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Mouloud MAMMERRI University of Tizi-Ouzou
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Title:

**Business Commination Barrriers Faced by British and
Algerian Staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association
Located in In Salah Gas, Hassi Messaoud, (Ouragla,
Algeria)**

Presented by:
Ms. Belhamiche Lilia
Ms. Iguer Amel

Supervised by:
Dr. Berbar Katia

Board of Examiners:

- Chairman, Mr. Akli Aouine MAA Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
- Supervisor: Dr Katia Berbar MCB, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
- Examiner: Ms. Malika Akir, MAA, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou

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Dedications

This research is dedicated to my mother, loving sisters, fiancé, nephews, aunts, cousins, and dear friends, whose endless love, support, and encouragement have enriched my soul and inspired me to complete this research.

Lilia

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents and brothers for their endless love, support and encouragement.

Amel

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Abstract

This study investigated the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association located in In Salah Gas, Hassi-Messaoud, in the province of Ouargla. Four main objectives guided the study. First, the study sought to determine whether British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers. Second, it attempted to identify the barriers that interrupt business communication between British and Algerian staff. Third, it intended to investigate the impact of these barriers on communication. Fourth, it strived to identify the strategies used by British and Algerian-staff to overcome these barriers. Our research relied on Newman and Ober's book entitled "Business Communication: In Person, in Print, Online" (2013) as a theoretical framework. In order to collect and analyze data, the qualitative method was used. Data were collected using synchronous online interviews conducted with ten British and fourteen Algerian workers. The obtained findings were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis. The results revealed that the participants face both verbal and nonverbal communication barriers and that these barriers disrupt the communication process among colleagues. The findings also exposed some remedial strategies suggested by the interview participants to overcome these communication obstacles.

Keywords: Algerian and British staff, Business Communication, Communication barriers, Effective communication, Sonatrach BP Equinor Association

List of Abbreviations

ALC: Algerian Language Center

BP: British Petroleum

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EBP: English for Business Purposes

EOP: English for Occupational Purposes

ESBP: English for Specific Business Purposes

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

HMN: Hassi Moumen, Site / field (GAS facility)

HRM: Hassi R'Mel, site / field (GAS facility)

IA & ISG office complex: In Aminas project and In Salah Gas project

KBA: Krechba site / field (GAS facility)

QCA: Qualitative Content Analysis

REG: site / field (GAS facility)

TEG: Teguentour, site / field (Gas facility)

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General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Man witnesses the age of rapid growth of science and technology, and new terms of being with self and others. Building social relationships, sharing and transmitting messages, feelings and emotions, and creating meaning means communication. The concept of communication is defined differently depending on one's interest and importance.

Communication is a broad term like culture and philosophy. If you ask a hundred different people what communication is, you would get a hundred different definitions. Indeed, Mbinda-Lashley and Powley (2012, p.8) indicated that

'Today communication has become difficult to define because it has come to mean practically anything'. That is why scholars and communication theorists failed to provide a unified definition of communication.

The basic means of communication is language (Buarqoub, 2019), which is specific to humans. Nowadays, the most spoken language all over the world is the English language due to the status of the British Empire and the technological developments the world is witnessing. English works as a facilitator in maintaining internal and external relationships within a country or with other countries. This language is used in many domains, particularly in business, and that is why the demands to learn the English language are increasing day after day. This type of English is known as business English. The latter is the study of language fundamentals needed to communicate effectively in business contexts.

Business occupies the top spot of all professional areas. The flourishing of any country depends on it. The strength of any business organization relies on powerful and effective communication. For business communication to be successful and meaningful, the sender and the receiver should use the same language. However, sometimes they face some obstacles that come in the way of communication. These obstacles are referred to as communication barriers.

Communication barriers occur when two people are from different countries speaking different languages. For instance, in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association based in Hassi Messaoud, the workers are from different countries. Some are Algerians with English background knowledge as a second foreign language, and others are English natives. As English is the official means of communication between workers, certain barriers may come in the way of communication.

Overseas, many scholars have investigated communication barriers in the workplace. (Barić et al., 2013; Jenifer and Raman, 2015). However, in Algeria, this topic has received little interest. One of the few studies that have dealt with barriers to effective communication in a detailed way is the study conducted by Djouadi and Negrouche (2017) entitled “Investigating Barriers to Effective Communication and their Impact on Employees’ Engagement: The Case of El Kendi Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company (Algiers)”. They have explored the barriers to effective communication and their impact on employees’ engagement in this pharmaceutical company where Jordanians and Algerians work in close collaboration. The results obtained from the questionnaire addressed to fifty-seven employees and from the interview conducted with five managers demonstrated barriers to effective communication exist between employees but not between managers in EL Kendi pharmaceutical Company. It is worth mentioning that Jordanian and Algerian workers share the same first language, which is Arabic. However, in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association which is the context of our investigation, British and Algerian workers do not have the same first language and they are required to use English as a means for communication. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association, their impact on the communication process, and how they can be overcome.

Aims and Significance of the Study

The general objective of the present research is to explore the barriers that can interrupt the process of communication in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. More specifically, this study attempts to reach four main relevant objectives. The first objective is to determine whether British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers. The second objective is to identify the barriers that can impede communication between British and Algerian workers. The third objective is to investigate the impact of these barriers on communication. The last objective strives to identify the strategies used by British and Algerian workers to overcome these barriers and improve communication.

This research is important in highlighting the different communication barriers encountered in multicultural companies like Sonatrach BP Equinor Association, understanding how these barriers affect the process of communication, and determining how they can be surmounted. The results of the study can benefit communication scholars who aim to learn more about communication barriers. In addition, the findings of the research can add new insights to past studies on the topic.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to reach the above-mentioned research objectives, the present study aims at answering the following questions:

1. Do British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers?
2. If yes, what are the barriers that can disrupt the process of communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association?
3. How do these barriers affect communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association?

4. What are the strategies used by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association to overcome communication barriers?

In attempt to answer the above-mentioned research questions, the following hypotheses are advanced:

1. Both British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers.
2. Both verbal and non-verbal barriers can disrupt communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association.
3. These barriers have a negative impact on communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association.
4. Both British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association use strategies to overcome communication barriers.

Research Techniques and Methodology

In order to accomplish this investigation, we adopted the qualitative method for the collection and analysis of data. In order to explore the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association, two sets of synchronous online interviews were used to collect the necessary data. The gathered data were then analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis. This process consisted of reading and rereading the interview transcripts, coding the data, and categorizing them into themes. The interpretation of the findings was based on Newman and Ober's (2013) theory presented in their book entitled "Business Communication in Person, in Print, Online".

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation follows the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) format. It comprises a general introduction, four chapters, and a general conclusion. Our general introduction states the research problem, objectives, questions and hypotheses, explains the

Significance of the study, and gives brief descriptions of the methodology used to conduct the research and the outline of this dissertation. The first chapter is labelled “Review of the Literature”. This chapter defines key concepts and discusses the theoretical framework of the study. The second chapter is named “Research Design and Methodology”. It describes the data collection tools and the data analysis procedures used in the study. The third chapter, entitled “Presentation of the Findings”, exhibits the results of the study obtained from the two sets of interviews conducted with British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The last chapter is called “Discussion of the Findings”. It is concerned with the discussion and interpretation of the study findings in relation to the theoretical framework and review of the literature, and provides answers to the study questions. Our general conclusion is a kind of a summary of the whole work. It is a synthesis of the main findings and conclusions reached throughout the study. In addition, it stresses the main limitations of the study and provides suggestions

Chapter One:
Review of the Literature

Introduction

The present study aims at investigating the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff at Sonatrach BP Equinor Association located in In Salah Gas, Hassi-Messaoud, in the province of Ouargla. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides some background information about the status of the English language in Algeria. The second section presents some definitions of concepts relevant to the study. The last section deals with the presentation of the theoretical framework upon which the present study is based.

1. The Status of the English Language in Algeria

Algeria is a multilingual society where four major languages coexist: Arabic, Berber, French and English. According to Nakla (2021, p. 39), ‘Both Arabic and Berber are deemed as official and national languages while French is viewed as a main foreign tongue because of the colonial impact’. Indeed, Algeria was under the French regime for 132 years, and this led to the dominance of French as the first foreign language. However, with the globalization of the English language, the relevance of the French language diminished. The initiative taken by the Algerian government regarding the implementation of English in different domains such as education, administration, scientific research and business shows how prominent the English language is in Algeria. The Algerian government envisions replacing French with English. Indeed, according to Fox and Mazzouzi (2019) the Algerian High Education Minister Tayeb Bouzid has published on his official Facebook page in 2019 that ‘the French language does not get us anywhere’ and proposed to replace French with English as the main foreign language in Algeria. From this perspective, Grandguillaume (2004; cited in Abbassia, 2021, p. 84) stated that:

Algeria is experiencing a new era of linguistic update, especially among recent generations and workers in direct exposure to English language in their occupations; English now has a promising status of competition with French language.

2. Definitions of Concepts

The present section defines some concepts that are pertinent for the aim of the study.

2.1. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) witnessed rapid growth since the 1960s and became relevant in English Language Teaching (Agustina, 2014). English became the universal language of science, technology, and commerce. This led to the creation of a new generation of learners or professionals who know their needs in specific domains. This new learning movement is known as ESP – English for Specific Purposes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987, pp. 6-8) highlighted three main reasons for the development of ESP ‘1) the demands of a Brave New World, 2) a revolution in linguistics, and 3) focus on the learners.’

Many definitions of ESP have been provided. ESP, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 19), is ‘an approach to language learning, which is based on learner need. The foundation of all ESP is the simple question: Why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?’ In addition, ‘all decisions as to content and method are based on the learners’ reason for learning’ (Ibid). That is, ESP courses are designed to meet the specific needs and learning goals of the learner. According to Rahman (2015), ESP is different from General English in the sense that ESP refers to a particular type of English used in specific disciplines.

According to the above-mentioned definitions, ESP is teaching English for adult advanced learners who have a good level of English. In addition, the courses are designed depending on learners’ needs in a specific field or professional area. Here are some examples of how the learners’ needs influence the design of specific courses. A case of a professional learner, for instance, an Algerian doctor working in America should know how to communicate with his/her American patients. In order to do so, he/she needs to

learn a specific type of English, known as English for Medicine. Similarly, a businessperson needs to learn the English needed in the workplace, known as Business English. From this perspective, Boudersa (2018, p. 3) indicated that:

In the ESP course, the type of English that Algerian students need to learn is the one that trains and prepares them for success in academic and professional contexts... ESP courses aim to make students specialists in their professional fields through the English medium.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) identified two main types of ESP that are shown in Figure 1.

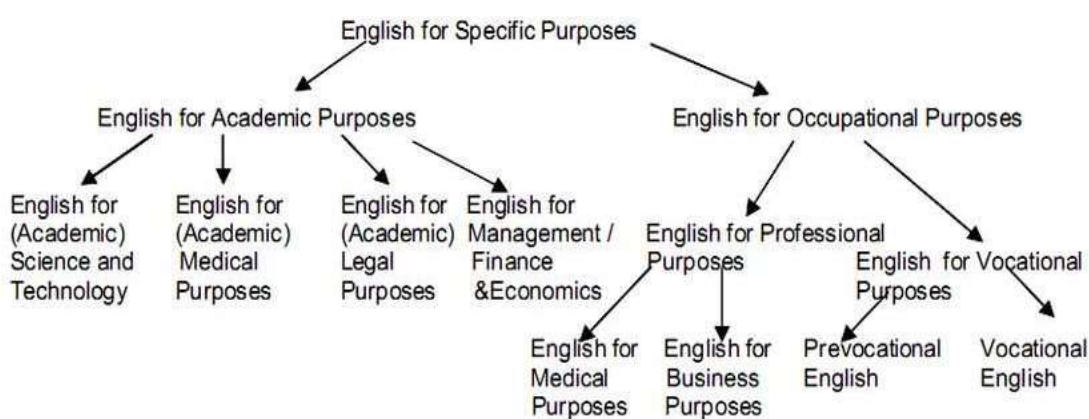


Figure 1. Classification of ESP (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p. 6)

As it can be seen in Figure 1, ESP is divided into two main branches: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). The latter is further subdivided into English for Professional Purposes and English for Vocational Purposes. Since the purpose of the present study is to highlight the communication barriers in the workplace, let us discuss the first subdivision of English for Occupational Purposes, which is English for Professional Purposes. The primary goal of English for Professional Purposes is to provide students with effective skills and strategies for the accurate and confident use of English in a professional context such as in business. This sub-class of English for Professional Purposes is known as English for Business Purposes. According to Rahman (2015, p. 25), ‘English for Business Purposes (EBP) is developed for communicative functioning of English in business contexts.’ Sekhar Rao (2019, p. 4) further explained that:

Business English (English for Business Purposes) is a new branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is a type of ELT (English Language Teaching) emerging as a response to a growing awareness of certain types of learners with specialized needs which are not fulfilled in General English courses. The teaching of Business English, directly related to learners' and employer s' professional needs, started to be accompanied and guided by abundant theoretical literature.

