

Hiba ZEROUALI

Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary

hibazerouali@student.elte.hu

ALGERIAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMMON GROUND IN BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY IN HUNGARIAN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract: In the context of the increasing cultural diversity in Hungary, common ground remains largely unidentified, thereby hindering the development of strategies that create a meaningful intercultural communication between Algerians and Hungarians. The current research investigated how shared experiences, values, and cultural practices are perceived to shape interactions. Drawing on the results of a questionnaire distributed to 40 Algerian individuals studying in Hungary, and through a mixed-method approach, the collected data were treated using SPSS and MAXQDA software. Additionally, via thematic analysis, the study examines instances of cultural convergence and divergence, stereotypes, and practices for overcoming communicative challenges. The findings accentuated the significance of identifying and leveraging shared understanding as a foundation for fostering empathy and mutual respect. However, they ascertained that language barriers are not the main factor affecting intercultural communication virtuosity. Eventually, this research elaborates on the complex interplay between identity and strategy where embracing diversity is a proof of existence of both core and emergent common ground conceptions. To sum up, it provides valuable insights into the cultivation of cross-cultural comprehension across diverse contexts for further discussion.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, Algerian, mixed-method, common ground

1. Introduction

According to Clark (1996), common ground is a prerequisite for a conversant to perceive knowledge from another individual (as cited in Keszkes, 2013). As a matter of fact, this concept is viewed in different approaches among which is the same theory, supporting the notion as specialized mental representations existing a priori, that is essential for prosperous communication. However, on the other side, Keszkes and Zhang (2009) highlighted a more dynamic view of common

ground as an emergent property, where it is conceptualized not as fixed knowledge but as constantly evolving during interactions. Therefore, communication involves continuous adjustments and co-construction by participants, emphasizing a more trial-and-error process in intercultural dialogue. By considering these perspectives on common ground, one can observe its crucial role in intercultural communication by providing a basis for communal understanding, facilitating effective dialogue, and creating a shared context for interaction. The continuous updating and revision of common ground during communication help establish a coherent and meaningful exchange across cultural boundaries.

Clark and Brennan (1991) proposed the theory of grounding in communication to highlight the importance of mutual understanding when cultural and linguistic differences exist. Therefore, this common knowledge forms the basis for repair which is vital in intercultural settings where language and cultural backgrounds differ. In Hungary, the latest census data signify that the foreign-national population increased significantly, growing from 350,000 to nearly 430,000 over recent years, with nearly one quarter of the capital's population being non-Hungarian (Sarkadi, 2024). Also, the official quotas for Algerian students were raised from 35 to 100 student (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad, 2023). In direct response to this change, an association to represent the community was created by members who have been in Hungary for more than 15 years. Their aim is to support integration by sharing their experience and teaching the language as well. Despite this escalating diversity and the presence of sizeable communities, from Algeria and beyond, the intercultural connection that relates the different communities remains underexplored while common ground can serve as a foundation for successful social coherence (Bajzát, 2023).

The current paper elaborates on the shared common ground by analyzing the strategies employed to build a constructive intercultural communication. Accordingly, this study takes a narrower scope of intercultural pragmatics using a qualitative analysis targeting Algerians who are residing in Hungary for the purpose of studying. Using a semi-structured questionnaire, 40 students participated to express their perceptions and share experiences in managing misunderstandings and building rapport. This aligns with the broader understanding in intercultural pragmatics that successful communication requires awareness of diverse cultural norms and communication patterns. At the end, this theory provides the conceptual tools to analyze how communication succeeds or fails due to the presence of common ground in such a socially and culturally diverse country like Hungary.

2. The role of common ground in shaping intercultural communication

The socio-cognitive approach emphasizes that common ground is a dynamic construct which is mutually constructed by interlocutors throughout the communicative process. The core and emergent components join in the construction

of common ground in all stages although they may contribute to the construction process in different ways, to different extents, and in different phases of the communicative process (Kesckes and Zhang, 2009).

People tend to interpret things based on their own experiences which influence interaction. In other words, interlocutors, being egocentric, depend merely on their individual perception rather than what they have in common (Kim, 2023). During the interaction, they apply cooperation as a driving force to react to non-understanding for instance (Mustajoki, 2023). Ultimately, cooperation and egocentrism are both present in all stages of communication to a different extent. Therefore, the socio-cognitive approach is a necessity in revising the notion of common ground with a view that pays equal attention to the aforementioned aspects. The interplay of both with the adaptation of new perceptions result in a highly dynamic communication (Diedrichsen, 2023). Under the same track, intention is considered a dynamically changing phenomenon that is the main organizing force in the communicative process. It is not only private, individual, pre-planned and a precursor to action, but also emerging and social (Kesckes and Zhang, 2009).

