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An evaluation of intercultural communication challenges and their impacts on academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students.

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Chapter One

1.1   Introduction and background to the study

This study aims to evaluate intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of University of Fort Hare students. Intercultural communication has been an issue ever since nations started to link together, particularly in trading and job market. However, people have been looking at ways of fitting in and being able to meet halfway with regards to accommodating one another's culture during the process of intercultural communication. Many scholars have given explicit definitions on intercultural communication, but some are not deep enough to make it clearer and more understandable. Scholars like Pinto (2000) define intercultural communication as communication between individuals or groups from distinctive cultures.

Pinto (2000) also touches the issue of other authors ignoring the goal of communication between these cultures when they are exchanging ideas. The afore-mentioned author further highlights that a number of scholars are using different terms in referring to the same term as "intercultural communication," and such terms include: "trans-racial communication" (Smith, 1973), "Inter-racial communication" (Rich. 1974), "cross-cultural communication" (Ruben, 1986), and "Inter-ethnic communication" (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). This, therefore, adds clarity to the definition of intercultural communication as a process of communication between two or more individuals of distinctive cultures for achievement of a specific goal. Moreover, it could be also the process of exchanging ideas between subcultures.

It is, therefore, important to note that Intercultural communication refers to the communication which takes place amongst individuals from distinctive cultures.

Gudykunst (2003a) cited in Sven Rosenhouer (2007) notes that intercultural communication is used to describe communication between people from different cultures and focuses on communication. When two or more people from different cultures interact and exchange information amongst them, which is called intercultural communication.

This study is, consequently, based on finding out about intercultural communication challenges and at the same time, evaluate intercultural communication by students within the University of Fort Hare. It aims to look at the views of students on critical issues like barriers to intercultural communication and whether intercultural conflict exists on account of those barriers at the university. The study also hopes to find out how students manage to reach a common understanding with students from different nationalities and cultures; it also investigates if there is any ethnocentrism and/ or prejudice amongst them when they are sharing or exchanging the ideas as means of reaching mutual understanding.

Many communication scholars have produced similar work but different topics with different angles on the subject. Zheng's (2009) research on "intercultural communication barriers between Zulu and Chinese students at selected higher education institutions in Durban is one example of such studies. One of the objectives of his study was to identify the intercultural communication problems experienced between Zulu and Chinese students. The findings revealed that culture and language are the main intercultural communication barriers. Racism, cultural stereotyping, nonverbal communication and lack of trust were other obstacles in intercultural communication between the Zulu and the Chinese students. The

particular characteristics of participants such as their age, educational level and home language influenced intercultural communication.

1.2   Problem statement

According to Fielding (1993: 445), "intercultural communication is a special type of communication in which people from different cultures communicate with each other". Rampersad (2007) states that as learners enter into intercultural dialogue or collaboration, they are often faced with cultural differences. Rampersad (2007) also notes that learners have difficulties learning in a second language. The afore-mentioned author further indicates that learners are either unhappy, reluctant to work or associate with people of other cultures, and are shy or intolerant to engage in discussions. Usually, misunderstanding is always a major problem. This is much similar to the challenges that were found by the researcher among the students of University of Fort Hare. Some students are reluctant and, therefore, unhappy to work as a group and engage in discussions. This always causes problems in academic progress, as some times students have to do certain projects or assignments in groups. With such challenges, academic progress is hampered.

Smitherman (2003) notes that some of students or learners even evaluate their cultures as being better than those their classmates; they evaluate themselves better than others even in terms of their home languages. This is very much similar to what has been noticed by the researcher, where students mingle with the students of their culture exclusively when asked to form groups to work in. For example, it is common to for one group to consist of students from a local cultural group only, and another group constituting only students a foreign culture. That clearly shows that there is a

problem with intercultural communication amongst the students learning at international universities. This study has, therefore, answered a number of questions relating to this issue.

Units of analyses for this study were the students of the University of Fort Hare. As this study is mainly focusing on cultural interaction among students, the researcher's sample of student cultures was based on local students, ranging from Xhosas (as accommodating culture) and other cultures from local students. It is also focusing on international students ranging from Zimbabweans (as dominating foreign culture in international students' cultures) and other cultures from Nigerian, Tanzania and so forth.

1.3   Research questions

The main aim of this study was to evaluate the intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of University of Fort Hare students. In order to meet the above aim, the study asked the following research questions:

- ➢ To what extent do intercultural communication challenges exist among students of Fort Hare?
- ➢ To what extent do intercultural communication challenges affect University of Fort Hare students?
- ➢ What are the views of students on the impact of intercultural communication challenges on their academic performance?

1.4   Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this study are:

> ➢ To understand the extent to which intercultural communication challenges exist among students of Fort Hare.

> ➢ To understand the extent to which intercultural communication challenges affect students of Fort Hare.

> ➢ To determine the views of students on the impact of intercultural communication challenges on their academic performance.

1.5   Research Methodology

The researcher employed the qualitative method using qualitative paradigm to investigate the intercultural communication challenges among students of the University of Fort Hare. Qualitative method has allowed the research to present the investigated findings deeply and also allowed the researcher to depict findings in theories and in-depth discussion. The other reason for utilization of qualitative method is that it allowed the research sample to be divided in to groups of cultures; words, concepts, theories and scholars' ideas were used in explaining and analyzing findings qualitatively. The population sample was drawn from the students of University of Fort Hare. Details of the methodology utilized in this study are discussed in detail in chapter three.

1.6   Significance of the Study

This study has much value, as it answers questions already mentioned and sought to evaluate whether there is smooth intercultural communication among students learning at multicultural and international universities such as the University of Fort

Hare. Some of the underlying issues investigated were to ascertain if there were challenges to intercultural communication that included ethnocentrism, prejudice and cultural stereotypes. The findings from this study targeted at informing policy pertaining to the issue of intercultural communication by the university, as these can be applied by university departments of learning to enforce good relationship and better intercultural communication amongst the students.

