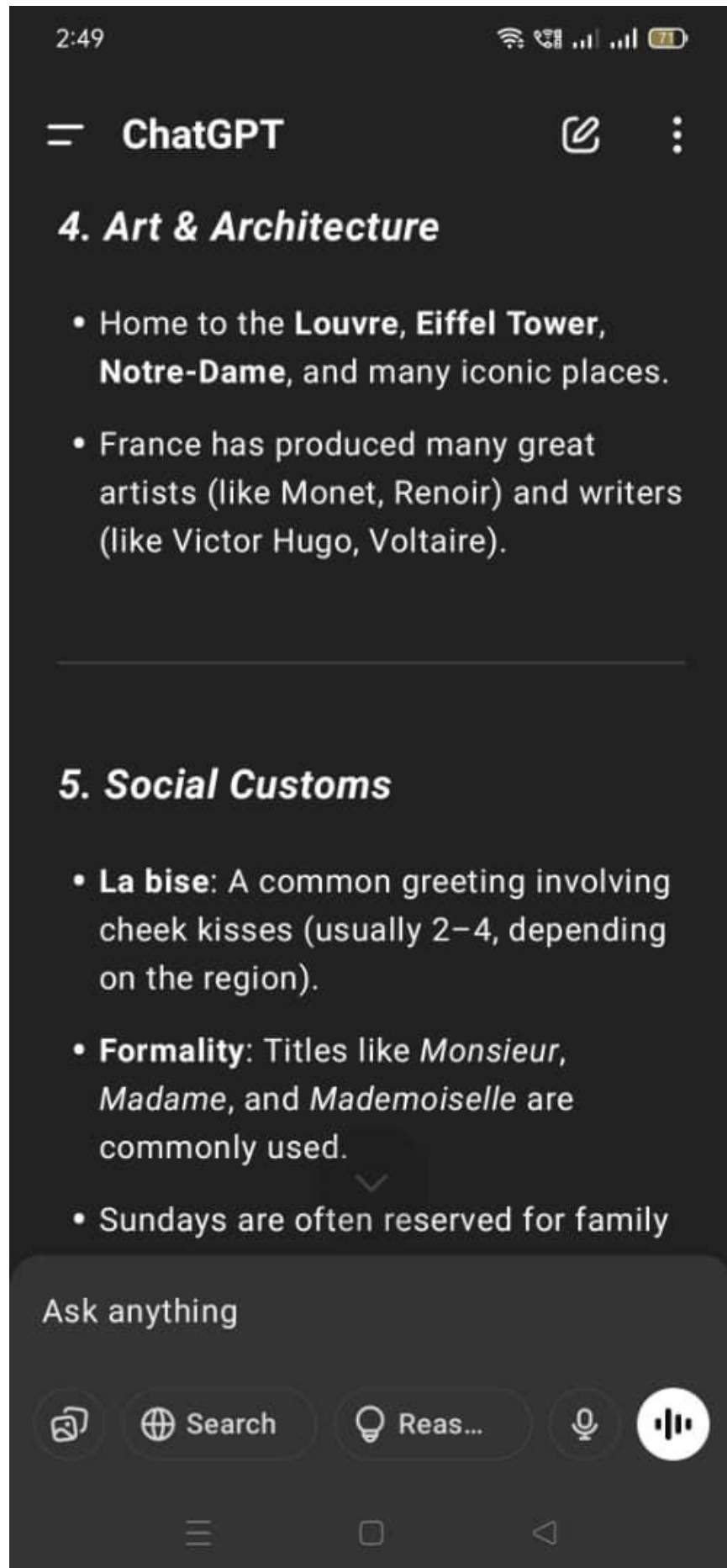
- Algeria is located in **North Africa**, bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Sahara Desert to the south.
 - The majority of Algerians are of **Arab-Berber descent**, and **Arabic and Tamazight (Berber)** are the official languages. **French** is also widely spoken due to colonial history.
-