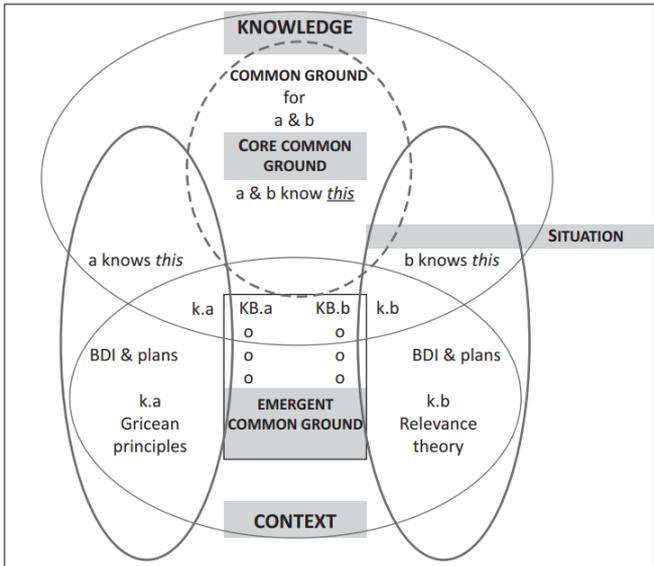


Figure 1. Core and emergent common ground with shared knowledge (Nolan, 2023)

Kesckes (2013) claimed that by integrating the pragmatic and cognitive approaches and incorporating varying sources, there are two sides of common ground: core common ground and emergent common ground. The former refers to the relatively static, generalized, common knowledge that belongs to a certain speech community as a result of prior interaction and experience, whereas the latter

pertains to the relatively dynamic, particularized, private knowledge created in the course of communication that belongs to the individual.

Based on Figure 1, core common ground is depicted through what a and b know and presume they share. In the case of intercultural encounters, it is typically limited which depends on the individual knowledge base, and this is the source of potential misunderstanding. Therefore, interlocutors work to move the individual boxes k.a and k.b into the emergent common ground to locate egocentrism and cooperation together. That is why this study uses a socio-cognitive basis to investigate mechanisms by which participants include in their new situations (Nolan, 2023).

3. The socio-cognitive approach

Salience is understood as the dominance of certain signs, entities, and phenomena relative to others, a phenomenon deeply intertwined with language, culture, and perceptual contexts. Through three distinct characteristics, the Socio-cognitive Approach (SCA) diverges from previous and contemporary perspectives on salience. It highlights the reciprocal relationship between language, production, and comprehension. Thus, speakers' and listeners' linguistic behaviors are influenced by salience in both processes. Eventually, this approach extends the scope of salience beyond linguistic factors, acknowledging the significant role of perceptual salience. The interaction between linguistic and perceptual salience shapes both production and interpretation of language. Hence, the cultural and linguistic specificity of salience emphasizes that its influence is contingent upon individuals' experiences, encounters, and linguistic backgrounds (Kecskes, 2010).

Several studies, among which the current study, have attempted to answer the questions of how people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds act and react in intercultural discourse; how common-ground or intercultural understanding is established, and what new discourse structures result from intercultural communication (Lee-Wong, 2002; Shea, 1994; Ningsih, 2019). Henceforth, the researcher considers it appropriate to place this investigation within an intercultural pragmatics framework, though a socio-cognitive view was necessary for the current theoretical approach.

The Algerian and Hungarian participants arrive with distinct cultural senses and formulaic repertoires that constrain expectations and lexical-pragmatic interpretations. According to Allan (2023), in momentary exchanges, grounding, clarification or metapragmatic marking generate emergent common ground that can override or reframe initial mismatches.

Many apparent failures stem not from the lack of linguistic competence but from divergent core assumptions or what we call culture sense. As interlocutors begin with egocentric presumptions, they tend to adjust them via grounding operations including acknowledgment, verification, and repair to build transient shared meaning. Ultimately, this will result in successful mutual understanding falling under emergent

common ground (Nolan, 2023). Common ground as a cognitive object contributes to the interpretation of the Algerian Hungarian case by locating, within the experiences, how common ground originates to specify the operations through which participants accommodate their previous knowledge to the new evolving one.

4. Research methodology

The main problem of a floundered communication is that interactants have very little common ground. They need to co-construct it in the conversational process (Kecskes, 2013). Hence, the study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the views and perceptions expressed by Algerians studying in Hungary in connection with establishing common ground for effective intercultural communication?

2. What are the key factors affecting intercultural communication mastery?

3. In what ways do the strategies used by Algerians students facilitate intercultural communication?

The primary objective of any research is to address research questions by utilizing a specific research approach. There are primarily two approaches to research: quantitative and qualitative (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative research involves collecting and analyzing numerical data to test hypotheses or make statistical inferences. Qualitative research, on the other hand, focuses on collecting and analyzing non-numerical data such as words, images, and observations to gain insights into the meanings and experiences of individuals or groups. In recent years, there has been an increasing use of mixed-method research, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem.

On the one hand, what best achieves the research aim is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure the credibility and validity of the results, providing breadth and depth to understand and analyze strategies of intercultural interactions. Essentially, this emphasizes the significance of directing attention towards identifying patterns of misunderstanding, and also the way cultural backgrounds influence these patterns. The research not only quantifies data extracted from the open-ended questions but also uses them to support the numerical frequencies in order to achieve its aim (Karasz & Singelis, 2009).

a. Participants

Sirwan (2025) suggests that a range of 20 to 40 participants is sufficient for studies on community attitudes, as this sample size helps capture a wide spectrum of perspectives. Referring to Algerian students' messenger groups and the

researcher's academic community, an online questionnaire was sent; to which 40 students responded. The target population is specific and hard to sample randomly. The convenience sampling design was chosen due to the selection of respondents based on the easy accessibility and known contacts (Kumar, 2019). As a result, its use presents significant challenges for representativeness and generalizability. In other words, as the study falls under an exploratory nature, the research results' quality is prioritized over generalization although transparency about its limitations is maintained. It is among the pioneering studies in the field, and it can be tested with more randomized sampling in the future with specific immigrant communities.

b. Data elicitation techniques

An online semi-structured questionnaire was designed, a mixture of closed and open-ended questions, via Google Forms. One aspect is that online questionnaires, as a tool to collect data, pave the way to meet the appropriate conditions to match an exploratory design of the study with the minimum efforts in terms of time, cost, design, and administration (Dörnyei, 2003).