1.7   Ethical consideration

There are variables which might contribute towards unwillingness of participants to partake in this study. These are: fear, authenticity, expectations, hopes, privacy and other factors which might discourage the success of this study. First of all, in order to address these, the researcher explained for the participants that participation is voluntary, and that there are no incentives in return for their participation. Secondly, they were informed that their responses are absolutely confidential, so there should be no fear on being explicit in terms of answering questions, and lastly the study was to be used for academic purposes. By explaining all these before they actually began giving out information, they believed and freely gave out all the necessary information. The study also abided by the University of Fort Hare's ethical policy that guides research at the university.

1.8   Limitation of the study

This study is limited to university of Fort Hare students in terms of the representativeness of the population. On the other hand, this study is not limited to Fort Hare students in terms of generalizability as any university that is similar to the

University of Fort Hare with multicultural and international students can experience similar challenges found at University of Fort Hare.

1.12   Envisaged structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is presented in a structure that is commonly used at the University of Fort Hare. Below is a chapter breakdown followed in this dissertation;

Chapter 1: This chapter presents information on introduction and background of the study.

Chapter 2: Chapter two discusses literature consulted in this study.

Chapter 3: Chapter three presents the research methodology used to gather data in this study.

Chapter 4: Chapter four presenting findings collected from the respondents.

Chapter 5: This chapter discusses the study's conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature to evaluate intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students. This review discusses perspectives on communication, culture in intercultural communication. It also focuses on the role and impact of cultural adaptation, intercultural communication, theoretical framework, relationship between culture and communication, barriers to effective communication and factors that can cause intercultural conflict and intercultural communication challenges as well as theories to explain different challenges to intercultural communication.

2.2 Communication: An overview

According to Luistig and Koester (1993: 25) cited in Zheng (2009: 46), "to understand intercultural communication events, one must study the more general process involved in all human communication transactions". On the other hand, Intercultural communication is used to describe the communication between people from different cultures and focuses on communication (Rosenhouer, 2007). In this section, the transactional model is used to describe and examine the process of communication in order to achieve and understand the nature of communication. This model is also used to analyze the communicator, recipients and the message. This model further depicts the path and rout of the challenges and barriers to effective communication and how they affect the process of communication. In this regard, it can be also applied as ideological challenges that negatively impact the intercultural communication among the students of University of Fort Hare.

Figure 1. Transactional Model of Communication (*Source*: Verderber, 1990)
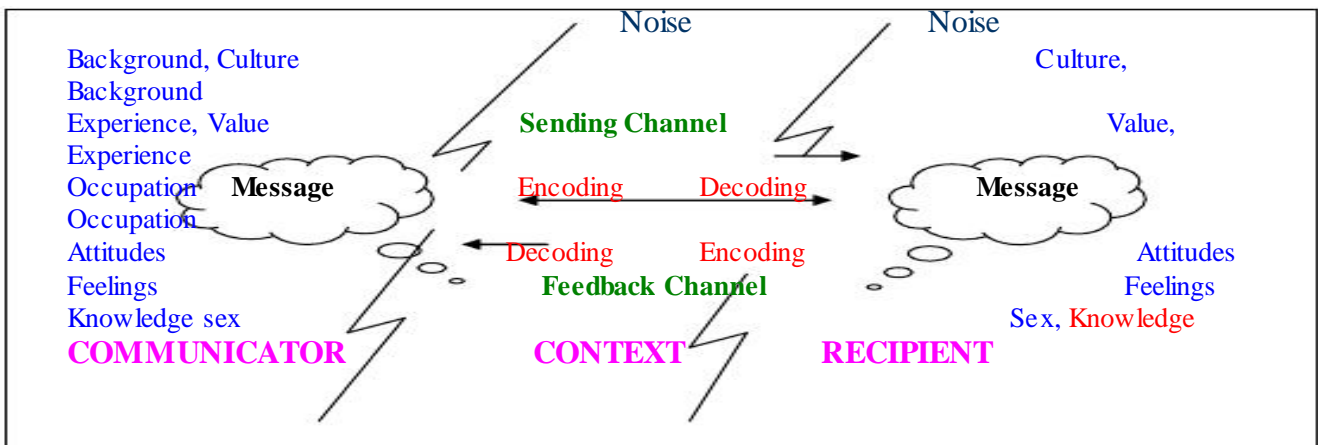
One can apply the above diagram to day to day interaction of multi-cultural and intercultural communication by students with reference to this study. Amongst the students of University of Fort Hare, a student from any culture can assume the role of a sender and receiver. Moreover, any of them also assumes the responsibility of encoding and decoding the message. As the process of intercultural interaction takes place, both parties (sender and the receiver) perpetually change roles.

Steinberg (2007) emphasizes that communication is seen within the context of a relationship between two participants or individuals who are both simultaneously involved in the negotiation of meaning. 'Simultaneous' means instead of a two-way flow, both people are constantly encoding and decoding messages. Steinberg (2007: 57) also contends that "the transactional model highlights the creation of meaning negotiated between the participants". This means that, after changing roles, both parties finally reach mutual understanding while there are barriers that hinder the smooth process of communication, and those barriers include noise and so forth.

These noises may affect the ability of the communicator and recipient to share meanings (cf. Verderber, 1990 cited in Steinberg 2006:19)

Steinberg (2006) further explains the elements of this model one by one saying the two circles reflect the sender and the recipient. In the centre of each circle, there is a message, the thought, idea or feeling that is communicated using verbal and non-verbal signs. The surroundings of the messages are the participants (which are students in this regard) values, background, occupation, sex, experiences, feelings, knowledge and attitudes. These factors have a direct influence in the meaning that is expressed and meaning that is interpreted.