The goal of any business English course is to permit learners to communicate effectively with others in business environments. Having adequate vocabulary, writing business reports and emails, telephoning, giving presentations, taking parts in meetings, and negotiating are relevant skills to achieve effective business communication.

2.2. Communication

The term 'communication' is of Latin origin. It derives from the noun 'communis' which means 'common' (Lunenburg, 2010). Lunenburg (2010) indicated that in order for communication to be effective and successful, there must be a common or mutual understanding between the sender and the receiver of the message. Without this common understanding, 'there is no communication' (Ibid., p. 2). Communication plays a key part in everyday life. Indeed, Buarqoub (2019, p. 64) stated that 'Communication is fundamental to the existence and survival of individuals, groups, societies, and nations.' Without communication, people cannot create social relationships and share knowledge and experiences with one another.

Defining communication is not an easy task. Various scholars provided different definitions of communication. To illustrate this lack of consensus among scholars regarding the definition of communication, Vleugels (2018, p. 5) asserted that:

In 1970 and 1984 Frank Dance looked at 126 published definitions of communication in our literature and said that the task of trying to develop a single definition of communication that everyone likes is like trying to nail Jello to a wall. Thirty years later, defining communication still feels like nailing Jello to a wall.

Communication, according to Lasswell (2007, p. 216), is a process that contains five main components that are summarized in the question 'Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With What Effect?' 'Who?' is the sender of the message, 'Says what?' is the message

being delivered, 'In which channel' is the medium used to deliver the message, 'To whom?' is the receiver of the message, and 'With what effect' refers to the influence of the message on the receiver. Lasswell sees communication as a linear process. That is to say, the message is sent one way from the sender to the receiver and no feedback or response is given to the sender. Buarqoub (2019, p. 64), on the other hand, views communication as a 'social interaction process' during which the sender and the receiver generate, exchange and share 'information, opinions, facts, feelings, and experiences.' Communication, in this sense, is an interaction between at least two persons who engage in the process of exchanging and generating meaning. Another definition of communication was provided by Newman and Ober (2013, p. 5) who claimed that 'Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages-sometimes through spoken or written words, and sometimes non-verbally through facial expressions, gestures, and voice qualities.' In other words, communication can be verbal (Orally or in writing) or non-verbal. Newman and Ober (2013) further stated that communication is not linear but dynamic in nature where the sending and the receiving of messages are simultaneous.

2.3. The Process and Elements of Communication

Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages and information between the sender and the receiver. This process begins with the sender who encodes a verbal or nonverbal message and sends it to the receiver using a channel of communication. When the message reaches the receiver, he/she decodes it, interprets it, and encodes another message and sends it to the original sender who then becomes the receiver. The response of the receiver to the message he/she has received from the sender is known as feedback. Certain barriers, known as noise, can obstruct the communication process. Figure 2 illustrates the process of communication.

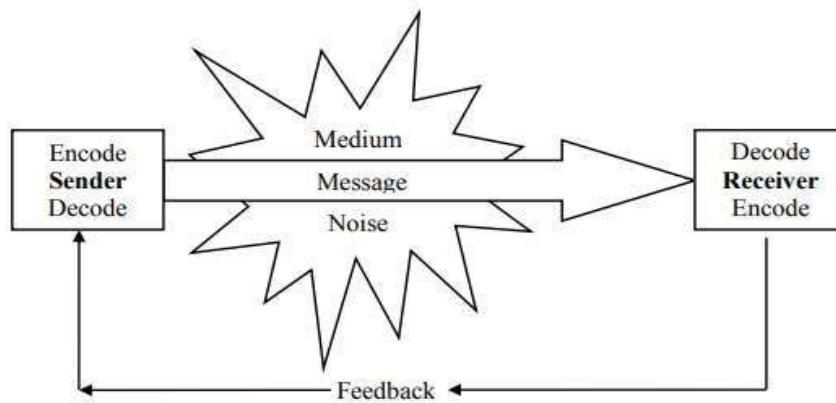


Figure 2. The Communication Process (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 2)

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the communication process contains the following elements:

The sender is the person who encodes the message and sends it to the receiver.

The receiver is the person who receives and decodes the message.

The message represents the information being communicated, which can be verbal or non-verbal.

The channel/the medium is used to transmit or communicate the message from the sender to the receiver. It can be face-to-face, over the telephone, or in writing.

Feedback is the response or reaction of the receiver to the sender's message.

Noise is any interference that obstructs communication (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 2).

2.4. Business

In Parkinson and Noble (2005, p. 66), business is defined as 'the activity of making, buying, selling or supplying goods or services for money'. That is to say, the aim of conducting business is to maximize one's profits. A similar definition of business was provided by Pride *et al.* (2019, p. 9), which is as follow:

Business is the organized effort of individuals to produce and sell, for a profit, the goods and services that satisfy society's needs... To be successful, a business must perform three activities. It must be organized, it must satisfy needs, and it must earn a profit.

Druckler (1973) disagrees with all those who define business as an organization to earn profits. He indicated that such definitions are not only false but also irrelevant. He argued that

‘creating a customer’ is the unique relevant definition of business, and explained that the customer is the one who decides what a business is, and the only one who can maintain it because he/she is the essence of this domain Duckler, 1973, p. 44).For Kumar (2014), business is not just ‘sale and purchase of goods and services’ but it is also ‘forecasting, planning, organizing, instructing, coordinating, and controlling. For the triumph on these business parameters, communication plays a critical role.’ (Ibid, p. 3). That is to say, communication plays a fundamental role in business. But what is business communication?

2.5. Business Communication

Many definitions of business communication were provided. According to Haase (2013, p. 59), ‘business communication is the specific type of communication, which employs means and tools for the performance of business’. For krizan *et al.* (2006), business communication is having a mutual understanding established between people within business. Moreover, Bisen and Priya (2009, p. 1) claimed that ‘business communication is marked by formality as against personal and social communication’. That is to say, business communication is formal whereas personal communication is informal.

2.6. Organizational Communication

Organizational communication is fundamental for the successful functioning of an organization (Kapur, 2018). To be more specific, effective communication within an organization is of significant importance to create a shared understanding of the message and communicate essential information from one worker to another, or from department to another. Emails, reports, and conference calls are communication channels used by workers to communicate with their colleagues.

Different definitions of organizational communication have been suggested. According to Richmond and McCroskey (2009, p. 1), organizational communication is ‘an organized

collection of individuals working interdependently within a relatively structured, organized, open system to achieve common goals.’ Similarly, Newman and Ober (2013, p. 4) asserted that ‘people in organizations work together to achieve a common goal that can only be reached through communication.’ Therefore, the success of any business or organization relies on effective communication.

3. Theoretical Framework

A successful and powerful business needs effective communication. Communication is the process of sharing, transmitting and receiving verbal (spoken and written) and non-verbal (body language, facial expressions, and voice qualities) messages. At the workplace, some barriers may hinder the communication between workers. In an attempt to investigate the business communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association situated in Hassi-Messaoud, we have relied on the book entitled *Business Communication In Person, In Print, Online* (2013) written by Newman and Ober as our theoretical framework.

3.1. Communication Components

Before moving to the communication barriers, we should first start by explaining how communication occurs inside an organization. According to Newman and Ober (2013, p. 5), effective communication requires five components namely the stimulus, the filter, the message, the medium, and the destination.

Stimulus: is something internal or external that creates a demand to communicate within an individual. It is important that the sender encodes the message in a form that can be understood easily by the receiver (ibid)

Filter: is the experience, culture, emotions, and background knowledge that influence the way the message is interpreted, as each person has a unique perception of reality (ibid).

Message: good communication depends on how well the message is formulated. Hence, the message sent should reflect the sender's goals and be adapted according to the receiver. (ibid, pp. 6-7).

Medium: is the means used by the sender to convey the message to the receiver. Newman and Ober (2013, p. 7) argue that:

Oral messages might be transmitted through a staff meeting, individual meeting, telephone conversation, voice mail, podcast, conference call, videoconference, or even less formally, through the company grapevine. Written messages might be transmitted through an email, a report, a blog post, a web page, a brochure, a bulletin board notice, or a company newsletter. Nonverbal messages might be transmitted through facial expressions, gestures, or body movement.

Destination: once the message is encoded and transmitted through the medium by the sender, the receiver decodes it. The presence of a reaction or feedback means that the objective of communication is achieved (i.e., the message is clearly understood by the receiver) (Ibid).

3.2. Directions of Communication

For the success of an organization or a business, communication should circulate through formal and informal channels (Newman and Ober, 2013).

3.2.1. The Formal Communication Network

Downward, upward, and lateral communication are the three different formal directions for the flow of information in an organization (Ibid).

3.2.1.1. Downward Communication

Downward communication is also called cascading communication. It refers to 'the flow of information from managers to their employees' (Ibid, p. 7). In other words, information flows from the upper level (executives) to the lower level (subordinates) in an organization (Ibid, p. 8).

3.2.1.2. Upward Communication

Upward communication is the opposite of downward communication. In other words, upward communication is ‘the flow of information from lower-level employees to upper-level employees or managers.’ (Ibid, p. 9). This type of communication allows managers to get feedback and suggestions from their employees (Ibid).

3.2.1.3. Lateral Communication

Lateral communication is also called horizontal communication. It is the transmission of messages between workers in an organization (ibid). According to Newman and Ober (Ibid), lateral communication allows employees to ‘create a more cohesive work unit by coordinating work, sharing plans and activities, negotiating differences, and developing interpersonal support.’

In the present study, the formal communication network direction taken into account is lateral/horizontal communication. That is to say, the study is an attempt to investigate the communication barriers encountered by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association.

3.2.2. The Informal Communication Network

The informal communication network is also labeled Grapevine (Newman and Ober, 2013). It is the transmission of data through informal channels inside the company. Workers exchange information, opinions, views, and critics when they are having lunch or coffee and posting messages on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp). According to Newman and Ober (2013, p. 09)

The informal communication network (or grapevine) transmits information through unofficial channels within the organization. Employees share what’s happening in the company in person (while eating in the cafeteria or refilling their Coffee cup) and online (on social networking sites and blogs).

3.3. Communication Barriers

Considering the complexity of the process of communication, messages may sometimes be received differently and can be misinterpreted. These received messages are incomplete and inaccurate due to a number of obstacles or barriers (Ibid). According to Newman and Ober (2013), barriers to business communication can be verbal and non-verbal.

3.3.1. Verbal Barriers

Consistent with Newman and Ober (Ibid), verbal barriers are related oral and written messages that are sent from the sender to the receiver. They include inadequate knowledge or vocabulary, differences in interpretation, language differences, inappropriate use of expressions, overabstraction and ambiguity, and polarization (ibid).

3.3.1.1. Inadequate Knowledge or Vocabulary

In order to transmit a message or piece of information, the sender should have sufficient knowledge about the idea itself. The real meaning and the value of the message may be conveyed incompletely because of the lack of information (ibid).