To pilot the questionnaire, a sample group of 12 students participated to check for clarity of questions, coherence, and consistency of responses. Therefore, the designed online questionnaire included four main parts in the following order: The first section collected data about the sample's profiles, and the second section tackled the participants' intercultural communication experience. In addition, the researcher focused on the cultural differences and connections as perceived within the Algerian community. The final section was devoted to investigating Algerian perspectives on conventional Hungarian stereotypes. This structure was validated by two professors who are experts in intercultural pragmatics and discourse. Construct validity confirmed its usability and alignment with intercultural communication theory and framework. Content validity ensured that the methodological instrument covers all relevant dimensions of the research problem.

The demographic data alongside the personal perceptions from the questionnaire were analyzed using the 27th version of SPSS software. Due to the qualitative nature of the former, it is hard to measure them directly for interpretation. To reduce bias and subjectivity of these perceptions, they were objectified and captured using quantitative questions, specifically Likert scales and multiple-choice. This approach allows for a clear measurement but was essential for completing the study within a restricted timeframe due to the size of the sample. In addition to performing descriptive statistics, it was employed to visualize the findings. This involves inserting data from Google Forms into the software to create tables. Therefore, it converts the results into visual representations like bar charts and pie charts to illustrate the sample's answers. Such graphical output helps communicate quantitative findings effectively and make data more accessible and interpretable.

For a contextual depth, the questions that required extended answers were analyzed both thematically and using MAXQDA which was used to code the part where qualitative data were presented. That is to categorize and analyze textual data by data importation first. Afterwards, the step for coding after initial reading can describe what kind of data are illustrated. Assigning codes depends on the frequency of words and ideas which facilitates the division of concepts. Together, they handle perceptions on common ground to explore how these results arise according to different factors.

5. Analysis of the findings

Throughout this section, the results from the online questionnaire are organized, displayed, interpreted, and discussed starting with the quantitative elements moving to the qualitative ones.

5.1. The sample profiles

Based on the results shown in Figure 2, there are five different levels of proficiency in the Hungarian language reported among Algerian students: elementary, full professional, bilingual, professional working, and no proficiency. The majority of respondents (53.66%) indicated elementary proficiency, reflecting only a basic understanding of the language, while (36.59%) reported no proficiency, indicating a lack of knowledge or ability in Hungarian. A marginal percentage (4.88%) of participants reported full professional proficiency with minority share of students who have bilingual and professional working proficiency.

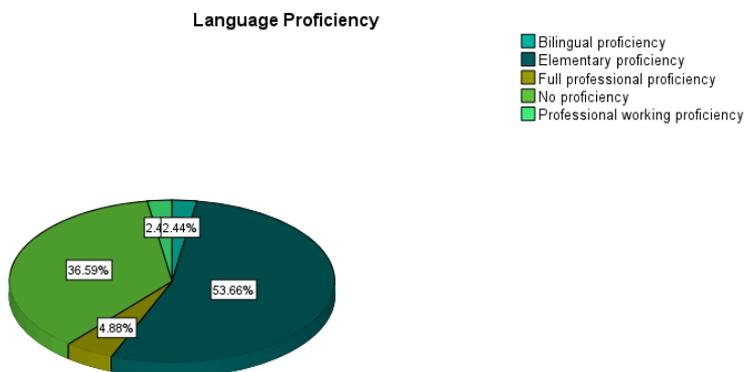


Figure 2. Hungarian Language Proficiency of Algerian Students

According to the data provided through a pie chart in Figure 3, it indicates that respondents differ in terms of their length of residence in Hungary. The majority

(41.46%) corresponds to students who have spent more than three semesters in the host country while (26.83%) indicated a duration of 2 semesters. Students who spent 1 semester only are in lower percentage of (21.95%). Finally, the smallest proportion (9.76%) corresponds to students who have spent more than one year in Hungary. These statistics offer insights into the distribution of lengths of stay among the surveyed population, with the majority having spent 2 years or more abroad.

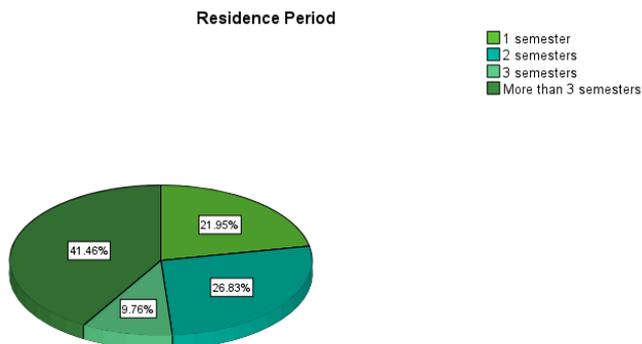


Figure 3. Algerian Students Duration of Residency

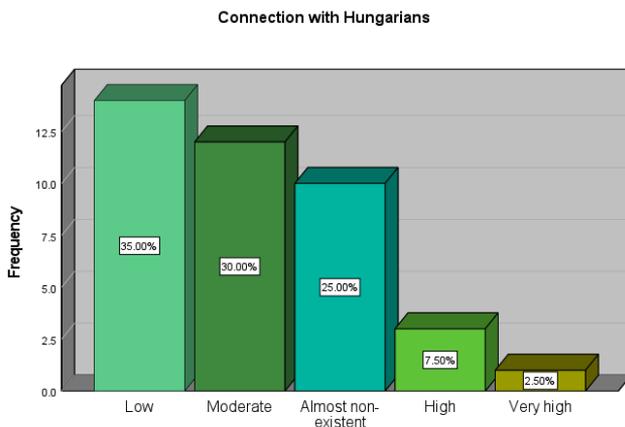


Figure 4. Experiences of Algerian Students Regarding their Connection with Hungarians