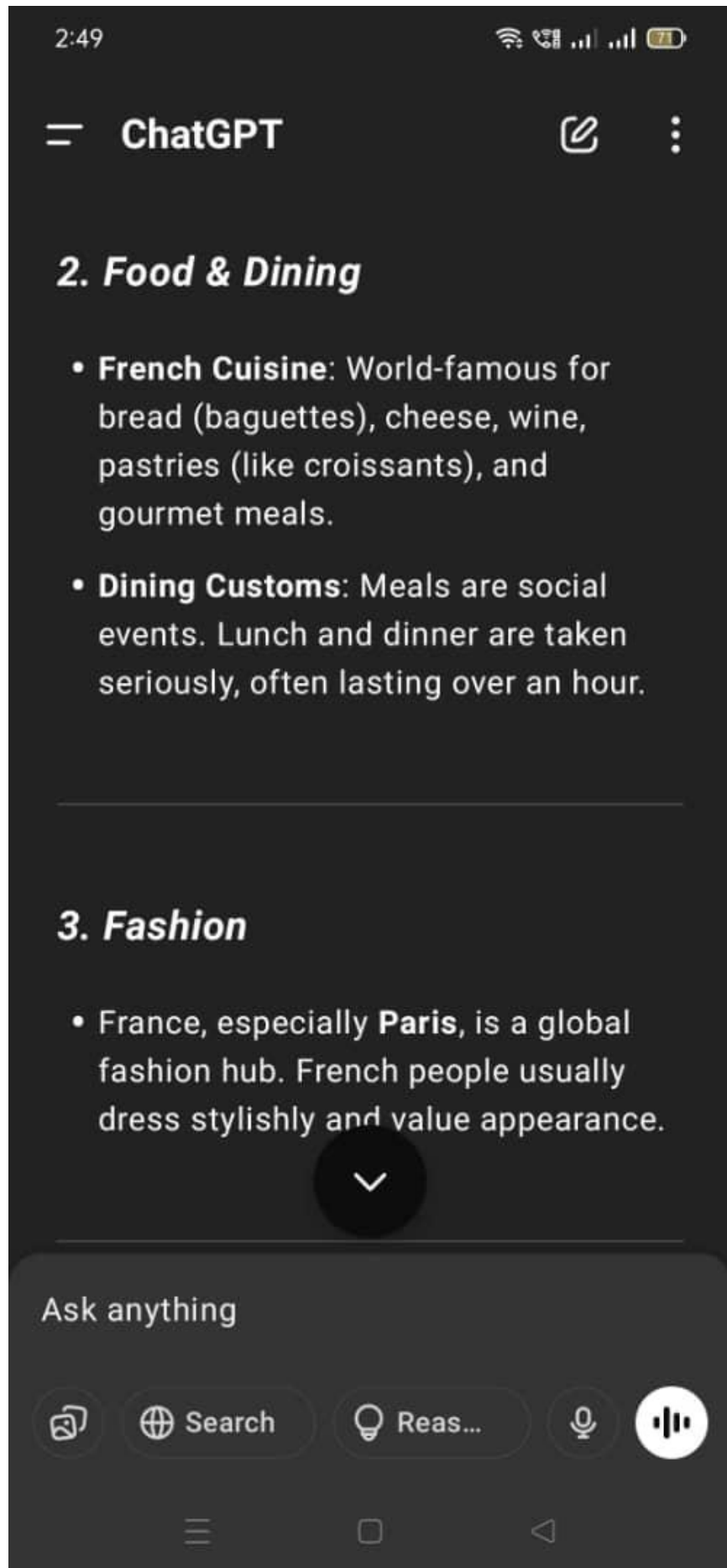
2. Religion

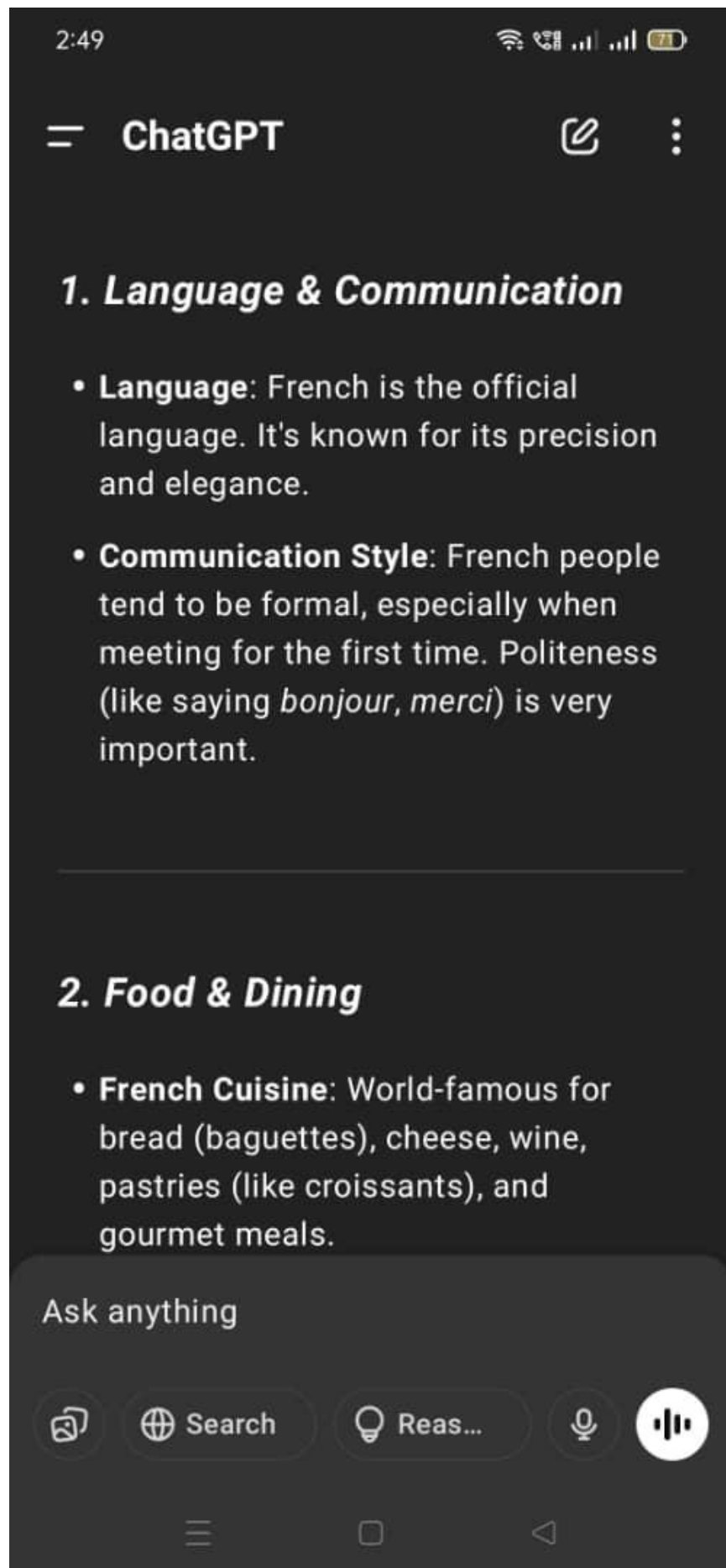
- **Islam** is the predominant religion, and it plays a major role in daily life, traditions, and holidays.
 - Most Algerians are **Sunni Muslims**, and religious customs are respected in both private and public life.
-











Screenshot 11 : Living and adapting in X'ian culture

The screenshot shows a ChatGPT interface with a question and an answer. The question asks about the convenience and ease of adapting to Xi'an's culture and traditions. The answer provides a general overview of the city's cultural life and then lists specific points for foreigners.

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Xi'an's cultural life is a vibrant blend of ancient heritage and modern influences, shaped by its history as the starting point of the Silk Road and capital of 13 dynasties. The city thrives on its deep-rooted traditions, with historic sites like the Terracotta Army, ancient city wall, and pagodas serving as everyday reminders of its imperial past. The presence of a large Hui Muslim community adds a unique flavor to the city's cultural landscape, especially visible in the bustling Muslim Quarter, where Islamic architecture, customs, and cuisine thrive alongside traditional Chinese practices. Xi'an also embraces modernity, with a youthful energy driven by its large student population. The city regularly hosts cultural festivals, music and dance performances, art exhibitions, and food fairs that celebrate both local and international cultures. From traditional Shaanxi opera and Tang-style music to shadow puppetry and contemporary art, Xi'an offers a rich, layered cultural experience that bridges the ancient and the modern.

is it convenient and easy for a foreigner to adapt culture and tradition of xi'an

Yes, Xi'an is **generally convenient and welcoming for foreigners**, and many find it relatively easy to adapt to the local culture and traditions — especially with a bit of openness and curiosity.