3.3.1.2. Differences in Interpretation

Misunderstanding or miscommunication occurs sometimes when the encoder (sender) and the decoder (receiver) attribute divergent meanings to the same word. Words have dual meanings: the literal meaning found in the dictionary (denotation), and the hidden or implied meaning related to imagination and emotional association (connotation) (Ibid). Generally, receivers of messages attribute negative connotations to words. This negative connotation is willingly or unwillingly allocated by the sender. To illustrate how people attribute different connotative meanings to words, Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 10) gave the following example:

The denotative meaning of the word plastic is “a synthetic material that can be easily molded into different forms.” For some people, the word also has a negative connotative meaning—“cheap or artificial substitute”—or they associate the term with its environmental impact. For other people, the word means a credit card, as in “He used plastic to pay the bill.”

3.3.1.3. Language Differences

Difference in language is among the most common communication barriers, especially in international business communication (Ibid). Two people speaking different languages cannot communicate effectively. For example, language differences can be a barrier to communication for Algerians who work in international corporations where English is used. Since English is the second foreign language in Algeria, communicating with British co-workers may be a problem for the Algerians who work at Sonatrach BP Equinor Association.

3.3.1.4. Inappropriate Use of Expressions

Expressions may cause problems in communication when the receiver does not understand them. Newman and Ober (Ibid) gave three examples of expressions that can lead to miscommunication. These expressions are slang, jargon and euphemisms. For Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 11), slang is ‘an expression, often short-lived, identified with a specific group of people. Business has its own slang, such as 24/7, bandwidth, bottom line, strategic fit, and window of opportunity.’ Jargon refers to the specialized vocabulary used by a professional group that is hard for others who are not familiar with it to understand (Ibid). Euphemisms are ‘expressions used instead of words that may be offensive or inappropriate’ (Ibid). For example, it is more convenient to say, “She is between jobs” than to say, “She is unemployed”.

3.3.1.5. Overabstraction and Ambiguity

It is recommended to use concrete words to deliver an idea rather than abstract and ambiguous words that may confuse the receiver. FYI is an ambiguous shortcut that the receiver may not know, thus saying "for your information" is more professional and clear. Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 12) indicated that:

The higher the level of abstraction, the more difficult it is for the receiver to visualize exactly what the sender has in mind...Ambiguous terms such as a few, some, several, and far away, may be too broad for business communication.

3.3.1.6. Polarization

Polarization is the act of dividing things into two completely opposing groups. However, things are not always black or white; situations do not only have two opposites but also have other alternatives and possibilities called 'gray areas' (Ibid). Polarization can cause miscommunication because these gray areas are not taken into consideration. According to Newman and Ober (Ibid), 'Competent communicators avoid inappropriate either/or logic and instead make the effort to search for middle-ground words to best describe a situation.'

3.3.2. Non-verbal Barriers

Communication problems may arise not only from the way we speak or write but also from the way we act, and the way we perceive and react to external stimuli (ibid).

3.3.2.1. Inappropriate or Conflicting Signals

Showing up to a job interview with inappropriate clothes may prevent you from being employed no matter how qualified you are. We tend to rely on nonverbal signals to make our judgment, as they are hard to manipulate. Of course, non-verbal signals vary from one culture to another (ibid).

3.3.2.2. Differences in Perception

Perceptual differences are mental or internal barriers that can impede communication. The way people communicate can be obstructed by their perceptions of a certain person or situation. Differences in peoples' background, age, culture and even mental abilities lead to differences in the perception and reaction to the nonverbal messages (Ibid).

3.3.2.3. Inappropriate emotions

Disproportionate emotional involvement can hinder the communication process. Anger, prejudice, hatred, boredom and stereotyping prevents effective communication from being

established. Being open-ended, accepting new ideas, and more importantly being objective in all situations are the keys to avoid misunderstandings (ibid).

3.3.2.4. Distractions

Noise is one of the most problematic and common distractions that can cause problems when communicating. Such distractions may include uncomfortable seating, hot or cold temperature, or simply incoming messages or emails on your phone. Getting rid of those distractions will effectively ameliorate communication (ibid).

Conclusion:

This chapter reviewed notions and concepts that are essential for the study. It first introduced the status of English in Algeria, then it presented definitions of the key concepts. Finally, it explained the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The subsequent chapter describes the research design and the methodology used data collection and data analysis.

Chapter Two:
Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the description of the methodological approach and the research procedures used to investigate the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association located in *In Salah Gas*, Hassi-Messaoud, in the province of Ouargla. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section explains the research method used to carry out the investigation. The second section describes the context of the investigation and the research sample. The third section deals with the presentation of the data collection instrument and the description of the data collection process. The fourth and last section is about the procedure of data analysis.

1. Research Method

According to Chivanga and Monyai (2021, p. 12), the research method ‘should be selected in accordance with the research problem in order to develop appropriate research instruments, in order to generate data, which is meaningful within the context of the research topic.’ In order to fulfil the objectives of the study, we relied on the qualitative method. According to Croker (2009), the qualitative research method necessitates collecting textual data and analyzing it using interpretive analysis. It allows the researcher to gain data on a given topic from the participants’ points of view. Indeed, Mohajan (2018, p.2) indicated that ‘Qualitative researchers are interested in people’s belief, experience, and meaning systems from the perspective of the people’. Since the aim of the present study is to highlight the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association, the qualitative research method seems appropriate.

2. Context of Investigation and Sample Population

The investigation was carried out in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association located in *In Salah Gas*, Hassi-Messaoud, in the province of Ouargla. *In Salah Gas* is a development of gas fields

in the southern general part of Algeria. It is a joint venture between Sonatrach, BP (British Petroleum) and Equinor. There are five main locations connected by flow lines. These are. 1) HMN [Hassi Moumen- gas processing/dehydration], 2) TEG [Tegentour gas processing/dehydration], 3) REG [Is a site located in In Salah and REG gas processing/dehydration is a facility] 4) KBA [Krebcha site / field (GAS facility) - gas/dehydration and CO₂], and 5) HRM [Hassi R'Mel gas compression and export. At each of these sites, there are also camps and base de vie which accommodate personnel. There are approximately 650 people at KBA, 300 at REG, 400 at TEG, 220 at HRM. Included in the scope of this work is the office base in Hassi Messaoud– IA & ISG [In Aminas project and In Salah Gas project] where the British and the Algerian workers work and reside during their work period. They work for four weeks and they take a break for four weeks. There are approximately 200 personnel accommodated on the base de vie. The infrastructure includes warehousing, water treatment, stand-by power generation, kitchens, laundry, offices, bedrooms, and workshops.

Our study focuses on the existence of communication barriers and how they can be overcome. The sample of our research consists of twenty-four (24) participants, ten (10) British and fourteen (14) Algerian workers chosen randomly. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and interview time limitations, we were only able to interview twenty-four workers. Among the twenty-four participants, we have interviewed four Algerian females and ten-Algerian males. Concerning British participants, they were all males.

3. Data Collection Instrument and Process

In order to collect the relevant data to answer the research questions stated in the general introduction of this dissertation, we relied on synchronous online interviews. According to Kothari (2004, p.97), an interview is the ‘presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. This method can be used through personal interviews and, if possible, through telephone interviews.’ In other words, an interview is a kind of conversation that

usually takes place in person (face-to-face) or over the telephone between an interviewer who asks questions and an interviewee who answers them. However, with the technological advances the world is witnessing, interviews can also be conducted virtually. This is known as online interviewing or internet-based interviewing. Online interviews can be synchronous or asynchronous. Asynchronous online interviews do not take place in real-time and use emails and wikis. Synchronous online interviews, on the other hand, happen in real-time and involve the use of instant messaging, video conferencing and video calls (Salmons, 2012).

As a result of the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting online interviews seemed more suitable. James and Busher (2016, p.3) indicated that ‘Online interviews can be used to gather original data via the Internet with the intention of analyzing it to provide new evidence in relation to a specific research question.’ In the present study, synchronous online interviews were used in order to gather data via audio calls by using the ‘TEAMS’ application. The latter is a professional application that workers (employees and managers) use in companies, especially in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association and this since the pandemic of COVID-19 as all workers work remotely from home.

Before conducting the interviews, the interview questions were first administered to two British and four Algerian workers chosen randomly. This piloting stage is important in order to detect any problems that need to be addressed before the actual process of data collection starts. According to Majid *et al.* (2017, p. 1073), ‘piloting for interviews is crucial to test the questions and to gain some practice in interviewing.’

We have conducted twenty-four (24) synchronous online interviews on October 8, 2021. Two sets of interviews were conducted: one addressed to British staff and the other directed to Algerian workers. The interview addressed to British staff comprised eleven open-ended questions. Ten British workers were interviewed between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m., with an interview length ranging between 10 to 15 minutes. The interview directed to Algerian staff contained

twelve open-ended questions. Fourteen Algerians were interviewed between 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., with an interview length ranging between 15 to 20 minutes. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed us to obtain detailed descriptive information about the topic under study.

Because of the pandemic of COVID-19, we conducted the synchronous online interviews with the guidance of the company's vice president during the interviews with British staff and with the help of his assistant during the interviews with Algerian workers. In order to conduct the interviews, we were first invited to download an application labeled "TEAMS" which is specific to conferences calls and then we received an email to have the access to join the meeting. In order to save the data gathered, we recorded the participants' declarations by using a mobile phone (audio recorder).

4. Data Analysis Procedure

In order to analyze the data collected from the two sets of interviews, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was adopted. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) define QCA as a 'research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns'. In other words, this analytical tool enables the researcher to code qualitative data (written or verbal) and categorize them into themes. The main objective of QCA, according to Down-Wamboldt (1992, cited in Heisch and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278), is 'to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study's. Therefore, this form of analysis is suitable to analyze the data obtained from the open-ended questions of the interviews and help us understand the communication barriers that both British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodological approach of the study. It described the setting and study participants, presented the data collection tool, and explained the data collection procedure. The chapter also clarified the procedure used to analyze the twenty-four synchronous online interviews conducted with British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The following chapter named “Presentation of the Findings” exhibits the results obtained from the interviews.

Chapter Three:
Presentation of the Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the gathered data and shows the outcomes of two synchronous online interviews conducted using ‘TEAMS’ application. One was addressed to the British staff and included eleven open-ended questions, and the other was directed to the Algerian workers with twelve open-ended questions. All the participants are workers and staff members at Sonatrach BP Equinor Association located in In Salah Gas, Hassi-Messaoud, in the province of Ouargla. The questions of the interviews were designed to highlight the most encountered barriers by the workers and how they can be overcome. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to the display of the results obtained from the interview with the British workers. The second part is dedicated to the presentation of the results obtained from the interview conducted with the Algerian workers.

1. Findings of the Interview with the British Workers

The first data collection tool used in our research is a synchronous online interview (See Appendix 1) which was conducted with the British workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The interview helped us to get the data needed in order to reach the objectives of the study and to answer the research questions stated in the general introduction of this dissertation. The following are the detailed results of the interview.

Question 01: How long have you been working in this company?

The first interview question invited the respondents to specify their working experience in the company. The results of the question showed that the British participants’ work experience varies from one worker to another. It ranged from seven to twenty years.

Question 02: English is the tool of communication used in this company. Do you find any obstacles or barriers when communicating with the Algerian staff? If yes, what are these barriers?

This question was asked mainly with the purpose of identifying the barriers that British workers encounter when communicating with their Algerian colleagues in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The answers to this question showed that the majority of the participants do encounter barriers when communicating with Algerian workers. These barriers are cultural, semantic (lack of business vocabulary) and environmental. The following declarations exemplify this point.

Participant 05: (thinking) obviously, maybe cultural differences. I mean I'm English but I live in Spain but always there is a difference even language differences so the majority of problems easily appears (thinking) when the culture the language are different well you know.

Participant 10: you know I think that there are a lot of barriers like lack of business vocabulary knowledge, culture and environmental disturbances. well..... And many others maybe.....

Few participants indicated that they do not face any communication barriers when communicating with Algerian colleagues because they speak French, which is the first foreign language in Algeria. For example, participant 07 said that "No, because, (thinking) I speak French as another foreign language."

Question 03: During your work experience in this company, have you already faced any problem related to language differences? If yes, can you please give us an example?