Figure 4 demonstrates that respondents have varying levels of connection with Hungarian people during their stay in Hungary. Approximately, three-fifths of respondents described their connection as “low” and “almost non-existent,” indicating a minimal or limited interaction with Hungarian individuals (60% of both). These findings were also supported by Németh et al. (2025) who also found that students’ interactions with Hungarians are quite rare. Meanwhile, a lower proportion

(30%) reported a “moderate” level of connection, signifying a somewhat balanced level of interaction with Hungarian people. On the other hand, only (10%) of the sample reported a “high” to “very high” level of connection, suggesting a strong and significant connection with Hungarian individuals during their time in Hungary.

5.2. Influence of language on intercultural communication effectiveness

When comparing Figure 4 results of the contact with Hungarians and the findings in Figure 5, a conclusion can be drawn about the reasons that would hinder such a match. To elaborate on that, respondents perceive varying degrees of impact of their knowledge of the Hungarian language on their intercultural communication effectiveness. 10 students (25%) reported that their knowledge of Hungarian has a “fair” influence on their communication, indicating that Hungarian language proficiency impacts their intercultural communication effectiveness. Similarly, (25%) of the sample expressed a “neutral” stance, indicating neither a significant hindrance nor facilitation. Meanwhile, 20% of students pointed out a “moderate effect,” implying that their language skills somewhat hinder their productiveness in intercultural communication. However, the two extremes received the minimal portion (15%). On the one hand, participants suggested that they are able to navigate intercultural interactions adequately using English only. On the other hand, the remaining (15%) was on the opposite side to support the significance of the language proficiency in such linguistic instances. These findings highlight the diverse perceptions regarding the role of language proficiency in intercultural communication depicting the fact that language is not the main problem hindering Algerian students from having an interculture within the Hungarian atmosphere.

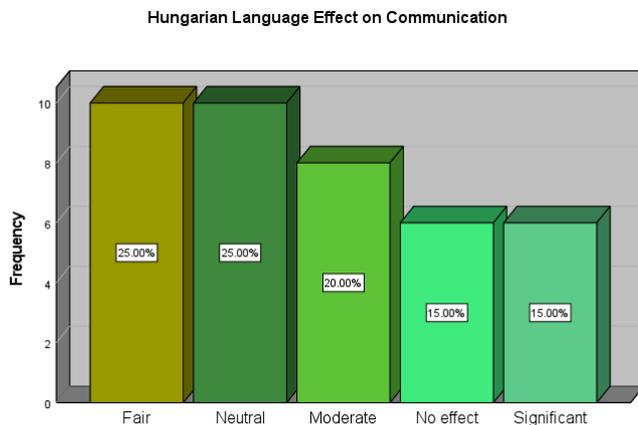


Figure 5. Algerian Students’ Perspective on the Influence of Hungarian Knowledge on Intercultural Communication

5.3. Strategies for facilitating intercultural communication

According to Kecskés (2013), participants can use several strategies to build common ground, which were provided for Algerian students to choose from in a multiple-choice question. In Figure 6, the most frequently selected strategy is awareness of cultural differences (25.25%), meaning that students recognize the importance of understanding both self and the interlocutor's cultural background and communication style to balance egocentric and cooperative perspectives. Finding common ground (18.18%) and embracing diversity (18.18%) also emerge as significant strategies, indicating that participants adapt to differing personal and situational contexts of communicators, which influence language choices and interpretations. In addition, they do not rely solely on predefined shared knowledge, but they also co-construct emergent common ground. Situational factors (17.17%) further emphasize the importance of context. A lower proportion of the participants (14.14%) recognizes that identifying commonalities in promoting effective intercultural communication is as considerable as any other strategy as well. Matching interlocutors' understanding (7.07%) is the least frequently mentioned strategy, suggesting that while important, it may not be as widely prioritized as other strategies. Overall, these findings underscore the need for students to employ a range of strategies to navigate diverse contexts successfully.

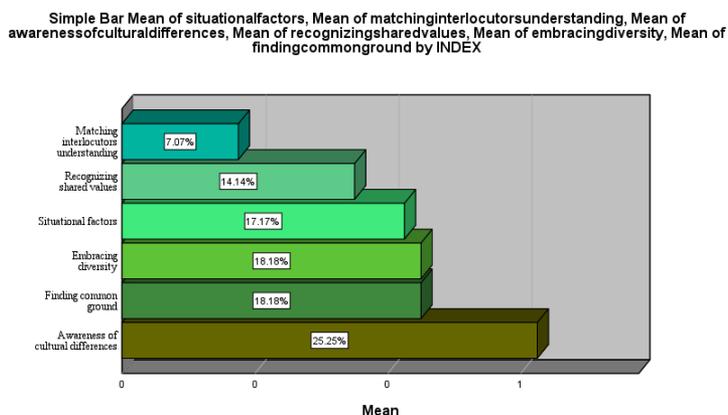


Figure 6. Algerian Students' Strategy Choice to Facilitate Intercultural Communication