In relation to this study, Verderber's (1990) transactional model of communication means that because the students of Fort Hare are multicultural and diverse, ideologically, when they are sharing or exchanging information, there are challenges that they encounter. According to this model, one of the most common challenges is the noise (depicted by the thunder lines). This study agrees with Verderber's transactional model of communication in the sense that when one student communicates a message, their background culture, experience, values knowledge sex are in the mind of the communicator. This study also agrees that the other student who receives the communiqué also has their own culture, feelings, attitudes and values towards the message sent. In addition, depending on the channel of communication, there is noise (might be psychological) that might distort the whole communication. Conclusively, noise can play a big role when students of University of Fort Hare are sharing meanings whether it is physical, psychological or semantic noise.
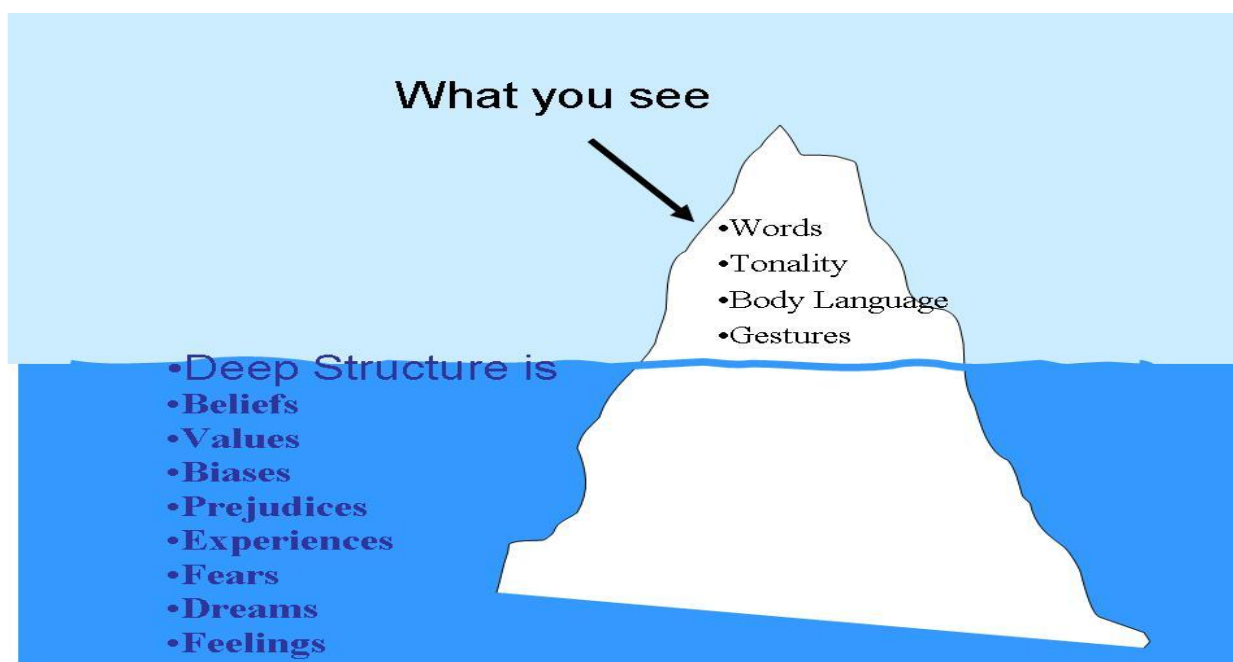
2.3. Culture in intercultural communication

The term *culture* refers to uniform values, norms, attitudes and behaviour learnt and performed by a particular group of people, and also accepted as their life guide from generation to generation (O'Rourke, 2009). The above-mentioned author also argues that culture commands the norm of each and every group in that these norms or unstated rules are accepted and expected ways of behaving and communicating with other people.

Culture is one of the broadest terms in academic disciplines, and even in dictionaries, there are lots of definitions that are accepted commonly used to support this. O'Rourke and Tuleja (2009: 5) estimate that "over 160 more or less accepted definitions of this term are in common use". This actually shows that culture is very broad and complex to just define it.

It must, however, be noted that culture is gradually changing in meaning. Goddard (2005: 53) cited in O'Rourke and Tuleja (2009) provide an excellent account of the change in this term. In its prehistoric use in English, culture was a noun of process, especially in crops or animals. This meaning can be commonly found in words like agriculture, horticulture and viticulture. Goddard (2005: 53) notes "in the sixteenth century, culture was used with regards to "cultivating" the human body through training and later on "cultivating" the non-physical aspects of a person. In the nineteenth century, the meaning was broadened to include the general state of human intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, giving a rise to the artistic works and practices, meaning which is associated with music, literature, painting, film and theatre" (Goddard 2005: 53).

After this term originated from agriculture, the same term emerged from other disciplines like anthropology, sociology and others. O'Rourke and Tuleja (2009) provide different meanings in different disciplines. Anthropological definition defines culture as the way in which we exchange ideas and thoughts, and that it is ruled by hidden rules (the silent language and hidden dimension of meanings) which are reflected in both languages, behaviour and attitudes (O'Rourke & Tuleja, 2009). Furthermore, Ting-toomey (1999: 10) argues, "culture is so similar to an iceberg: the deeper layers (such as traditions, beliefs, values) are hidden from our way of viewing things, and we only able to see and hear the uppermost layers of cultural artefacts (such as fashion, trends, pop music) and of verbal and nonverbal symbols".