The majority of the participants agreed that language differences can be a barrier to communication with Algerian colleagues. Since English is considered as the second foreign language in Algeria, communicating in English with Algerian colleagues can be an obstacle to reach mutual understandings, especially when new staff members join the company. The following assertions illustrate the point.

Participant 03: so primarily language difficulties will be when a new staff person joins with the association and maybe their language skills not beginning or not so strong in English. For example, early on we had someone joined in the finance team. (thinking) his English was really really weak. (thinking) it wasn't a huge problem because he found ways to work there a rounded it is plenty of the staff speak and have good English. If he have any difficulty, he just ask any other co-worker to assist. but in general anyone that starts in BP is not a matter maybe two to six months can improve with his intelligence his language skills much better.

Participant 08: I forget my self sometimes. I use idioms, slangs, and also phrases and once I recognize that I am not talking to a native English speaker especially from their facial expressions that something is wrong I change directly my words to simple ones or I explain them in simplistic way what I mean exactly.

Participant 10: yes, a big problem for me. I do have to explain twice three times till they got the information and even though sometimes I use simple words which seems in their faces that is hard to interpret so.....ok maybe simple for me (laughing).

Few participants indicated that they do not face communication barriers due to language differences. These participants speak French and know some useful expressions from their Algerian colleagues' mother tongues. The following statements illustrate the point.

Participant 01: Well, I said before that I speak French and during my work experience, I learned some words, expressions in the Algerian language like 'inchalah', 'salaam alikoum', 'Azul'

Participant 07: Maybe in the beginning I was not familiar or they aren't but now I do not find barriers related to that because I speak French too and during my work here I learned a little bit of Algerian expressions such as Well, (thinking) 'Inchalah', 'salam alikoum', and so many other words I can't remember them now, maybe later on.

Question 04: Do you think that differences in the interpretation of words and expressions can cause communication problems with Algerian colleagues? If yes, can you please explain?

Eight out of ten participants asserted that differences in the interpretation of words and expressions could cause communication problems, arguing that they are aware of the difficulty of the language, especially at the level of the accent. This means that it is very difficult for non-native English speakers to understand and get familiar with all the different meanings assigned to a single word. In addition, the different uses of certain phrases and the way certain words are pronounced may hinder communication. For example, Participant 03 indicated that 'my views the English language is really difficult because one word can have four different meanings in

different contexts. So I can understand the difficulty of learning and conversing'. In the same line of thought, participant 08 said that 'yes, since English is difficult with a lot of jargon, slangs. So you know one word can have different meanings so I think it is obvious.' Furthermore, participant 04 acknowledged that:

Well, yes maybe people are not familiar with the different accents or the different uses of certain phrases. Maybe American could use one type of phrase and British would use another type of phrase to say the same thing. It takes a long time for Algerians and foreign workers to find a common language.

Two participants stated that differences in the interpretation of words and expressions do not cause communication problems with Algerian colleagues. They argued that communication with their Algerian colleagues is very simple. For instance, participant 05 specified that:

(thinking) I should imagine they do, but I rarely come across those sorts of problems with my Algerian colleagues simply because all my communication whether written or verbal with my Algerian colleagues are pretty simplistic. It's not really in depth business language.

In the same perspective, participant 07 claimed that:

No, I don't think so. (thinking) I use simplistic and an easy vocabulary, and I use body language some signals. Well also, I avoid the complicated words to facilitate communication and to avoid any misinterpretation.

Question 05: How can the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts cause miscommunication with Algerian colleagues?

This question aimed at demonstrating how abstract and ambiguous concepts may affect the communication process. For some participants, the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts may cause frustration and offensiveness, and lead to communication problems. Hence, when British workers use ambiguous and abstract concepts and realize that they deal with Algerian workers as non-native English speakers, they try to express themselves with Basic English to avoid misinterpretation. For instance, participant 05 claimed that:

(thinking) now you are getting in depth of the real English. Just like Arabic and other languages, English has a lot of jargon, a lot of slang. Sometimes I forget that I'm not talking to a native English speaker. Some of the phrases that I use will not be understood by my Algerian colleagues. So I

have to sit back and think of the passage that haven't been understood because I have used a phrase in English that really doesn't make any sense to anybody except the native English speaker.

Similarly, participant 08 asserted that:

Ok, I think most of Algerian workers are not familiar with our cultural slangs and vocabulary and if a misunderstanding occurs, it could cause offensiveness so yes it has an impact and causes a miscommunication. That's why we should be aware of our sayings.

In order to convey a message in an effective way, others prefer to translate messages from English to French. Because for British workers business is business and is sacred, they do their best to achieve effective communication. This is especially important in the workshop or the technical part where they should be extra careful. For example, Participant 03 declared that:

(thinking) I think for me, maybe for English speakers we try to converse in French. For example, it is so easy for something to be the opposite of yes versus no. So, if there is any technical or legal situation going on, we try to do it for example in French to avoid confusion.

Question 06: To what extent does the inappropriate use of expressions, such as slangs, jargon and euphemisms, affect the communication process with Algerian colleagues?

All the participants avoid the use of slangs, jargon, and euphemisms in the field of business since it creates ambiguity, misunderstanding, and miscommunication. The inappropriate use of such expressions may lead to offensiveness, anger, and conflicts which in turn can have negative impacts on the business process. For example, Participant 05 stated that:

(thinking)Emmmm in my case, I tend to not do that because I do understand the fact that jargon and slang English phrases can be misunderstood. So I tend to not use those sorts of phrases simply because I know from my experience they can be confusing. I have been guilty of doing that in the past but these days not so much... There are a lot of slang, a lot of jargon, and a non-native English wouldn't understand. Now for me, especially in this project, I tend to do not use phrases because I realize that to be very clear and to make sure that people I'm speaking to understand what I'm saying.

Likewise, participant 04 asserted that:

We try not to use jargon, slang. We try to use technical words or expressions to avoid complications, misunderstanding. We have to explain to people exactly what it is because communication is very very important especially in the operations and technical parts for both the national and the international staff. We have to have a good communication especially now with TEAMS' application where we do not see people face to face. So we should be extra careful on the actual language we use and sometimes we repeat twice or three times to make sure that everybody understand what we are saying and this is to avoid any misunderstanding.

In contrast, two British participants argued that slangs, jargon, and euphemisms do not affect communication during their conversations with their Algerian colleagues. For example, participant 02 claimed that those inappropriate expressions are too casual and euphemism is better in expressing selves in a polite way. Participant 07 held the same view and affirmed that he always makes sure to use the most well-known expressions to avoid any ambiguity.

Question 07: Does environmental noise, such as poor acoustics, extreme temperature and uncomfortable seating, disrupt the communication process? If yes how?

The majority of the British interviewees confirmed that environmental noise could disrupt communication. To be more specific, the British participants have listed the different environmental disturbances they face such as high temperature, noise (i.e., when Algerian colleagues talk loudly and shout when communicating with each other), network problems during conference calls by TEAMS application, and face masks. The following statements illustrate the point.

Participant 06: Yes, the extreme temperature in summer makes me feel tired especially when it arrives to 60°. It's a real demotivation because you know I work in the workshop. You know it is an open space. So you became nervous and you can harm someone with offensive words.

Participant 07: Yes, now especially with the pandemic (Covid-19), we work online and with audio-conference calls by 'TEAMS'. You know like now and most of the time the network cut off well (thinking) here it disrupts the communication. I think this the only issue.

Participant 09: ok well (thinking) the Algerians when they speak especially on the phone they talk loudly and the phone should be put on silent but sometimes they forget to put it silent so especially with the noise of machines so for me it is a barrier to communication.

Participant 10: Yes, the noise of the machines in the workshop disturbs. Well... we speak fast and the Algerian colleague couldn't catch up so here there is a disruption to communication. They ask can you repeat please, sorry I don't hear you.

Concerning those who denied the fact that environmental noise obstructs the process of communication, they said that it is a question of having patience and noise does not affect them. For example, participant 08 declared that 'Not at all. You have just to be patient and focus only on work without giving importance to such disturbances.'

Question 08: Do body language and facial expressions facilitate or complicate the process of communication with Algerian colleagues? Please explain.

The goal of this question is to determine whether body language and facial expressions facilitate or complicate the process of communication. Most of the participants agreed on the fact that body language and facial expressions facilitate the communication process. They argued that, in face-to-face conversations, body language and facial expressions are natural and useful in conveying a message. Participant 04 explained more in his words:

Body language and facial expressions to myself actually facilitate communication between different people even if we don't speak the same language. With simple gestures and facial expression, you get across a message easily.

Participant 07 shared the same point of view by saying that 'It facilitates for sure. Sometimes, we do not need to speak or say something. We can transmit a message through gestures, for example, just nodding or winking. So yes, it helps a lot.'

However, the nonverbal signals sometimes could be interpreted in different ways as it was asserted by participant 01 '...if you are trying to explain something, you know, those means could be useful but also they could be interpreted in different ways and people could be offended'. Participant 10, on the other hand, indicated that body language and facial expression could both facilitate and impede the process of communication. He explained his point of view in the following declaration:

Sometimes it facilitates. (thinking) it helps us to explain in an easy and simple way and sometimes it complicates, for example, when you use a gesture or a signal that is not allowed or is forbidden here in the Algerian culture. So just we should be careful.

Question 09: As you know, nonverbal signals vary from one culture to another. Have you encountered any communication problems related to the use of inappropriate or conflicting signals with Algerian colleagues? If yes, please describe the situation.

The majority of the respondents admitted that they have not faced any communication problems related to the use of inappropriate or conflicting signals. They claimed that they have the tendency to use more simplistic gestures and body language. For example, participant 05 said that ‘...I tend to communicate more simplistic gestures and body language...’ Participant 04 highlighted the importance of knowing the local culture in the following declaration:

We must adapt to the local culture to know what we can do and what we cannot do. Let say international staff, certain signs in Europe or in America you would find them offensive. We do actually educate ourselves what a national culture is what signs they find offensive or what signs we can use to actually avoid any misinterpretation.

Participant 04 believed that workers need to adapt to the local culture, as certain signs in Europe or elsewhere are viewed as offensive. Therefore, they are obliged as international workers to educate themselves on the different cultural aspects in order to avoid any misinterpretation.

Question 10: Do you view inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping as a barrier to effective communication with Algerian colleagues? Why or why not?

Most of the interviewed British workers agreed that inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping are barriers to effective communication with Algerian colleagues and this is owing to a number of reasons. First, when someone is angry or reacts in an angry way, this creates problems among workers. Hence, everyone should mind their language and carefully choose the appropriate words. This point is demonstrated in the following declarations.

Participant 06: Yes, because anger may lead to conflicts and problems and anger doesn’t come up with nothing. So you know we are in a professional place.....So we should be polite and patient to avoid such inappropriate emotions that can that can affect the business.

Participant 08: Yes, sometimes it hurts and can create problems among workers which can lead to offensiveness and vindictiveness.

Participant 09: Yes, well (thinking) what can we say about this..... Can lead to conflicts and problems between workers and they could become aggressive, offensive. (thinking) so being careful of our words is very important.

Second, there exist a lot of stereotyping between workers, especially when they come from different regions. For instance, participant 03 claimed that once they had a female colleague and things were great, but as soon as they hired a second woman the tension grew between them and two women refused to become friends because they come from different regions. Participant 07 further elaborated by saying that:

Well, stereotyping and judging workers, especially religion, and traditions, and clothes, and how people speak for example. All this may lead to many things, frustration, you see disappointment also and even to lose someone's confidence you understand.

Two out of ten participants answered the question negatively. They believe that these emotions do not affect the communication process. For instance, participant 02 said that '(thinking), not really. I mean I think everybody use stereotype but it doesn't affect communication.'

Question 11: According to you, how can verbal and nonverbal communication barriers with Algerian colleagues be overcome?

British workers suggested solutions in order to overcome verbal and nonverbal barriers to effective communication. The majority of the participants indicated that being patient and avoiding ambiguities and jargon are the keys to successful communication. Participant 05 said that 'simplifying things, having patience, and speaking clearly'. Equally, participant 02 suggested that:

(thinking). I think sometimes, speaking slowly and not using slangs too much and also sometimes not using technical expressions when you talk to people who don't share that discipline. So engineers need to not use, you know, abbreviations.