5.4. Strategies for addressing and challenging preconceptions in interactions

It is evident from Figure 7 that being open-minded emerges as the most prevalent strategy (32.35%), highlighting the importance of fostering receptivity to diverse perspectives and actively challenging ingrained beliefs. Providing more resources to substantiate arguments (29.41%) represents another approach, suggesting the value

of empirical evidence in debunking stereotypes. Another notable trend depicted in figure 7 is offering firsthand accounts that defy stereotypes and foster empathy (20.59%). Meanwhile, setting boundaries appears to be a less common strategy (7.35%), indicating that while it might be chosen in sensitive situations, it may not be the primary method chosen for challenging stereotypes in such communication sets. Eventually, it makes it another supporting proof for the subsequent characteristics of Algerians. Respondents demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to how they are perceived by others, which is consistent with the fact that neglecting what people think is the least chosen choice to deal with preconceptions (4.41%).

Simple Bar Mean of being open minded, Mean of Narrating personal experiences, Mean of Providing more resources to prove your point, Mean of Setting boundaries, Mean of Neglecting what people think, Mean of Avoiding such conversations by INDEX

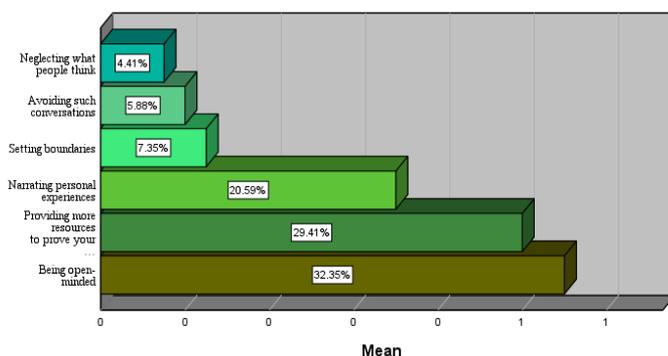


Figure 7. Algerian Students' Ways of Addressing Stereotypes

5.5. The contribution of cultural practices or traditions to the connection of both nations

A key observation from Figure 8 is that historical connections emerge as the most frequently cited shared value, with (30.77%) highlighting the significance of shared historical background and connections within the community. Culinary traditions follow closely behind, with (23.08%) of cases acknowledging the importance of food culture in shaping communal identity. Festivals and celebrations are mentioned by a smaller proportion, accounting for (11.54%), indicating a lesser but still notable aspect of shared cultural heritage. Interestingly, a significant portion of respondents (13.46%) chose mutual exclusivity, indicating that there are no shared aspects among the group and suggesting a diversity of perspectives within the community especially on religion. At the same level, participants pointed out resemblances in traditional music and dance (13.46%). Finally, multiple answers (5.77%) highlighted the shared concept of conventionalism under different illustrations. In the current case, such concept is related to how ethics are not

based on external reality but arise from conventions within a society. Norms and rituals, for instance, are grounded in social agreements through which Algerian and Hungarian create a consensus of expectations between individuals. Both conventionalism and mutual exclusivity were inferred based on the open-ended field in this multiple-choice question to convert them into numerical data.

Simple Bar Mean of HistoricalConnections, Mean of CulinaryTraditions, Mean of TraditionalMusicandDance, Mean of FestivalsandCelebrations, Mean of Theydonotshareanyaspecttogether, Mean of idontknow, Mean of Conventionalism by INDEX

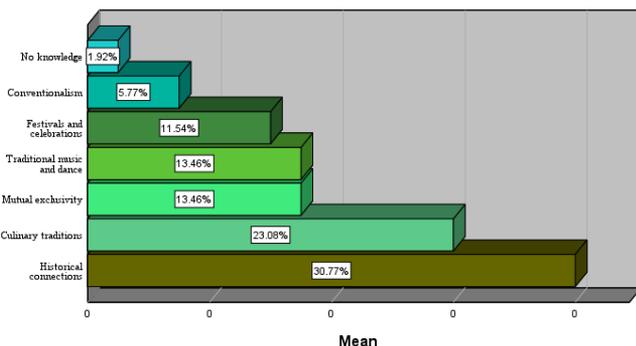


Figure 8. Students' Perceptions on the Cultural Practices that Connect Algerians and Hungarians

5.6. Algerian identity influence on communication

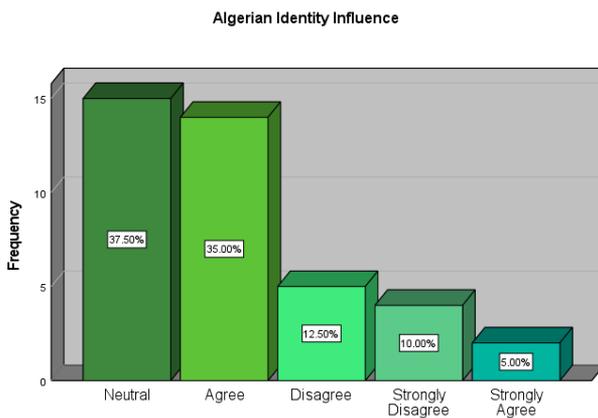


Figure 9. Algerians Student's Opinion about the Identity Influence

Figure 9 displays remarkable findings on Algerian students' perceptions about the effect of their identity. While (40%) agreed that their Algerian identity does influence these aspects, a lower but still significant proportion (37.5%) expressed a neutral stance. This suggests that many respondents neither strongly feel their Algerian

identity affects their communication style and interactions nor strongly feel that it does not. Conversely, (22.5%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed, implying a strong rejection of the notion that their Algerian identity plays a significant role in their communication style and interpersonal interactions in Hungary.