Figure2. Egros (2012), Culture: An iceberg metaphor *(Source:* cross-cultural-communication, 2014)

Martin and Nakayama (2001) note that culture is often perceived as the core idea in intercultural communication. On the other hand, Ting-Toomey (1999: 10) points out that on a common level, culture refers to a patterned way of living by a group of

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interacting individuals who share similar sets of traditions, beliefs, values and norms. Figure 2 above depicts the visible and the hidden layers of culture towards individuals and groups of certain culture. The above diagram is applicable in multicultural environments like University of Fort Hare and to any tertiary institution that holds a variety of cultures. Take for instance, students always meet and bump into people they do not know around the university campus. They can only identify their cultures by noticing the visible cultural signs (visible culture) such as dress code, language, behaviours, body language, gestures, and probably, the environment they are in. It is, however, necessary to note that the hidden culture is mostly the one that brings barriers to intercultural communication forward mainly because we cannot notice it. It causes people to have prejudice, stereotypes and ethnocentrism because they are not aware of the hidden side of the culture, and they end up having assumptions (stereotypes) and generalize these to the masses.

The people students bump into in places and around a university campus with regard to this study carry hidden culture (beliefs, prejudice, biases, values, norms, fear, dreams, experiences, cultural traditions, rules and perceptions) that make students not to fully identify them according to what is called individual cultures.

This study fully concurs with what the iceberg model depicts, as there are cultures that can be seen and the ones that cannot be seen. In this case, any student at the University of Fort Hare has a visible culture that can be noted through their appearance, their words, accent, body language and gestures. However, deep down there is a culture that one cannot see, and these can be students' belief, values biases, prejudice and so forth, as depicted by the iceberg. This entire hidden and unhidden culture phenomenon has an impact on the challenges that occur among

students of University of Fort Hare when they communicate to one another in the sense that, one, for instance, could just prejudge someone by assuming that he/she belongs to a certain culture judging from the visible behaviour, whereas that person is not from that particular culture.

2.4 The role and impact of cultural adaptation

Kim (1995) cited in Fong and Chuang (2003: 59) contends that human beings are adaptive when using a holistic open-systems approach. This means that adaptation can be based on language adaptation to maintain effective intercultural communication and lifestyle adaptation as well. For example, as a student coming from Nigeria to learn at University of Fort Hare in South Africa, she or he will mostly come prepared to learn the language spoken in the new country in order to fit within the University of Fort Hare or be socially friendly.

Kim (1995) takes a firm stand that the cultural adaptation process is dynamic, multidimensional and interdependent and that it also includes enculturation, acculturation and deculturation. Enculturation is defined as the process of socialization which instils children with a mutual understanding of the *modus operandi*, which is the way things work and the means of operations. Kim (1995) maintains that children learn by following members of their cultural group and cultural milieu, and they are enculturated in the home culture by observing their family members' or significant others' culturally patterned behaviours. This makes sense as Brazelton *et al.* (2002) note that culture is passed from one generation to another through learning.

This is indistinguishable to the case of University of Fort Hare students. The University of Fort Hare consists of multi-diverse students coming from all over Africa. They are encultured with different cultures of their respective background environments. One student is different from another whether through individualistic or collective culture. The researcher has noticed that, as much as students are encultured differently, but some students can adjust and end up sharing the same values and norms (identifying what is wrong and right). This is also evident from the past research of Zheng (2009) who noted that 12% of the Zulu students communicated frequently with Chinese students for social interaction. This reveals that it is common for students who are encultured distinctively to commonly share same values for the betterment of intercultural communication.

In addition, Kim and Gudykunst (1992) cited in Fong and Chuang (2003: 59) note that "as individuals move away from their familiar cultural environment to a brand new and unfamiliar culture; they begin the process of re-socialization or acculturation, and argue that this process of **acculturation** involves acquiring the elements and cultural patterns of new culture". To make this simpler, when a student from Ghana for instance, comes to register at University of Fort Hare, he/she is leaving behind familiar culture that he/she grew up in and moves to a very different and unfamiliar culture where he/she will begin to re-socialize with those unfamiliar cultures.

This is similar to the case of University of Fort Hare students in the sense that many students are from other countries and most of them are learning the local languages of local students to create a friendly social environment. For example, in this study,

one of the respondents from international students mentioned that he is happy to be learning one of the local languages, specifically IsiXhosa, so that he can make good relations with other local students and to improve intercultural communication. Kim (1995) explains that the process of unlearning the original home culture is called *de-culturation.* A good example made is of Chinese students who mostly find that the longer they stay in United States, the more difficult it is for them to speak Chinese without mixing English words or grammar in their sentences (Kim, 1995). his is similar to the students of University of Fort Hare. For instance, one of the postgraduate respondents who is from Kwazulu Natal at University of Fort Hare mentioned that the process of acculturation led her to end up speaking IsiXhosa fluently and forgetting his home language which is IsiZulu. Somehow deculturation does help students of Fort Hare to improve their intercultural communication especially with the local students.

2.5 The role of communication Adaptation Theory in intercultural communication

According to Fong and Chuang (2003: 56), "language is pivotal to the identity-formation process". It can help solidify cultural identity, whereas linguistic distinctiveness can be used to differentiate the in-group and out-group members, on the other hand, Kim (1995) notes that language is of crucial importance when it comes to differentiating cultures. For example, there are cultures and sub-cultures, and at the University of Fort Hare, there are students from the Xhosa culture, which happens to have many sub-cultures under it. For instance, there are students from Amampondo as one of Xhosa sub-cultures, and through IsiXhosa language, one student could be identified regarding the sub-culture they belong to. It is quite

noticeable that African languages are totally different from European languages in the way they are spoken. African languages have clicks in them when spoken, whereas European languages do not have clicks.