Ask anything

Search Reason

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3. Food & Halal Options:

- Food is a major cultural highlight, and most foreigners enjoy the bold, flavorful local cuisine.
- **Halal food is easy to find**, thanks to the large Muslim population.

4. Cultural Etiquette:

- Respecting traditions (like modest dress when visiting religious sites) is appreciated.
- Locals don't expect foreigners to be perfect with customs, but effort is respected.

5. Community & Support:

- Universities have **international student offices**, events, and buddy programs to help with cultural exchange.
- There are also **expat communities** and international clubs around the city.

6. Cost of Living & Safety:

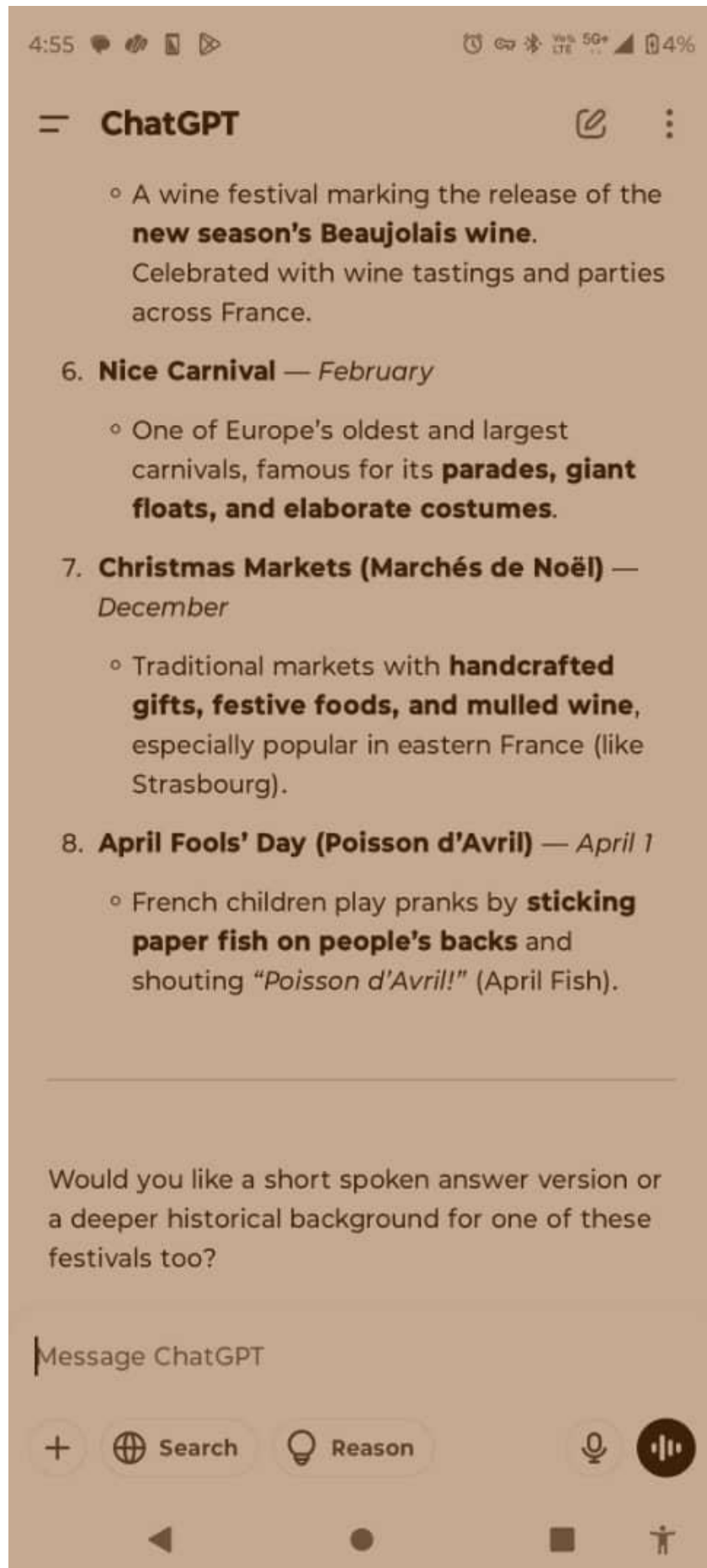
- Xi'an is **affordable** compared to bigger cities like Beijing or Shanghai.
- The city is **safe**, with reliable public transport and walkable areas.