5.7. The different aspects of Hungarian and Algerian culture

General Cultural Differences	Seven Algerian students expressed a perception of stark contrasts between Hungarian culture and their own Algerian culture. Almost every aspect of Hungarian culture differs from theirs.
Language	The predominant difference mentioned by respondents is the language. While this does not directly relate to cultural practices, it significantly impacts their ability to engage with Hungarian culture fully.
Work Ethic	One respondent highlighted the Hungarian commitment to work as distinct from their own cultural norms, specifically differences in workplace behavior and social interactions.
Tradition, Cuisine, and Social Norms	Differences in tradition, cuisine, and social norms were observed by respondents, indicating variances in cultural practices, eating habits, and societal expectations. Six participants highlighted the prevalence of a drinking culture in Hungary, suggesting disparities in socializing and leisure activities compared to their country of origin. The perceived introverted tendencies among Hungarians were also mentioned by respondents, pointing to variations in socializing patterns and personality traits.

Table 1. Algerian Students' Perspective on the Differences Between the Two Cultures

5.8. Algerians' experience with sense of commonality in Hungary

A total of 11 responses indicated a lack of significant instances where the respondents felt a strong connection or commonality with Hungarians. This could suggest a perceived lack of meaningful intercultural interactions or shared experiences. However, other answers provided another perspective of this cultural context where there was a positive interaction with a Hungarian individual. Despite an accidental mishap, the respondent felt a strong sense of connection due to the responsible and respectful treatment received from the shopkeeper.

Another interesting connection is the existence of friendships. As an example, a strong bond was formed with a Hungarian friend who actively assists this Algerian student, shows genuine interest in their background, and respects cultural differences. Also, another instance was illustrated to explain the supportive nature of a Hungarian friend who helped a student in resolving a technical error that happened. It suggests that personal relationships play a crucial role in fostering intercultural connections. Not only that but also demonstrating care and concern for their well-being.

Being open to meeting new people can create opportunities to discover potential intercultural connections. One experience was where a shared meal led to an exchange of cultural knowledge and experiences, or a casual conversation in a coffee shop highlighting the potential for spontaneous interactions to foster a sense of commonality.

When individuals from different cultures find shared interests, values, or experiences, it provides a foundation for understanding and connection. Common ground allows for the bridging of cultural gaps and the development of a sense of familiarity and empathy.

5.9. Misconceptions and stereotypes about Algerians

Table 2 presents Algerian students' perceptions of Hungarians' misconceptions about Algeria.

Geographical confusion	Respondents noted that many Hungarians are unfamiliar with the location of Algeria and sometimes confuse it with other countries, such as Nigeria.
Race and wealth assumptions	Some Hungarians assume that Algerians or North Africans should be black, while others assume they are extremely rich. These misconceptions reflect underlying biases and lack of knowledge about the diversity of appearances and socioeconomic backgrounds within the Algerian society.
Language misconceptions	There's a common misconception that Algerians primarily speak French as their first language.
Dark side of stereotypes	North Africans were stereotyped for terrorism, economic migration, and strict religious beliefs mentioning not accepting friendships with others, reflecting a perception of cultural isolation and religious conservatism. These stereotypes perpetuate and contribute to prejudice and discrimination.
Perceptions of personality and intellect	Algerians or North Africans are lazy and not very smart, generalizing about the competences of individuals from these regions.

Table 2. Hungarians' Misconceptions about Algerians

Students use this one approach to correct misconceptions which is by providing accurate information about Algerian culture, heritage, and diversity. They explain the origins of North Africans, such as Amazigh, Arab, and Turkish influences, and highlight the cultural richness beyond simplistic racial categorizations. When faced with curiosity, some students choose to engage directly and respectfully with the person asking questions. They explain cultural differences without taking offense, recognizing that the other person might simply be seeking understanding. Another strategy involves sharing personal experiences and insights into Algerian life and the positive qualities of Algerians. This can help dispel stereotypes and foster mutual understanding and appreciation. In cases where derogatory remarks are

made, some individuals choose to respond with humor. By laughing off offensive comments like being called a terrorist, they disarm the situation and refuse to let such remarks affect them negatively. Eventually, these qualitative data match our quantitative results that tackled the Algerian students' strategies in addressing misconceptions when faced with Hungarians.

6. Discussion of the results

Algerian students positively perceive common ground as an effort to merge the mental representations of shared knowledge. They also have constructive attitudes to switch a negative situation based on misconceptions to a productive setting to facilitate interaction. This concept is present as memory that we can activate, shared knowledge that we can seek, and rapport that we can build, as well as knowledge that we can create in the communicative process (Kecskes and Zhang, 2009).

Although language is the most important means of communication, the first section of the study highlighted that the difficulty of intercultural communication goes beyond language. Some students have the Hungarian course as compulsory during their studies, and the majority of the sample have been in Hungary for more than one year. It is quite a short period to build a rapport for such distinct communities. However, they reported low to almost non-existent connection with the people. Still, this period is not enough for Algerians to adopt a language that is extensively different from Arabic, which is their mother tongue or Latin (languages they learned at school). To support this, Algerian students are allocated in dorms where only internationals reside, so this will lead to the lack of integration within the Hungarian community.