Giles and Noels (1998) cited in Fong and Chuang (2003: 56) discuss the notion of communication accommodation theory (CAT), which posits that individuals are motivated to use language in different ways to achieve a desired level of social distance between ourselves and our listener. This is evident in the fact that each of us often interacts verbally and nonverbally to others. This can also be brought to the University of Fort Hare students. As much as they have differences in terms of their cultures, each student is forced to use a universal and common language so as to accommodate other students, more especially in classrooms. According to Giles and Noels (1998), the essential concepts of CAT are convergence, divergence, and maintenance, which are also called approximation strategies (Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, and Ota, 1995: Giles 1973; Giles, Mulac Bradac & Johnson, 1986) cited in Fong and Chuang (2003: 56).

As noted by Fong and Chuang (2003), communication convergence is a strategy or tactic where individuals adapt their communicative behaviour to become more alike compared to their interlocutor's behaviour. The convergence can be done through changing accent, modifying word choice, using similar expressions, or adjusting non-verbal behaviours to create a sense of similarity between two people. Hence "the convergence behaviour includes modifying language and dialects, speech rate, pauses, utterance length, phonological variations, smiling, gazing, and any other kinds of nonverbal gestures" (Fong & Chuang, 2003: 56). All these play a vital role in

the communication process. This is the very same strategy that was used by one of the postgraduate students' example earlier on. The University of Fort Hare student who is from KwaZulu Natal ended up speaking IsiXhosa fluently by copying the IsiXhosa accent with is not that different from IsiZulu. The other case is the one of the Zimbabwean students. Evidence from the study revealed that some Zimbabwean students who have been at Fort Hare for a long time have adopted communication convergence strategy to learn to speak IsiXhosa. One of the respondents from the Zimbabwean students mentioned that he had to focus on his ability of making clicks as part of the IsiXhosa language accent, which was challenging for him, although he ended up mastering it.

Fong and Chuang (2003) also note that in communication divergence, the speakers accentuate the speech and nonverbal differences between themselves and others. On the other hand, Giles and Noels (1998) cited in (Fong and Chuang 2003: 56) describe the tendency to enlarge linguistic differences as a speech divergence. They assert that declaimers move and shift through their linguistic collection to converge and gain social approval and identity or diverge to show distinctiveness. Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile, and Ota (1995: 117) in Fong and Chuang (2003: 56) conclude that convergence or divergence motives are adopted to maintain a clear and smoother communication. This is also common in this study, as it is evident from this study that most students of University of Fort Hare are maintaining a huge gap of cultural difference from other students. In most cases, most students exaggerate the communication divergence in that it results to poor intercultural communication.

Another thing to note is that people are different, unique and grew up in families with different cultural values and norms and with desires to seek greener pastures or go

around the globe looking for better educational experiences. It must, therefore, be noted that once people relocate to a different country or province, it means that they have left the environment where their cultural values and norms are rooted and will have to learn to adjust to those values and norms of the area they are currently in. As communication convergence by Fong and Chuang (2003) notes that people use tactics and strategies to adapt to communicative behaviours of the people from different cultures in order to fit in their environment. Communication convergence might be a good practice in multicultural and intercultural areas like University of Fort Hare as it could bring unity and tight friendships amongst students of University of Fort Hare. This does not mean students should forget and forfeit their cultural values and norms, it means that students should, at least, learn the cultural values and norms of other students. This might help to improve intercultural communication and reduce stereotypes, ethnocentrism and prejudice.

2.6 Intercultural communication

Since the twentieth century, the definition of the term 'intercultural communication' has been growing and changing but not in context. A simple definition to this can be taken by dividing the term into a few parts. For example, 'inter' means 'between' and 'culture' as it has been defined above, refers to uniform values, norms, attitudes and behaviour that is learned and performed by a particular group of people. 'Communication' is a process of sharing ideas and exchanging information amongst one or more people. The term 'intercultural communication' can thereby be defined as the process of exchanging ideas and information between different cultures. Jandt (2013: 8) supports the definition that has been made up above, emphasizing that the term 'intercultural communication' does not only refer to the communication between

individuals of diverse cultural identities but also to the communication between diverse groups.

Many theorist and scholars of communication have given different names to this term, but the context remains the same. Pinto (2000: 13) provides a list of scholars that developed different terms for 'intercultural communication'. Smith (1973) speaks of 'trans-racial communication', Rich (1974) 'interracial communication', Scollon and Scollon (1981) 'interethnic communication' and Ruben (1986) 'cross-cultural communication'.

2.7. Theoretical framework in relation to the study

A number of theorists and authors have attempted bringing out theories that explain intercultural communication. Some of them are far removed from the gist of this study and some are reasonably relevant to this study. Amongst the list of theories that can be used in this study, the following have been chosen by the researcher with the assumption that they are relevant to the study and can help to bring more explanations or discussion to the study. Such theories are cultural-level: individualism-collectivism theory. The second theory that also supports this study is the identity/face negotiation theory.

2.7.1 Cultural-level: individualism-collectivism theory

The theory of cultural-level is very relevant and applicable in understanding intercultural communication challenges and their impact on students' academic performance. This theory covers individualistic or personal and collectivistic or group aspects of culture. In individualistic cultures, people pay more attention to personal

goals unlike in the collectivistic cultures where people pay more attention to the group's goals. Hofstede and Bond (1984:419) cited in Gudykunst and Mody (2002:27) argue that "in individualistic cultures, people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only, whilst in collectivistic cultures, people belong to groups or collectivistic environments which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty". This is very applicable to the case of University of Fort Hare students as it consists of students who are from one culture and sharing all the values, norms and attitudes, and one can say they belong to one collectivistic culture, for example, Xhosas, Shonas, and Ibu culture. On the other hand, there are students who are from their respective cultures, but they have their individual values, norms and attitudes.