Ask anything

Search Reason

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.

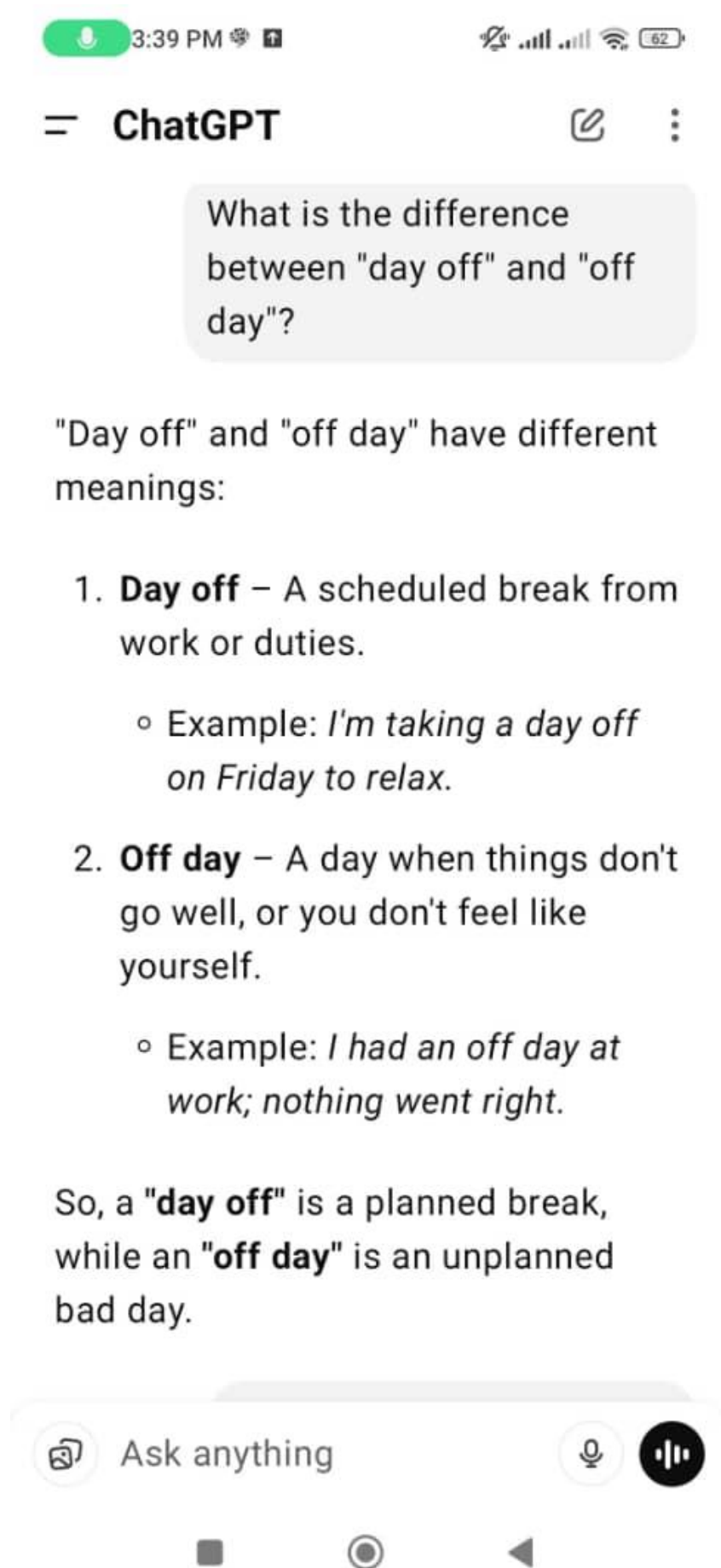
Screenshot 12 : French and holidays







Screenshot 15 : difference between “day off” and “off day”



Screenshot 16 : How to agree in english : “me neither” vs “me either”