Another significant factor playing a role in the effect of Hungarian language on intercultural communication is the presence of English language alongside. As long as students have the chance to speak primarily in English, they would only use Hungarian on very rare occasions, which makes it more rational that some participants claim that lack of knowledge of Hungarian has no effect on their communication. However, since the highest percentage are people who have at least elementary proficiency, they know how Hungarian knowledge play a significant role in their communication.

According to the findings, other key factors in addition to language, be it English or Hungarian, affecting intercultural communication mastery can be depicted in participants' connection with each other. Since Algerians are experiencing from low to almost nonexistent connection with Hungarians, it results in difficulties having intentions to develop meaningful interactions.

When it comes to the intersection of identity, strategy, and common ground, the relationship can be elaborated in an interesting flow. As the awareness of cultural

differences is the most adopted strategy by Algerian students, it explains that they are culturally and psychologically conscious about the change they will undergo to be in a totally different country. Additionally, the biggest proportion of participants agreed that both cultures shared many aspects which added up to cooperation as interlocutors feel more connected having mutual thinking than egocentric when cultures diverge. Here, intercultural instances work by shifting salience from self-centric filter to an integrative angle.

Numerous components, like history and language, build an individual's identity, not to mention culture and religion. Algerian students are born and raised in a country where religious values shape their lifestyle and background. Therefore, they are mentally ready to see the contrasting nature of the surrounding they are going to, shifting from a Muslim to a non-Muslim nation. Their nature to seek acknowledgement is nationally known and depicted in choosing to be open minded for facing stereotypes. Their identity is highly related to the grounding elements they use to verify and repair in case of misunderstanding. The least they intend to do is neglect what the other interlocutors think about them as such opportunities allow them to express their patriotic sense.

Based on the answers, their explanation in such situations rely merely on clarification and willingness to narrate personal experiences using metapragmatic marking. This will eventually lead them to find the common ground in a linguistic context. It shows the link between sharing and narrating personal experiences with also providing more resources in an intercultural discussion and their opinion about historical connection between the two countries, which might be surprising for some.

These strategies underscore the importance of empathy, mutual respect, and leveraging shared understanding in fostering effective cross-cultural interactions. Factual, educational, collaborative approaches to facilitate communication are among the ways the participants use. However, there are other significant instances where humor was used to deflect. In other words, it is one strategy to de-escalate comments and prevent breakdowns. This is to include more reception to the new information allowing for the construction of new emergent common ground. This finding aligns with the theoretical understanding of common ground. In sensitive situations, humor functions primarily as a shield to avoid conflict, thereby preserving future interaction. Based on the socio-cognitive approach, humor lowers the egocentric barriers between interlocutors creating a positive context for emergent common ground. This is a highly adaptive communicative strategy to face challenges during intercultural linguistic exchange.

As the dialogue progresses, both parties' personal and socio-cultural contexts are incorporated for a collaborative meaning-making process (Kecskés, 2013). As this process might not be easy for people, participants struggle since it is a completely different context incorporating multiple backgrounds.

7. Limitations and recommendations

The limitations of the present study are crucial to help the readers avoid misinterpreting the research findings as they serve to elucidate some suggestions for further research studies. Starting with quantitative restrictions, the results are drawn upon perceptions from a relatively small sample size although it encompasses an in-depth qualitative analysis. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to broader Algerian-Hungarian relations. This is further compounded by the non-probability sampling strategy, convenience sampling specifically, to select participants. The latter were not easily accessible, which resulted in a not fully representative sample missing certain perspectives from the data. Eventually, this allows further research to expand the focus including the Hungarian sample in the orientation as well.

To follow up, for qualitative considerations and due to the nature of the study, questionnaires result in self-reported data that serve the participants' own experiences and attitudes. This allows for deeper, yet subjective angle limited by potential biases such as social desirability. The findings might be used as a start up for prospective research plans to align effectively with the actual behavior in real-time intercultural interactions, identifying articulated strategies for building common ground in different contexts.

8. Conclusion

This paper presented the findings of a narrow-scope study conducted on the role of common ground as a basis to have effective intercultural communication. The validity of the findings is supported by Zhou (2023) who reviewed what Kecskes claimed, and that common ground is inevitable in communication. The more common ground we activate, the better we are able to understand each other, and the more efficiently we achieve our desired goals. As Algerian students had the same opinion, they have chosen strategies that contribute to the development of such a background. In addition to the main findings, the research also sheds light on the influence of language proficiency, particularly Hungarian. From Algerians perspective during their studies in Hungary and supported by (Urhan Torun, 2016), language barriers are not the sole factor influencing effective communication, but also stereotypes about religion, ethnicity, and race.

The study illustrates the effect of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds on how individuals act and react in intercultural discourse. It also examines the strategies employed to establish common ground, such as finding commonalities, creating a sense of shared understanding, and seeking and activating shared knowledge. These strategies align with Kecskes' (2013) notion of emergent common ground, which is the dynamic, particularized knowledge created through the communicative process between individuals. To align with the findings of Michael (2017) about misconceptions, the paper discusses how Algerian students deal with cultural

differences and stereotypes from Hungarians, indicating the need to co-construct emergent common ground to bridge these gaps and foster mutual understanding.