Other participants stressed the importance of knowing each other's cultures before working in any multinational company. For instance, participant 08 recommended that

‘...Algerian workers... have to improve their cultural knowledge’. Another suggested solution concerned written communication. For participant 09, Algerian workers ‘should give importance to improve writing emails, reports for more professionalism to avoid any miscommunication’.

2. Findings of the Interview with the Algerian Workers

The second synchronous online interview was conducted with fourteen Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The results of the twelve open-ended questions are provided below.

Question 01: How long have you been working in this company?

This question was asked to gather information about the interviewees’ work experience in the company. The results demonstrated that the Algerian participants’ work experience varied from one worker to another. More specifically, it was found that their work experience ranged from five to twenty-two years.

Question 02: As French is the first foreign language in Algeria, how do you find yourself facing the obligation to communicate with the English language inside the company?

This question was asked to discover how Algerian workers face the obligation to communicate using the English language rather than the French language, which is the first foreign language in Algeria. All the participants shared the same opinion about the major influence of the French language on them due to the Algerian educational system and colonial history. Therefore, they give more importance to French than English. Participant 08 argued

Yeah !...there is an influence of the French language especially for us Algerians you know ...Because we give more importance to French rather than English it is a question of vocabulary.(repetition) don't practice our English vocabulary enough so yes I encountered issues about this at the beginning but after one year of experience I feel better.

The most cited obstacle among the Algerian participants is that they think in French when they communicate in English. For example, participant 11 said that: 'The French language has an impact. It is a major issue because we think and make our ideas in French then try to talk in English. So the meaning of our ideas may disappear because they are different languages'. However, all the participants denied having problems after a few years of work experience at Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. In addition, most of them learned English at the university or at least had an experience with it. This is the reason why they were familiar with the use of English. The following declarations exemplify the point.

Participant 09: At the beginning, it was very difficult As you know and said it before, French is our foreign language and we did our studies and university system is in French.So, it is difficult to compose our sentences...yeah then, we did some efforts and training to improve our communication and our experience with British (thinking)helped us to feel better.

Participant 10: (thinking) As far I'm concerned for the English language I personally I don't haveany problems because I studied English at the university...(thinking) but I do...,I can just tell you something... even if you are studying English at the university, when you speak English outsideor in business it is something else...it is not the same at all.

Participant 14: French was...really dominated me I remember at the beginning of my experience in BP, I encountered many difficulties, especially in face to face conversations but after let's say two years of work experience maximum, I was adapted to the use of Englishfor communication.

Question 03: Since you have to communicate in English, do you face any obstacles or barriers when communicating with British colleagues? If yes what are these barriers?

This question was asked to the Algerian workers to determine if they face any obstacles when they communicate in English with British colleagues. Nearly all the participants answered the question positively. To be more specific, they encounter issues when they communicate in English with their British colleagues, especially at the beginning of their integration to Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. They listed several barriers like semantic barriers (lack of vocabulary, different accents, and dialects, thinking in another language, jargon, and slangs),

cultural differences (expressions and gestures), psychological barriers (bad emotions, shyness, fear, and offensiveness) and physical barriers (noise and face mask). They have difficulties picking up the meaning because of all these barriers. In addition, some of them stated that they used to translate their ideas from French to English directly, but this method does not always work. The following declarations exemplify the points stated above.

Participant 09: Yes. As I said it before, in the beginning of my experience everything was difficult for me. There was a lot and different accents also, my British colleagues speak fast since it is their mother tongue and the listening process seems very low so; each time ... I asked for repetition, I said 'please said it again! Said it again!' (laughing) There is also the cultural side I always have this fear to say something and they will interpret it negatively.

Participant 11: Yeah, of course. I was not familiar with the use of English language for daily discussions my English background was not sufficient enough have lack of adequate expression and vocabulary.

Participant 06: Well. It depends on which type of communication, verbal or nonverbal. If we don't communicate effectively, we put ourselves and others at risk and besides physical and technical barriers... you know, there are barriers to affective communication and the most common barrier I think... that you can face are cultural differences and when we do not recognize cultural differences like gestures and facial expressions we risk offending the other person, you know... This is my point of view.

Participant 12: (thinking) yes! I faced a lot of complications in speaking, especially due to shyness and the fear of making mistakes even if I know the words perfectly.

Participant 04: (thinking) for me personally, I can face an obstacle when I find some difficult words or when I forget some words while speaking or..... while discussing (thinking) I also encounter another problem this last year with face mask. It hides facial expression and when there is noise or something like that, it reduces voice.

Participant 07: Naturally, because business English is not the same with the general English that we studied, and my British colleagues speak fast. So it's hard to receive well the information. there is another issue I think most of Algerians face is every day! All of us have this tendency to translate directly French to English.

The minority of the participants answered the question negatively. This entails that these workers do not face any obstacles when communicating with their British colleagues. According to them, this is due to their work positions in the company, as it was specified by participant 03:

So it depends on the position each position has its. How to say .there is some positions where you should communicate. speak, write, prepare reports but there are other positions like mine I don't need to communicate with everybody and I have my specific technical vocabulary.

Question 04: Have you studied ESBP (English for specific Business Purposes) or English for Communication before or after your recruitment? If yes, how did this help you to communicate with British colleagues?

The fourteen participants answered the question with 'Yes'. All of them had learned English for communication or ESBP before or after their recruitment. More than half of them stated that they studied English at the university or/and enrolled in special language training on ESBP to improve their business communication such as joining the Algerian Language Center. For instance, participant 01 said 'I was an English student at the university, and before my recruitment, I did training with ALC [Algerian Language Center] and I got level 9 nine in this training'. The results of this question also showed that the workers, who have more than fifteen years work experience, had another kind of experience with learning English, as it was specified by participants 07:

Well before integrating the company, I had my own Basic English. Then after my recruitment, I spent three weeks with a British native family in London. (thinking)...Let me tell you it is not like studying because you interact more with the cultural side. It helped me a lot to know more about their culture and you know culture is very important. After that, I did language training for business eight-hour day.

Each participant gave his/her own opinion about his/her own experience with learning English. All of them agreed that these trainings are of great importance to communicate, write E-mails, prepare reports, attend meetings, enrich business vocabulary, be self-confident and join in multicultural companies. For example, participant 10 stated that:

After finishing my studies, I have done courses on business English with a private school and it was very very helpful and useful. The Standard English and the academic English that we studied at the university has nothing to do with daily communication or with business communication that we use in the company.

Participants 11 expressed how such trainings helped his communication in the following declaration:

Well..., I studied ESBP after my recruitment and it was very important and helpful, especially for writing E-mails, preparing reports and attending meetings. I become more confident I express myself better in professional way.

Question 05: Do you think that your lack of adequate knowledge and vocabulary in English is an obstacle to effective communication with your British colleagues? If yes, please explain how?

This question was asked for the purpose of determining whether the lack of knowledge and vocabulary in English is an obstacle to effective communication. Eleven out of fourteen participants agreed with the fact that inadequate knowledge and vocabulary hinder the process of communication. More than half of the participants said that they have already faced a situation in which their lack of vocabulary created problems and led to miscommunication. For example, participant 04 explained:

Yeah..Yeah! I think it is a big problem! I will explain why, simply...as you know English is an international language as you know.. And it's our second foreign language. So it is a little bit difficult to master it as French or Arabic. So it happens to me (thinking) when I speak to my British colleagues, sometimes I forget or I lose my words, then I become very nervous. It creates negative emotions on me it really frustrates; but I try to do my best in managing this by asking for repetition or making my own research.

According to the sayings of the different participants, lack of adequate knowledge and vocabulary in English is a real obstacle to effective communication that is why they try their best to solve it. Two participants mentioned that they prefer to write e-mails than communicate face-to-face because e-mail communication allows them time to choose the appropriate words to express themselves. For instance, participant 10 said:

Sometimes to avoid this, it is preferable to write an e-mail ...(thinking) it is a solution because I think when you write, you have time to choose the appropriate words. Well...it is better in some situations. But when it is face-to-face discussion, it is a problem if you don't have the appropriate and necessary words at the moment.

Three participants answered this question with 'No', meaning that they do not consider lack of adequate knowledge and vocabulary in English as a communication barrier. These participants do not encounter such problems due to their positions inside the company. This is

because they have their specific technical vocabulary and they are not obliged to write e-mails or reports. Participant 06 affirmed this by saying:

For me no, it's not an obstacle because I have technical position as I said we have the same terminology as in French we always use the same technical. Basic technical knowledge and vocabulary and generally I am not in need to communicate with everybody.

Question 06: Have you ever misinterpreted a word or an expression conveyed by a British colleague? If yes, how did you overcome this communication barrier?

This question was structured in order to investigate whether Algerian workers have already met situations in which they misinterpreted a word or an expression conveyed by their British colleagues. The best part of the participants (Twelve participants) answered with 'Yes'. According to them, misinterpretation is something that can happen to anyone due to the fact that English is the second foreign language in Algeria. The results showed that this occurs mainly when the participants join the company. Participant 09 shared his own experience in the following statement:

Certainly! (laughing) Nobody can avoid this! (laughing). I remember in the first time my colleague asked me "do you go to gym?" It was my supervisor. I said no! No! I don't know because I mixed between the word gym which is the place where we practice sport and the word gymnastic which is a discipline. I thought we are going to do gymnastic (laughing).

In the second part of the question, the participants gave different solutions to overcome this communication barrier. Each one has his/her own technique to manage misinterpretation. The most cited ones are asking for qualification, repetition, translation, and making personal researches, as participant 02 told:

...Most of the time we just ask: would please say it again? Would you please explain it again in easier way? This is the way we do it here because we are in a professional area so we always say please explain. What do you mean please? This is the way we solve such issues we just keep on asking for repetition or explanation in another way. They can explain again and again ...They are open-minded. They can repeat till you get the information and the meaning

Only two participants answered with 'No' to this question. According to them, it is possible to avoid misinterpretation and be adapted to every situation in business. For instance,

participant 12 argued ‘to be honest with you, no, because when you are majored in English so generally there is no this kind of problem’.

Question 07: Have you faced any obstacles to communication due to the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts by your British colleague? If yes, how did you manage to overcome this barrier?

This question was asked in order to determine whether the interviewees encountered communication barriers due to abstract and ambiguous concepts used by their British colleagues. All the answers were ‘Yes’. This indicates that communication can be hindered by the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts. The participants declared that this issue happens generally when British colleagues use slangs, jargon or vocabulary related to their culture.

Participant 06 revealed:

Yes it happens sometimes when some... Some British colleagues use vocabulary related to their culture and jargon related to their own dialects (thinking) This is difficult for us to understand. Therefore, we try to approach our colleagues with long conversation or outside of work in order to rich a deep knowledge of their cultures and even their slangs and it is beneficial for us and facilitate our daily tasks at work yeah

The same issue was raised by participant 08 in the following assertion:

Of course! You know as English is not our mother tongue, so you face a lot of idiomatic expressions and second meaning. For example, when my British colleague says “it is raining cats and dogs”; this kind of expression can be ambiguous, you should not be shy to ask for repetition you can overcome this barrier by just asking about the meaning and British people are very kind they have no problems to help us.

The other part of this question asked the participants to indicate how they overcame miscommunication due to abstract and ambiguous concepts. The majority stated that they try to enlarge their knowledge about their British colleagues’ culture and ask for clarifications about the intended meaning. For example, participant 01 said that:

Yes, it happened to me, especially at the beginning. I was not familiar with the concepts related to their culture. To manage this, I tried to make my own research about their jargon and I learned a lot of their daily expressions, jargon and slangs.

Question 08: To what extent does the inappropriate use of expressions, such as slangs, jargon and euphemism, affect your communication with British colleagues?