The cultural level theory does explain and give a hint on why there are some intercultural communication challenges which impact on students' academic performance eventually. Most students are influenced by the collectivistic cultural level theory through siding with the students that they share the same cultures with even if the situation calls for mingling as a group in classrooms. As Hofstede and Bond (1984:419) argue that "in collectivistic cultures, people belong to groups or collectivistic environments which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty". This is evident from the research as one of the respondents mentioned that he cannot form a study group with other students who are not from his culture because he has to stay loyal to his cultural group by being part of them anytime they have to form a study group.

This means that, to some extent, collectivism cultures can bring intercultural communication challenges among students, which in return, negatively impact on their academic performance. This also gives a clue on why in most cases, students tend to stick with the people of their culture when they have to work in groups or teams. This theory makes it clearer that the main reason for students to be with students of their cultural group is that most of them believe that they will stay loyal to their cultural groups. Some students believe that if they mingle with other cultural groups, they will never be accepted again in their respective cultural groups. Marieke (2010) notes that people tend not to mingle with different cultures mainly because they do not want to lose face or identity to the people of their culture. This intensifies the above discussion and explains the reason for the present challenges to intercultural communication by the students of Fort Hare.

This supports the researcher's assumption that students do not want to work with other cultural groups because they are afraid of losing identity in their cultures. It is as if once they mingle with different cultures, they have lost their identity and self-belonging. Our personal beliefs and perceptions about other cultures play a big role in intercultural conflict. For instance, Donelson (2009) makes an analogy of how people let out personal beliefs and perceptions interfere or impact on intercultural conflict. A similar example is if one meets Rajesh khabir Malik on the street, one would quickly and automatically place him in a social grouping as a man, middle-aged and Pakistani because of his name.

Once categorized, our perceptions of Malik would be influenced by our beliefs about the characteristics of the people of Pakistan, called "stereotype". Many people would

associate Malik with suicide bomb of terrorism. All in all, this emphasizes that in collectivistic cultures, there are stereotypes towards different cultural groups, which also contributes to intercultural conflict.

2.7.2 Identity/face-negotiation theory

Identity negotiation theory and face-negotiation theory are two theories that are relative and have almost the same explanation. They are also relevant to this study, as they focus on the reactions of individuals' identity when they are interacting interculturally. Ting-Toomey (1988) cited in Gudykunst (2002:71) argues that face-negotiation is a well-designed theory that provides a system of explanations for why certain cognitions, emotions, and/or behaviour occur in some intercultural encounters and under what conditions.

On other hand, Gudykunst (2002) in the identity negotiation theory, argues that any kind of a person in any culture, longs for identity respect in the process of exchanging and sharing ideas or communication. Anything that has to do with paying respect for one's identity differs from one culture to the next. He also emphasizes that the identity negotiation perspective highlights certain identity domains in influencing our day-to-day interactions. Identities that people tend to bring into interactions include, social class, age, and sexual orientation disability.

These theories are relevant to this study as they aim to prove whether stereotypes, prejudice and ethnocentrism exist amongst students of higher learning in international or multi-cultural universities. Those theories clearly reflect that in multicultural geographical areas, there are always factors like stereotype,

ethnocentrism and judgments. For example, Collier and Thomas (1988) cited in Reisinger (2009:53) states that cultural identity negotiation theory refers to communication amongst people of distinctive cultural identity. It is also a process of intercultural communication where people make contacts with others. People tend to shape, make comparison, adjudicate, attribute, settle or agree on, verify, and challenge their cultural identity. They agree that according to this theory, when communicating and interacting with people of different cultures, people negotiate stereotypes towards other cultural groups and pose opinions, norms and significances - for example, concepts of feelings, time or activities which varies from one culture to the next.

In spite of the focus on the two theories which are collectivism/ individualistic and identity/ face negotiation theories of culture, there are other theories that have a great influence on the above theories, for instance, the anxiety/ uncertainty theory. It is one of the greatest influences on intercultural conflict where people get caught in anxiety and doubts about other individuals of different cultures.

Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) cited in Gudykunst (2006) describe uncertainty as the inability to estimate or explain others' attitudes, behaviours, or feelings, whereas anxiety is the feeling of being uneasy, tense, worried, or apprehensive. These two words both explain the situation that an individual usually experiences when coming across a stranger or a foreigner. This is a situation where one becomes tense and worried because of not being sure whether this stranger will respond to one positively or not. Sometimes you are not sure whether they are going to understand you when you talk to them. This means that in institutions like Fort Hare, which are

constituted by different cultural groups that might be unfamiliar to other cultures, students might have uncertainty and therefore be anxious towards other cultural groups. One has to understand that the University of Fort Hare is a diverse environment which has to be accepted as it is, and students have to adapt to each other's difference.

2.8   Relationship between culture and communication

There is a huge relationship among culture and communication in the sense that for instance, one can note from the definition of the two terms without going deep and finding the relationship between them. Scholars like James (2009) and Schirato (2000) can reflect the relationship of the two terms in the publications. Schirato and Yell (2000:1) provided a clearer relationship between the two terms by firstly defining them within the argument that their relationship can be seen in their definitions. They defined communication as the 'practice of producing means, and the way in which systems of meanings are negotiated by participants in a culture that can be understood as the totality of communication practices and systems of meaning'.

They noted that culture involves uniform norms, ethics, values and attitudes performed by certain group; these are learned by communicating and are passed on from generation to the next through communication. Moreover, each culture has its different and unique language. This particular language is used for learning a culture and is passed from generation to the next, which means that language is used as a means of communication by members of cultural groups. It is also used to communicate amongst different cultures (intercultural communication).   Therefore,

language is one important and strong variable that connects culture and communication.

There are also signs which are used as means of communication, and they can tell a lot about culture. They are also an important variable that reflects and connects culture with communication. For example, our cultural clothes can send a message about our cultural groups. The language spoken and the accent say a lot about where one comes from and one's culture. Culture and communication are, therefore, linked in many ways.