Through the influence of Algerian identity and cultural practices on communication, the researcher showed how common ground is established demonstrating the interplay between cultural background and how it shapes interactions. Revealing the new discourse structures resulting from intercultural communication, the paper's exploration provides empirical support for Kecskes' (2013) theoretical framework, highlighting the dynamic nature of common ground in shaping cross-cultural interactions. The results supported the existence of shared history which eventually created the appropriate context for communication.

After cataloging what cultural differences and similarities exist between Algerian and Hungarian societies, the results demonstrate the pragmatic strategies including openness, empathetical skills, cognitive flexibility and adaptability students use for constructing effective intercultural conversations. Therefore, Algerian students tend to enlarge the central process moving from their individual knowledge base into a new constructed one. The study contributes to the contemporary theories on common ground and intercultural communication as a test on how interlocutors localize their non-existent core background to create a primary one based on communication. The results showed how participants are highly agentive in such situations which align with the conclusions of Kada Zair (2025). These mechanisms are not as linguistic as they seem, but embodiment and emotional regulation play a significant role in shaping such behaviors to base it on a cognitive model.

The research requires institutions like embassies and associations representing Algerians in Hungary, or worldwide, to integrate them through international events and activities where also Hungarians are provided the opportunity to have cultural understanding and flexibility. By incorporating them, students will have the opportunity to develop better attitudes towards adapting to a new setting with a clear purpose supporting diversity.

References

- Ahmed, S. K. (2025). Sample size for saturation in qualitative research: Debates, definitions, and strategies. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 5, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100171>
- Allan, K. (2023). The interdependence of common ground and context. In I. Kecskes (Ed.), *Common Ground in First Language and Intercultural Interaction* (pp. 7–24). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110766752-002>
- Bajzát, T. (2023). International students' intercultural challenges in Hungary. *Multidiszciplináris tudományok*, 13(3). 148–158 <https://doi.org/10.35925/j.multi.2023.3.16>
- Clark, H. H. (1996). *Using language*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2277/0521561582>
- Clark, H. H., & Brennan, S. E. (1991). Grounding in communication. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (127–149). <https://doi.org/10.1037/10096-006>

- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Diedrichsen, E. (2023). Grounding emergent common ground: Detecting markers of emergent common ground in a YouTube discussion thread. In I. Kecskes (Ed.), *Common Ground in First Language and Intercultural Interaction* (pp. 105–134). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110766752-006>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410606525>
- Geurts, B. (2018). Convention and common ground. *Mind & Language*, 33(2), 115–129. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mila.12171>
- Kada Zair, M. A. (2025). Cultural Awareness, stereotypes and communication skills in intercultural communication: The Algerian participants perspective. 10.48550/arXiv.2511.12369.
- Karasz, A., & Singelis, T. M. (2009). Qualitative and mixed methods research in cross-cultural psychology: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, 40(6), 909–916. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022109349172>
- Kecskes, I. & Zhang, F. (2009). Activating, seeking, and creating common ground: a socio-cognitive approach. *Pragmatics and Cognition*, 17(2):331–355. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.17.2.06kec>
- Kecskes, I. (2010). The paradox of communication: Socio-cognitive approach to pragmatics. *Pragmatics and Society*, 1, 50–73. 10.1075/ps.1.1.04kec
- Kecskes, I. (2013). *Intercultural pragmatics*. Oxford University Press USA. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892655.001.0001>
- Kim, E. (2023). The co-construction of common ground through exemplars unique to an ESL classroom. In I. Kecskes (Ed.), *Common Ground in First Language and Intercultural Interaction* (pp. 163–194). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110766752-008>
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Kumar, R. (2019). *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners* (4th ed). Sage Publications Limited.
- Lee-Wong, S. (2002). Contextualizing intercultural communication and sociopragmatic choices. *Multilingua*, 21(1), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2002.005>
- Michael, B.H. (2017). Intercultural misunderstandings: causes and solutions. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 21, 885–909. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9182-2017-21-4-885-909>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad. (2023). Home. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad. Retrieved from <https://www.mfa.gov.dz/>
- Mustajoki, A. (2023). From laboratory to real life: Obstacles in common ground building. In I. Kecskes (Ed.), *Common Ground in First Language and Intercultural Interaction* (pp. 59–80). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110766752-004>
- Ningsih, L. F. Y. (2019). Conversation analysis: Communication across cultures. *Avesina: Media Informasi Ilmiah Universitas Islam Al-Azhar*, 13(2), 29–35.
- Nolan, B. (2023). Understanding common ground as a cognitive object. In I. Kecskes (Ed.), *Common Ground in First Language and Intercultural Interaction* (pp. 25–58). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110766752-003>
- Sarkadi, Z. (2024). *Budapest: a multicultural city – Census 2022 results - Helpers Hungary*. Helpers Hungary. <https://helpers.hu/residence-permit/budapest-a-multicultural-city-census-2022-results/>
- Shea, D. P. (1994). Perspective and production: Structuring conversational participation across cultural borders. *Pragmatics*, 4, 357–389. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.4.3.06she>
- Urhan Torun, B. (2016). Intercultural communication: A literature review. *İnönü Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi (İNİF E-Dergi)*, 1(1), 139–151.
- Zhou, X. (2023). [Review of the book *The Cambridge Handbook of Intercultural Pragmatics* by Istvan Kecskes. *Discourse Studies*, 25(5), 727–729. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614456231166231>