This question was asked to discover the extent to which the inappropriate use of expressions by British colleagues can affect communication with the Algerian workers. All the participants admitted that the inappropriate use of expressions disrupts the communication process, especially in business. Participant 13 stated ‘the inappropriate usage of such expressions in business environment can cause the business communication failure. I think it is preferable to avoid this’. The same point of view was shared by participant 03 who said, ‘Of course, yes! It affects sometimes. The inappropriate use of expressions leads to confusion and communication breakdown’. The use of such expressions can also lead to embarrassment and offend the other participant in communication, as it was specified by participant 12 ‘When my British colleagues use such expressions, then I have difficulties to know their meaning. I feel offended or embarrassed’. Therefore, the use of such expressions in professional settings should be evaded in order to prevent any communication breakdown. Participant 06 further elaborated by saying that:

Okay. So, what we can say about that. I think that a single word has different meaning for different persons. So, if both the sender and the receiver choose different meanings to the same words then this cause a semantic barrier, in proper words may result in unclear messages and create a bad impression. So, some slangs words or new and other terms for new persons who may not know them, using those words can inhibit conversations greatly.

The results also showed that three participants indicated that even though the inappropriate use of some expressions has a negative impact on communication, they do not face such problems. This is mainly because they are open-minded or they have a strictly professional relationship with their British colleagues. For example, participant 01 said that ‘My contact with our colleagues is only professional. We haven’t deep contact maybe for example we don’t have contact to enrich personal relationships’. Participant 09, on the other hand, stated that:

...I know a lot of slangs by experience but if I hear something. any word for the first time I directly ask about the meaning so it doesn’t affect me in a negative way and I like when someone corrects my mistakes I don’t have issue on that.

Question09: nonverbal communication (body language and facial expressions) differs from one culture to another. Do you think that non-verbal signals facilitate or complicate the process of communication with British colleagues? Please explain.

This question was asked to determine whether nonverbal signals facilitate or complicate the process of communication in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. Eleven out of fourteen participants totally agree with the fact that body language contributes to the understanding of the communicative message. According to them, it clarifies, reinforces and simplifies the message. For instance, participant 11 specified ‘Yes, it facilitates. Sometimes you understand the message only when the senders uses his hands, facial expression, body language’. Similarly, participant13 explained:

As a sender, if you use your body language in positive way, it will help to reinforce and to add strength to your verbal messages and will help the receiver to get the exact meaning of you message.

Three out of fourteen participants indicated that it depends. To be more precise, sometimes nonverbal signals facilitate the process of communication and sometimes they complicate it. The following assertions prove this point.

Participant 02: It depends, sometimes it facilitates and sometimes it complicates because here we are in a professional area we should pay attention to our body language because there are some gestures that we can consider here in Algeria something ordinary Maybe for them it is not acceptable and vice versa.

Participant 06 :When there are on-verbal signals that match up to what we are saying, they increase trust, clarity and self-confidence and rapport, but when they generate tension it distrust and may led to confusion and miscommunication this is what I think.

Question 10: To what extent does environmental noise, such as poor acoustics, extreme temperature and uncomfortable seating, disrupt the communication process?

The results showed that all the participants share the same opinion about the fact that physical and environmental disturbances are barriers to effective communication. Participant 06 confirmed this in the following assertion:

okay! As you know, noise is the most common barrier to effective communication. It is any persistent or random disturbance that creates the confusion or lack of clarity of the message, physical barriers can affect the communication transmission process.

However, the participants who work inside the company and occupy positions in the administration confirmed that they rarely face problems related to physical barriers such as noise and extreme temperature. They indicated that all the offices and rooms are equipped with air-conditioners and their communication is guided by strict instructions and rules. For example, participant 02 claimed that:

For sure, noise is an element that complicates the communication, but for noise it is very quiet here in the office, even your phone you have to put your phone on silent mode and you are not supposed to talk loudly. There are a lot of instructions to follow and pay attention to them. Here in the base, you can't hear any noise and even for the high temperature we have all the adequate equipment. We have the air conditioning in offices and everywhere, these barriers exist in workshop where there are engines, you know.

Based on this declaration, it can be deduced that environmental barriers are mostly encountered in the workshops where the workers manipulate different engines. Indeed, participant 08 acknowledged that:

Yeah! It disrupts the communication process. I used to work outside the office working with engines, and a lot of noise. It was so exhausting to get the message because my British colleagues speak fast, and when there is noise it is very hard to understand and get clear messages. So, noise is harmful in business communication, but in BP administration there is no noise so it is good.

The pandemic of Covid-19 created another communication barrier, which is the use of facemasks. Three participants stressed the role of facemasks in disrupting the communication process. More specifically, these masks hide facial expressions, attenuate the voice, and reduce speech intelligibility. Participant's 05 confession exemplifies the point.

...It is not the case here in BP administration where I work. Maybe in workshops, they encounter such an issue. Here, we have another issue. It is due to mask face due to Covid-19, we are obliged to wear a face mask so face-to-face communication becomes a little bit difficult to hear carefully.

Question 11: Do you view inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping as a barrier to effective communication with British colleagues? Why or why not?

This question was structured in order to know the views of the different participants about the effect of inappropriate emotions on communication. Twelve participants out of fourteen answered by 'Yes' to this question. They admitted that inappropriate emotions affect negatively the communication process. Most of their views confirmed that negative emotions in the business area lead to offensiveness and create conflicts between workers. According to them, these conflicts can cause business failure or even ruin the company. That is why they avoid as much as possible falling into such issues. The interviewees highlighted the importance of controlling oneself and remaining professional. For example, participant 02 declared that:

Yes! This can affect negatively the communication. So, you have to control yourself. Here, you are supposed to be professional, that's it. That's why I keep saying you have to control yourself and your emotions. You are here to do business with our partners and also they have to control their behavior also. So, if you are here, you are supposed to be here for work not for other things. Your anger, your happiness, prejudice, and all that. You have to do your best to control yourself at least. If there are issues, you have to go to your responsible or managers and express the problem.

Participant 09 shared his own experience in relation to inappropriate emotion, by saying:

Yeah. I remember, one day this happened between my colleagues. I, I don't know if I can tell it for you. (thinking). To sum up, it was due to culture differences and bad interpretation that created conflict between my colleagues. So, one day, my British colleague asked another Algerian colleague about his wife. You know here something like this is forbidden. You know we have no right to ask about someone's wife, sister or daughter. Then, my Algerian colleague was offended and angry by this question. My British colleague was choked then we tried to appease the atmosphere. we explained to our British colleague that in our culture, we are not allowed to ask about each other's wives then he asked his forgiveness, you see.

Two participants answered by 'No' to this question. They explained that there is no place for such emotions in business, as they have to be one hundred percent professional. For example, participant 01 stated that:

No. We are in a professional area we are supposed to be professional. We are not allowed to have judgments or show our emotions. Personally, I am open-minded and always ready to any situation. It doesn't affect me at all.

Question 12: According to you, how can verbal and nonverbal communication barriers with British colleagues be overcome?

This question was asked to the participants to suggest solutions to overcome communication barriers. To answer this question, each one of the participants gave his/her own opinion and solutions to overcome the different communication barriers encountered in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The participants provided different solutions, but the most recurrent ones consist of overcoming language barriers, cultural barriers, inappropriate or conflicting signals, and emotional barriers. To overcome language barriers, six participants suggested giving more importance to the study of English and enrolling in training programs on English for communication, English for specific purposes, and English for specific business purposes in order to enhance the language skills. In addition, they believed that this should start with the educational system, which should favor the English language. Participant 13 argued that:

By experience, I can say language training in English for specific purposes. You know each field has its own vocabulary, and our educational system doesn't focus on this and it favours the French language. So, we don't practice our English enough, that's why the best solution is language trainings for language barriers.

Other participants suggested solutions related to the cultural differences. They proposed that before starting working for an international company, it is preferable to know about each other's cultures, be open-minded, and accept each other's differences in order to avoid any problems related to culture. Participant 07 said that:

You know, culture is highly important for effective communication. I think we should make more efforts to overcome cultural barriers. (thinking). If you want to integrate an international company, try to know about their culture to avoid any problems of stereotyping or prejudice. Try to be open minded as much as possible.

To overcome nonverbal barriers such as conflicting signals, the participants recommended avoiding the inappropriate use of body language and unknown signals and facial expressions. For example, participant 10 claimed:

There is only one way. It is to avoid the inappropriate body language that can be interpreted in a negative way... I mean to use the well known internationally and the common between our countries to avoid any confusion...

The participants also viewed that in order to be professional, it is important to avoid inappropriate emotions in the business domain. According to them, such emotions have negative consequences and put at risk both the relation between workers and the organizational goals. Participant 08 said that ‘try to be professional as much as possible by avoiding any inappropriate use of expressions or inappropriate emotions that have negative impacts on both the workers and the company’.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the results obtained from the two synchronous online interviews conducted with twenty-four participants. The interviews questions were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis. The results revealed the existence of communication barriers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. In addition, the British and Algerian participants suggested solutions to overcome the barriers to communication. The next chapter is devoted to the discussion and interpretation of the results reported in this chapter.

Chapter Four:
Discussion of the findings

Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to the discussion and interpretation of the results obtained from the synchronous online interviews conducted with ten British and fourteen Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. It is divided into three sections that aim to answer the research questions addressed in the general introduction of this dissertation. The first part discusses the existing communication barriers faced by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. The second part deals with the discussion of the effects of those present barriers on communication between British and Algerian workers. The third and last section treats the suggested solutions and strategies to overcome communication barriers. The interviews questions aim at providing answers to the following study questions.

1. Do British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers?
2. If yes, what are the barriers that can disrupt the process of communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association?
3. How do these barriers affect communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association?
4. What are the strategies used by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association to overcome communication barriers?

1. Discussion of the Results Addressing the First and Second Research Questions

The first objective of the study was to investigate the existence of communication barriers between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. In order to do so, interview questions were designed to determine the existence and type of communication barriers. The results revealed that both British and Algerian workers encounter verbal and non-verbal barriers. Newman and Ober (2013, p. 46) stated that ‘Cultures differ not only in their

verbal languages but also in their nonverbal languages.’ Since workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association are from different countries and cultures, this explains the presence of such communication barriers.

British as native speakers of English and Algerians as speakers of English as a foreign language use English to communicate with one another in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. Language differences can be a barrier to communication. Indeed, among the verbal barriers faced by British and Algerian workers, we find language differences. In this sense, Buarqoub (2019, p. 68) explained that language barriers are ‘the most common communication barriers which cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations between people. They indicate difficulties that two people, who do not share a common language, face when they are trying to communicate with each other.’ Since British and Algerians do not share the same first language, language differences was a communication barrier mentioned by the participants. The British workers indicated that their Algerian colleagues have difficulties expressing themselves in English, especially at the beginning of their recruitment. Algerian workers, on the other hand, admitted having problems expressing themselves in English due to the influence of the French language. They stated that they have the tendency to think in French and speak in English. This major influence of the French language on Algerians is due to the colonial past and the Algerian educational system, which is centralized towards the use of French in various disciplines.

Another verbal barrier mentioned by the participants in the lack of adequate vocabulary in English. The majority of the Algerian participants consider their lack of vocabulary knowledge as an obstacle to communication with their British colleagues. In addition, when asked about the barriers encountered when communicating with Algerian colleagues, the British participants highlighted the Algerians’ lack of vocabulary in English. In order to communicate in any language, it is important to have sufficient vocabulary knowledge. Indeed, Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 10) stated that ‘before you can communicate an idea, you must have

the idea and know enough about it'. The Algerian interviewees specified that they had difficulties communicating in English with their British colleagues mainly at the beginning of their recruitment. However, after a few years of working in the company, they acquired a lot of vocabulary and improved their English. This entails that working experience played a vital role in improving the Algerian workers' English vocabulary. More specifically, the more they interacted with their British colleagues, the more they learned new words and expressions. Their improvement can also be attributed to the different training programs offered by Sonatrach BP Equinor Association to its employees to improve their level in English. Indeed, the Algerian participants indicated that they took part in training programs and this helped them to ameliorate their English.