2.9 Barriers to effective communication

In my first year at University of Fort Hare, when learning about communication, I learnt that the biggest and powerful barrier of effective communication is the "noise", whether physical noise, psychological noise or semantic noise. There are some scholars who dwell much on the barrier of effective communication. Such scholars like Hurn and Tomallin (2013:10) cite a Southeast Asian proverb that says 'misunderstanding don't exist, only the failure to communicate exists'. According to Hall and Hall (1990:4) cited in Brian Hurn and Barry Tomalin (2013:10), the intrinsic nature of effective cross-cultural communication has more to do with giving the 'right' response than sending the 'right' messages. Most people think this applies the other way round, whereas Brian and Tomalin (2013) think not. They also believe that Hall(1990) perceives communication as the centre of all cross-cultural interaction. Brian and Tomalin (2013: 10) also emphasize that culture is communication and that it might be seen as an on-going process of communication and emphasizes group norms.

2.10 Factors that can cause intercultural conflict

Earlier in this study, I mentioned that there are some variables which to be covered in this research which present empirical evidence which contributes towards making intercultural communication poor and distorted. Below are those variables or factors that cause conflict between cultures.

- Ethnocentrism;
- Stereotype;
- Prejudice;
- Cultural Value system; and
- Racism

2.10.1 Ethnocentrism

Donald and Cindy (2010: 208) regard ethnocentrism as pervasive, indeed a universal human reaction to strangers, and one characterized primarily by distrust and suspicion. The researcher's assumption is that whatever place is constituted by different cultures or nationalities like school, college or workplace, one finds certain people belonging to a particular culture thinking that their culture is more superior to others, especially the accommodating culture. Therefore, the study has revealed that the students of the University of Fort Hare are, to some extent, ethnocentric to others. The accommodating culture in this case is a Xhosa culture, which was mentioned by many respondents to be more ethnocentric to other cultures. That is why Guffey and Leowy (2011:88) note that the belief in the superiority of one's own race is regarded as ethnocentrism. They also emphasize that ethnocentrism causes us to judge others by our own values and expect them to react as we would; they expect us to behave as they would, then misunderstanding naturally results.

2.10.2 Characteristics of ethnocentrism: levels of ethnocentrism

Larry Samovar *et al.* (2012: 240) emphasize that ethnocentrism has three levels: positive, negative and extremely negative.

➢ Positive level

Larry Samovar *et al.* (2012: 240) argue that "positive is the belief that one's own culture is preferred over all others, and this is natural because individuals care much about their personal identity and many beliefs from their native culture". This is very true, and evident from this study, as one of the respondents mentioned that most of black students at University of Fort Hare evaluate white people's culture as mostly superior as other cultures.

➢ Negative level

Regarding negative level, Samovar *et al.* (2012: 240) emphasizes that 'ethnocentrism' begins to take on an evaluative dimension, and this is demonstrated in the belief that one's own culture is the centre of everything and that other cultures should be measured and rated by its standards. This means that the negative level of ethnocentrism is the total opposite of the positive level of ethnocentrism in that in negative level, it is you who evaluates your culture as superb than any other culture and that all other cultures are centred and should be measured towards your culture. However, in the positive level, it is you evaluating someone else's culture as being better than yours and others. Throughout the evaluation of the challenges of intercultural communication and their impacts on academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students, the negative level of ethnocentrism was mentioned by the respondents to be high, especially by the accommodative culture. This was

also mentioned to be one of the challenges to effective intercultural communication that negatively impacts on academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students.

2.10.3 Stereotype

Stereotype can be described as a fixed or distorted generalization made about members of a particular group (Marie Dalton *et al,* 2010). This means that when one twists information to generalize about a certain group or/and culture, that can be regarded as a stereotype. The University of Fort Hare is a multicultural institution, therefore, the researcher has noticed that other students have stereotypic views towards other students' cultures, and this is caused mainly by lack of information about other students' cultures and traditions. Even facts about other traditions can become distorted and turned to mockery. For instance, there were talks by the students that Zimbabwean students use buckets to bath, however, that is how they bathe traditionally back home. Differently en-cultured students were apparently making fun of that bathing system. Unfortunately, these are issues that can explode to intercultural conflict, and at some point, they play a role as challenges to intercultural communication; this might lead to negative impact on students' academic performance as they all meet and interact in classrooms.

2.10.4 Stereotype and intercultural communication

Samovar *et al* (2012: 232) note that "in most cases, stereotypes are the result of limited, lazy, and misguided perceptions, and the resulting problems created by these misperceptions are both numerous and serious". This shows how harmful stereotypes can be on intercultural communication:

Stereotypes become counterproductive when we place people in the wrong groups, when we incorrectly describe the group norm, when we evaluate the group rather simply describing it, when we confuse the stereotype with the description of a particular individual, and when we fail to modify the stereotype based on our actual observations and experiences (Samovar, 2012)

Samovar *et al (*2012) mention four reasons why stereotypes hamper intercultural communication. First, they argue that stereotypes are a certain type of filter that only permit in information that is steady with information already in possession by the individual and in this way, what could be the truth can be sieved out. They make a very good example of women being stereotyped for many years as a rather one-dimensional group confined to the role of homemaker. Similarly, men have been many years as food and security providers at home.

Second, it is not the act categorisation that forms intercultural problems, rather, it is the assumption that culture-specific information suggests to every member of a certain cultural group and stereotypes conjecture that all members of a particular group have exactly the same traits. Third, stereotypes also keep people from being successful communicators because they are oversimplified, exaggerated, and over-generalised. A good example the researcher can provide for this point is that it is over-generalised that a sub-culture from Xhosa called *Amampondo* has members whom are seen or known as teenage abductors who force young girls to marry at a young age.