Differences in the interpretation of words and expressions can also disrupt the communication process. The results of the two interviews demonstrated that misinterpretation of words and expressions occurs when workers use a word or an expression that may have different meanings. In the same vein, Newman and Ober indicated that (Ibid, p.10) 'Sometimes senders and receivers attribute different meanings to the same word or attribute the same meaning to different words. When this happens, miscommunication can occur'. This can be attributed to the fact that each word has a connotative and a denotative meaning. Newman and Ober (Ibid) emphasized that miscommunication occurs when communication participants assign different connotations to words. Since the participants have different first languages and cultural backgrounds, it is not a surprise that they attribute different connotations to words, which in turn causes miscommunication.

The use of ambiguous and abstract concepts also leads to miscommunication. According to Newman and Ober (Ibid, p.12):

An abstract word identifies an idea or a feeling instead of a concrete object. For example, communication is an abstract word, but newspaper is a concrete word, a word that identifies something that can be seen or touched. Abstract words are necessary to describe things you cannot

see or touch, but we run into difficulty when we use too many abstract words or when we use too high a level of abstraction.

Complementary to the answers of British and Algerian participants, this shows that the use of over-complicated and unfamiliar terms during their conversations affects the communication process when they misinterpret each other.

As Sonatrach BP Equinor Association is an international company, there are different staff members belonging to different cultures. According to the different declarations provided by the participants, these cultural differences can cause problems in communication. Among the cultural barriers related to verbal communication, the participants mentioned the use of slang words. Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 11) claimed that ‘...issues arise when the sender uses slang that receivers don’t understand, either because they’re excluded from a group or because of language differences.’ The Algerian employees indicated that they have difficulties understanding the slang words used by their British colleagues. Since British people have their own slang terms, this can explain why Algerians have difficulties understanding them. Slang is a very informal form of language used by people belonging to the same group, and it can cause miscommunication, confusion and ambiguity for the people who do not belong to the group. Therefore, it is important to avoid such expressions, especially in business contexts where the use of formal language is required.

Miscommunication can also occur due to non-verbal barriers. Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 96) claimed that ‘Cultures differ greatly in terms of how they interpret nonverbal behavior.’ Indeed, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures differ from one culture to another, and only a small number of these signs are universal. Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 48) went on and explained how the same gesture is interpreted differently by people belonging to different countries and cultures in the following:

Body language, especially gestures and eye contact, also varies among cultures. For example, our sign for “okay”—forming a circle with our fore finger and thumb— means “zero” in France, “money” in Japan, and a vulgarity in Brazil. Americans and Canadians consider eye contact

important. In Asian and many Latin American countries, however, looking a colleague full in the eye is considered an irritating sign of poor upbringing.

Communication barriers may arise from feedback, reaction, and our perception of the messages. Misinterpretation of nonverbal messages can arise when the sender and the receiver do not fully understand one another, particularly due to cultural differences. Newman and Ober (2013) stated that since culture differs from one community to another, conflicts might appear at the level of body language and facial expressions. However, this was not the case for the study participants. According to the British workers' declarations, they pay attention to their body language as much as possible since they have learned about the Algerian culture before integrating Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. They have prior knowledge about what could be appropriate and inappropriate in the Algerian context in terms of nonverbal cues.-These declarations were supported by the majority of the Algerian workers' sayings that nonverbal gestures actually facilitate the process of communication rather than impeding it.

Distractions refer to those physical disturbances that can disrupt the communication process. Among these distractions, the participants mentioned high temperature, the noisy engines they manipulate, and facemasks. The first two distractions are faced mainly in workshops where the employees work in open spaces and handle very noisy machines. Excessive environmental temperature and the noise produced by the engines can hamper one's ability to concentrate and obstruct the communication process. The results also demonstrated that the employees who work in the administration do not face these communication barriers. This could be justified by the fact that in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association administration, all the offices are equipped with air-conditioners and workers have to follow strict rules such as putting phones on silent mode in order to avoid disturbing their colleagues. Another important distraction mentioned by the participants is related to the use of facemasks. The rapid propagation of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) 'pushed physicians and health experts to recommend wearing facemasks during the pandemic.' (Mheidly *et al.*, 2020, p. 2). Wearing

facemasks can impede communication in the sense that they ‘muffle sounds and cover facial expressions that ease comprehension during live communication.’ (Ibid, p. 1).

Another nonverbal communication barrier faced by British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association is inappropriate emotions. The interviewed participants argued that inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotype are barriers that can affect the communication process. That is to say, judging people according to their positions, or denying their ideas because of their region or religion may cause frustration, offensiveness, hate, and grudge. Furthermore, they prevent the establishment and maintain of good relationships among workers. Therefore, adapting to international cultures, being open-minded, accepting new ideas, relying on logic instead of emotions are the keys to avoid any miscommunication problems. The same point was highlighted by Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 13) in the following:

Excessive anger can create an emotionally charged environment that makes reasonable discussion impossible. Likewise, prejudice (automatically rejecting certain people or ideas), stereotyping (placing individuals into categories), and boredom all hinder effective communication. These emotions tend to close your mind to new ideas and cause you to reject or ignore information that is contrary to your prevailing belief. Keeping an objective, open mind is important for effective communication—and for you to develop as a person.

1. Discussion of the Results Addressing the Third Research Question

Both verbal and nonverbal communication barriers affect the process of communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. Among the verbal barriers, we find language differences. Different first languages can impact the understanding of the message and affect the process of communication in a negative way. Indeed, Buarqoub (2019) indicated that language barriers prevent people from building relationships and cause misinterpretations that can result in conflict, irritation, offense, and violence. Algeria is a

multilingual society with two first languages (Berber and Arabic) and two foreign languages (French and English). The Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association tend to think in the first foreign language and convey their messages in the second foreign language. More specifically, they have the tendency to translate their thoughts and ideas from French into English, which is not always a successful communicative strategy due to the differences between the two languages. Language differences can lead to the misinterpretation of words and expressions. Since English is the second foreign language in Algeria, it is not a surprise that the Algerian workers misinterpret some words and expressions conveyed by their British colleagues. When the sender and the receiver attribute different meanings to the same message, this results in unsuccessful communication.

The findings also implied that inadequate knowledge or lack of vocabulary in English is a barrier that obstructs the communication process between British and Algerian employees. At the beginning of their recruitment, the Algerian staff possess insufficient words to express themselves and this negatively affects their communication with British colleagues. The Algerian interviewees highlighted the difficulty to discuss any given topic with their British colleagues owing to their lack of vocabulary knowledge that prevent them from conveying their ideas.

Another verbal barrier mentioned by the participants is the inappropriate use of expressions like slang words. The use of ambiguous expressions can lead to confusion, frustration, offense, and misunderstanding. According to Buarqoub (2019), the use of informal terms and expressions during communicative encounters can lead to the exclusion of certain groups. He also specified that such expressions lead to misunderstanding, thus the sender must avoid using them in order to ease the receiver's misunderstanding of the communicative message (Ibid). This is why the majority of the participants avoid using such expressions and stressed the need to avoid them in business contexts.

In international organizations, there exist different cultures and this is the case in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association where British and Algerian staff face communication barriers due to cultural differences. Among these obstacles, we find nonverbal barriers. For instance, what is appropriate in the Algerian culture might be inappropriate in the British culture and vice versa. Therefore, the wrong use and interpretation of body language, facial expressions and gestures can lead to a communication breakdown, and that is why it is important to use universally known gestures and avoid using signals that can cause misunderstandings. The participants of the study claimed that nonverbal signals actually facilitate the process of communication when used in a positive way. However, when these nonverbal cues are used inappropriately and misinterpreted by the receiver, this can lead to offensiveness, confusion and miscommunication.

The results also demonstrated that the majority of the interviewed participants viewed inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping as a barrier to effective communication. According to them, negative emotions are not acceptable in business due to their dangerous impact on both workers and the business organization. The participants stressed the need to avoid such emotions in business situations because they lead to conflicts, hurt feelings, offense, and spite. Newman and Ober (2013, p.13) shared the same point of view by saying ‘...too much emotional involvement can be an obstacle to communication. For example, excessive anger can create an emotionally charged environment that makes reasonable discussion impossible.’ For successful business communication, the participants highlighted the necessity to control oneself and remain professional during communication encounters.

Environmental noise such as poor acoustic and extreme temperature can also preclude the process of communication. Poor acoustic is a barrier mainly encountered in workshops. Oral communication between workers in workshops is rendered difficult owing to the loud noise of the machines and engines. The participants indicated that it is difficult to get the delivered

messages through the high noise level. Extreme temperature is also an environmental communication barrier mentioned only by British workers. In Hassi-Messaoud where Sonatrach BP Equinor Association is located, temperatures can be extremely high, especially in the summer. Since British people are not used to such high temperatures, this can impede their communication encounters. This can cause demotivation, distraction, and anger.

Moreover, the results revealed that the obligation to wear facemasks due to the COVID-19 pandemic complicates the process of face-to-face conversations. Facemasks reduce the loudness of the voice, lead to poor listening, and affect the understanding of the message. In addition, they hide facial expressions that are essential in face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the workers had to work remotely from home. In order to conduct business meetings and discuss important business matters, Sonatrach BP Equinor Association staff had to use the application 'TEAMS'. This application makes it possible for co-workers to work together when they are away from the office. However, communicating via TEAMS has its drawbacks since the communication participants faced some disruptions due to the bad network. This in turn can affect the sending and receiving of messages.

In summation, it can deduced that 'effective communication is difficult to achieve. In today's globalized world, effective communication is essential to building relationships between people by using verbal and non-verbal language as a tool of communication.' (Buarqoub, 2019, pp. 68-69). However, both verbal and nonverbal messages should be interpreted correctly in order for successful communication to occur.

2. Discussion of the Result Addressing the Fourth Research Question

The data obtained from the last question of each interview are used to answer the last research question. We asked both British and Algerian participants to offer suggestions to overcome verbal and nonverbal barriers they face in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. All

workers agreed that communication barriers should be overcome because of their negative impact on business and relations between workers.

The most suggested solution by British participants is to be patient with Algerian colleagues and recognize that they are speakers of English as a second foreign language. They indicated that they are ready to repeat messages or explanations several times till their co-workers get the intended meaning. Indeed, the Algerian participants stated that their British colleagues are open-minded and have no problem repeating the same message several times if they do not pick up the exact meaning. The British participants also highlighted the importance of speaking clearly and slowly. This is important because the Algerian participants pointed out that they have difficulties understanding the messages conveyed by their British colleagues owing to their accent and speed of speech. In order to overcome this barrier, the Algerian interviewees stressed the need to ask for repetition and clarification if they come across unclear messages. Therefore, being patient, slowing down, pronouncing words clearly, and repeating communicative messages can be effective ways to eliminate language barriers.

Another suggested solution to overcome language barriers came from the Algerian participants. They emphasized the need to give English more importance in the Algerian educational context and enroll in special training programs in English for Specific Purposes to improve their business communication skills.

In this sense, the British participants suggested that their Algerian colleagues should work at improving their communication skills. Writing emails and reports are essential means of communication in business organizations. Therefore, it is important for employees to improve their writing skill and deliver professional, structured and proofread written messages. Registering in training programs where they can improve both oral and written communication can also be an effective way to overcome language barriers.

Another suggested solution is to enlarge the cultural knowledge. Being aware of each other's cultures and enriching cultural knowledge are important factors in cross-cultural communication because they promote understanding and tolerance. Therefore, before integrating an international company, it is important to have sufficient knowledge about the other culture. The British participants, for instance, indicated that before coming to Algeria and starting working in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association, they educated themselves about some aspects of the Algerian culture. In the same line of thought, Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 45) declared that 'If you want to do business abroad, you need to understand different cultures and adapt to the local language of business.'

Among cultural differences, we find nonverbal signals. In order to overcome nonverbal barriers, the Algerian participants recommended their British colleagues to avoid using unknown signs and facial expressions. In order to avoid any communication breakdown, it is recommended to know about the other culture and use positive body language and universal gestures and facial expressions. According to Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 72), 'many of these expressions [facial expressions] have the same meaning across different cultures.'

Another nonverbal barrier that needs to be eliminated is inappropriate emotions. Due to their negative impact on business and relations among colleagues, the Algerian participants stressed the need to avoid such emotions in business contexts and suggested being professional. To be professional in business, it is recommended to be open-minded and flexible and avoid tension and undesirable feelings. In order to focus on the real objectives of business, workers should be professional at the workplace, respect their colleagues, and put aside any inappropriate emotion. In the same perspective, Newman and Ober (Ibid, p. 77) recommended that:

Regardless of whom you're listening to or what the topic is, keep your emotions in check. Listen objectively and empathetically. Be willing to accept new information and new points of view,

regardless of whether they mesh with your existing beliefs. Concentrate on the content of the message rather than on its source.

Conclusion

The present chapter is devoted to the discussion and interpretation of the data collected from the two synchronous online interviews conducted with ten British and fourteen Algerian participants. This chapter provided answers to the main research questions raised in the general introduction of this dissertation.

General Conclusion

This dissertation investigated the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. More precisely, study sought to reach four main objectives. The first objective aimed to determine whether British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers. The second objective attempted to identify and highlight all the barriers that interrupt the process of business communication between British and Algerian workers. The third objective endeavored to investigate the impact of these barriers on communication. Finally, the last objective strived to gather the strategies suggested by British and Algerian workers to overcome these barriers and improve communication.

In order to reach these objectives, answer the study questions and test the validity of the research hypotheses stated in the general introduction, we adopted the qualitative method for the collection and analysis of data. In order to collect the required data, we conducted two sets of synchronous online interviews with ten British and fourteen Algerian participants who work in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association situated in Hassi Messaoud using ‘TEAMS’ application. The obtained data from the eleven questions addressed to British workers and the twelve questions administered to the Algerian staff were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis.

The findings that we discussed in the discussion chapter provided answers to the research questions. The result of the first and second research questions showed that British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association face several barriers to effective communication. These obstacles can be verbal and nonverbal. This confirmed the existence of barriers to

effective communication between British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. Therefore, the results confirmed the first and second research hypotheses that are

“Both British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association encounter communication barriers” and “Both verbal and nonverbal barriers can disrupt communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association.”

The findings also demonstrated that these barriers have a negative impact on the relationship between workers and on business communication. Thus, this confirms the third advanced hypothesis that states, “These barriers have a negative impact on communication between British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association”.

In order to overcome these communication barriers, both British and Algerian staff suggested some remedial strategies. The interview participants indicated that they do their best to avoid situations that can cause embarrassment, frustration, and confusion. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis that “Both British and Algerian workers in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association use strategies to overcome communication barriers” is confirmed.

It is worth mentioning that the present study has faced some limitations that prevented the achievement of the objectives set during the process of data collection. The first limitation concerned the data collection tools. We intended to rely on three data collection instruments: an interview with British workers and another with the Algerian staff plus workplace observation. Permission to conduct this research was obtained from Sonatrach BP Equinor Association and signed by the vice president of the company, the head of the department of English and our supervisor (See Appendix 3). However, the pandemic of COVID-19 and the serious sanitary conditions did not permit us to conduct the workplace observation and face-to-face interviews. More precisely, the third wave of COVID-19 that Algeria experienced in July and August 2021 led to the closure of the company and this prevented us from going to Hassi-Messaoud (See Appendix 4). An observation would have added more value to our investigation and allowed us to observe how the participants interact in the workplace. Some barriers such as misinterpretation of passed instructions or conflicting signals can be better extracted through observation. The second limitation is that the two interviews were conducted online via ‘TEAMS’ application. During the third wave of COVID-19, Sonatrach BP Equinor Association staff worked from home and this obliged us to conduct the interviews by audio calls rather than

face-to-face. The last limitation concerned the duration of the interviews. To be more specific, we were obliged to conduct the two interviews in one day with an interview length restricted to ten minutes per interviewee (See Appendix 4).

The main aim of our study was to identify the communication barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association. This work could be conducted in another organization or workplace. From the collected data, the interviewed participants highlighted the existence of barriers related to the written form of communication (writing emails, business documents, and preparing reports). Thus, investigating barriers to written business communication can be a relevant research topic. Finally, future studies could investigate barriers to effective communication in other domains such as medicine and information technology.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Questions for British Workers

We are Lilia Belhamiche and Amel Iguer. We are Master two students, in “Language and Communication”, enrolled in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. This interview is part a research project entitled “Business Communication Barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association in In Salah Gas, Hassi Messaoud (Ouargla, Algeria.)”. Our objectives in this research are to highlight the different communication barriers faced by British and Algerian workers in this company and find out how these barriers can be overcome. Our research results will be used for academic purpose. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential. Thanks for taking the time to conduct the interview with us.

1. How long have you been working in this company?
2. English is the tool of communication used in this company. Do you find any obstacles or barriers when communicating with the Algerian staff? If yes, what are these barriers?
3. During your work experience in this company, have you already faced any problems related to language differences? If yes, can you please give us an example?
4. Do you think that differences in the interpretation of words and expressions can cause communication problems with Algerian colleagues? If yes, can you please explain?
5. How can the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts cause miscommunication with Algerian colleagues?
6. To what extent does the inappropriate use of expressions, such as slangs, jargon and euphemisms, affect the communication process with Algerian colleagues?
7. Does environmental noise, such as poor acoustics, extreme temperature and uncomfortable seating, disrupt the communication process? If yes, how?

8. Do body language and facial expressions facilitate or complicate the process of communication with Algerian colleagues? Please, explain.
9. As you know, nonverbal signals vary from one culture to another. Have you encountered any communication problems related to the use of inappropriate or conflicting signals with Algerian colleagues? If yes, please describe the situation.
10. Do you view inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping as a barrier to effective communication with Algerian colleagues? Why or why not?
11. According to you, how can verbal and nonverbal communication barriers with Algerian colleagues be overcome?

Appendix 2

Interview Questions for Algerian Workers

We are Lilia Belhamiche and Amel Iguer. We are Master two students, in “Language and Communication”, enrolled in the department of English at Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou. This interview is part a research project entitled “Business Communication Barriers faced by British and Algerian staff in Sonatrach BP Equinor Association in In Salah Gas, Hassi Messaoud (Ouargla, Algeria.)”. Our objectives in this research are to highlight the different communication barriers faced by British and Algerian workers in this company and find out how these barriers can be overcome. Our research results will be used for academic purposes. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential. Thanks for taking the time to conduct the interview with us.

1. How long have you been working in this company?
2. As French is officially a foreign language in Algeria, how do you find yourself facing the obligation to communicate with the English language inside the company?
3. Since you have to communicate in English, do you face any obstacles or barriers when communicating with British colleagues?
4. Have you studied ESBP (English for specific Business Purposes) or English for Communication before or after your recruitment? If yes, how did this help you to communicate with British colleagues?
5. Do you think that your lack of inadequate knowledge and vocabulary in English is an obstacle to effective communication with your British colleagues? If yes, please explain how?
6. Have you ever misinterpreted a word or an expression conveyed by a British colleague? If yes, how did you overcome this barrier to communication?

7. Have you faced any obstacles to communication due to the use of abstract and ambiguous concepts by your British colleague? If yes, how did you manage to overcome this barrier?
8. To what extent does the inappropriate use of expressions, such as slangs, jargon and euphemism, affect your communication with British colleagues?
9. Nonverbal communication (body language and facial expressions) differs from one culture to another. Do you think that non-verbal signals facilitate or complicate the process of communication with British colleagues?
10. To what extent does environmental noise, such as poor acoustics, extreme temperature and uncomfortable seating, disrupt the communication process?
11. Do you view inappropriate emotions such as anger, prejudice and stereotyping as a barrier to effective communication with Algerian colleagues? Why or why not?
12. According to you, how can verbal and nonverbal communication barriers with British colleagues be overcome?

Appendix 3

Research Authorization

وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE
• ٧٨٤٣٤١ : ٥٤ ١٢٤٧ : ١١ ٤٧ ٧٤ : ١٠ ٧٤ : ٥٤ ١
X. ٥٧. ١٤٧ ١ ١٢٤ : ١٢ : ٧. X ٤٧ ٤٤١ ٥١ ٧٤ : ١٢ : ١٢ : ١
X. ١٢ ٧٧. ٤٧ ١ ١ ٥٤ ١٢ ٤٧ ٤٧ ٧ ٧٤ : ١٢ : ٤٧ ١

UNIVERSITE MOULOUD MAMMERI DE TIZI-OUZOU
FACULTE DES LETTRES ET DES LANGUES
DEPARTEMENT : ANGLAIS
ANNEE UNIVERSITAIRE : 2020/2021



جامعة مولود معمري - تيزي وزو
كلية الآداب واللغات
قسم الإنجليزية

Demande d'autorisation de mener une enquête de terrain en milieu professionnel (entreprise)

Nom de l'établissement d'accueil : ASSOCIATION SONATRACH BP EQUINOR, OOC IN SALAH GAS Hassi Messaoud (Ouargla, Algérie)

Madame / Monsieur,

Nous avons l'honneur de vous demander de bien vouloir autoriser :

Mlle BELHAMICHE LILIA, née le 26/06/1998 à AIN EL HAMMAM, TIZI OUZOU
&
Mlle IGUER AMEL, née le 08/02/1996 à AZAZGA, TIZI OUZOU

Etudiantes en master II

Spécialité : Langue et Communication

Domaine : Lettres et Langues Etrangères

Département : Anglais, Faculté : Lettres et Langues Etrangères

Université : Mouloud Mammeri de Tizi Ouzou

A collecter des données de leur corpus d'étude dans votre établissement, pour au moins deux journées, en vue de préparer leur mémoire de fin de cycle II (Master), intitulé :

Business Communication Barriers faced by British and Algerian Staff in ASSOCIATION SONATRACH BP EQUINOR, OOC IN SALAH GAS Hassi Messaoud (Ouargla, Algérie)

Et cela sans incidence financière, le transport, l'hébergement et la restauration étant à la charge des stagiaires elles-mêmes.

En comptant sur votre collaboration, nous vous prions, Madame / Monsieur, de prendre les dispositions nécessaires afin de faciliter le travail de ces étudiants

Encadrant : Dr. BERBAR Katia

Signature

Le Chef de Département
Département
D'Anglais

Signature
Le Chef de Département
Département
D'Anglais
Mohammed HADDADOU

Avis de l'Organisme d'Accueil

Avis favorable

Mohamed Tarahim ANNOU
Vice Président de Salah Gas
SONATRACH - BP EQUINOR

Appendix 4

Emails from Sonatrach BP Equinor Association

Email A

De : HR Training 1 <HRTraining1@jvgas.com>
Date: dim. 25 juil. 2021 à 16:17
Subject: RE: Authorization request
To: lilia Bel <lilia.xena98@gmail.com>

Bonjour,

Nous vous informons que la situation sanitaire actuelle ne nous permet pas de vous accueillir et ce pour vous éviter des risques sur votre propre santé.

Salutations,

Hichem SMATI

Association SONATRACH BP EQUINOR
OOCs In Salah Gas & In Amenas
Tel: 029 74 16 01 Ext: 6203
Fax: 029 74 16 31
Fibre SH: 2333 6203
Mobile Personnel: 0661 42 42 43
Mobile Professionnel: 06 55 57 00 27
Direct Line: +44 (0) 1224 41 6203

Email B

From: HR Training 1
Sent: 04 October 2021 15:11
To: lilia Bel (lilia.xena98@gmail.com) <lilia.xena98@gmail.com>
Cc: HR Train Supervisor <HRTrainSupervisor@jvgas.com>
Subject: FW: Authorization request

Bonjour,

Nous vous informons que nous avons eu les accords nécessaires pour l'organisation des entretiens à distance. A cet effet, nous vous prions de bien vouloir préparer des interviews qui ne doivent pas dépasser 10 minutes par personnes.

Par ailleurs nous vous prions de nous fixer , dans les meilleurs délais , la date de déroulement des entretiens (via **Microsoft TEAMS**).

Salutations,

Melle Afaf BEN DERRADJI
HR Training 1
Association SONATRACH BP EQUINOR
OOCs In Salah Gas & In Amenas
Tel: +213 29 74 16 01 Ext: 6203
Mobile: 06 55 57 00 27
Fibre SH: 2333 6203