Fourth, stereotypes are impervious to change because they are usually developed early in life and are repeated and enforced by the in-group as stereotypes, in this

case, they are likely to boost with the passage of period. It is also true that stereotypes are resistant to change because firstly, it begins with one person stereotyped towards one cultural group who passes on their stereotype to another person and then it becomes over-generalized. Another example is how rumours quickly reach out to masses of people through informal communication and hence the same speed for stereotypes to spread among people.

2.10.5 Prejudice

Dovidio *et al* (2005: 20) define prejudice as treatment that is based on faulty and flexible generalization. In other words, this means that prejudice is an idea or opinion people tend to have about a specific cultural group that has no justification or experience of it. On the other hand, Dalton *et al* (2010: 296) note that prejudice is judging or making a decision about a person or a group of people with insufficient knowledge, and it is usually based on stereotype. Based on Dalton *et al.'s* (2010) description of prejudice, in the case of University of Fort Hare students, once a student is stereotyped against a particular students' culture, they are likely to have unreasonable prejudgment of that particular cultural group. For example, it was mentioned by one of the respondents of the Zimbabwean students that she cannot share a room with a Xhosa student because they are so spoilt and might even undermine her. In this case, there is an obvious prejudgement among students. This also means that if these students be forced to live together, this can negatively affect the Zimbabwean one's self-esteem both socially and academically. As mentioned before, prejudice is usually based on stereotypes, and this means that the definition and the nature of prejudice is closely related to the nature and definition of stereotypes.

Samovar *et al.'s (*2012) four reasons applying to stereotypes can also be applied as four reasons to look at why prejudice hinders the progress of intercultural communication, according to the researcher.

2.10.6. Value System

Webster (2007) notes that values are those things such as a principles or qualities that are intrinsically valuable or desirable. Our values can also bring challenges to intercultural communication between cultural groups. As a residence allocation system of Fort Hare allocates two students as roommates for their first two years of study, there might be a case, for example, where one of them grew up in a family that believes that at twelve o'clock midnight, they have to pray by shouting very loudly and pray, and the other roommate believes that she/he has to pray during the day. These differences between the roommates might also cause conflict between them. For instance, the scenario where one student shouts very loudly at twelve o'clock midnight while the other one is in deep sleeping might end up badly.

2.10.7 Xenophobia

Bordeau (2010: 4) explains the history of the term "xenophobia" and its meaning. He notes that "the word xenophobia comes from the Greek language consisting of '*xeno'* which comes from the Greek word *xenos*, which means foreigner or stranger, and phobia comes from the word *Phobos*, which means fear". When you try to combine the two words altogether, you can have a proper definition and meaning of xenophobia: which is an unreasonable and unjustifiable anxiety or distrust of foreigners. Bordeau (2010) warns us not to confuse xenophobia with racism. He

differentiated those terms by firstly describing racism as 'the belief that one race is superior to another, while xenophobia is the hatred of foreigners based on fear'.

Ever since the 19th century when globalization began to grow stronger and stronger, the issue of xenophobia has been one of the biggest hindrances in intercultural communication. When countries began to share trade, ideas, knowledge and capital, people also began to fear and dislike people from other countries which are alien and foreign to them in terms of language colour and other differences like culture.

Mogekwu (2005) notes that xenophobia is fear and therefore, dislike of foreigners that results in poor intercultural communication in which one member of the national culture does not understand appreciate and accommodate members of other cultures amongst them. As this study reflects that stereotypes, ethnocentrism and prejudice do exist among students of Fort Hare, eventually, this has led to a slight fear among cultural groups of students at University of Fort Hare. For instance, one respondent mentioned that she has a fear of passing near a group of students of one culture because she thinks they are going to talk about her when she does not understand their language.

In most cases, xenophobia emanates from ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice. This means that students refuse accommodating other cultural nations because they evaluate their cultures as better than those of other nationals. This is when they have unproven assumptions about those cultures and judge the foreign students before they do not actually know them, and then emanates the concept of xenophobia. It is therefore be a problem for it to exist in an institution of higher learning, because no one can study effectively in fear.

2.10.8 Xenophobia and Intercultural communication

Xenophobia can be regarded as one of the most contributing factors of intercultural conflict in communication as it plays a big role in hindering the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Mogekwu (2005) emphasizes that it is the lack of understanding of our cultures that suggests ineffective intercultural communication as one of the causes. On the other hand, effective intercultural communication would enable members of one culture to understand, appreciate and accommodate other members of another culture with limited stress and sense of threat.

This means that xenophobia and other related problems could be eliminated if students could stop assuming that they are culturally better than other students and reject unproven information and premature judgments about other cultures. It also means that students must begin to seek to understand themselves (introspection) and begin to use curiosity as a source of knowledge in trying to understand other cultures that exist among themselves (at University of Fort Hare). There are many interesting things to learn about our differences, but students fear to face those interesting differences. Communication across-cultures is important and desirable, especially as globalization affect the whole world (Taylor, 1991) cited in Mogekwu (2005).

With reference from the above discussion on barriers to intercultural communication, the University of Fort Hare, as a multicultural institution, has put policies in place to guide against xenophobia. This is evident in the welcoming statement of University of Fort Hare's website that says "an assertion and celebration of our identity as an African university - a multicultural, continental as opposed to an ethnocentric

identity". This is because there are many cultures which students of this university belong to, namely, Xhosas (as accommodating culture), Zimbabweans (as dominating foreign culture), Nigerians, Tanzanians, Somalia and others. At some point, all those cultures constitute students of this university and have to exchange ideas or interact with one another, like in the case of study groups or work groups. There may, however, be some variables which may disturb the communication process during their interaction, and these could be an academic interaction or a social or casual interaction. Those variables may include ethnocentrism, prejudice and stereotypes which have been extensively discussed in this study. This is why this study is important.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature on intercultural communication and has shown the relationship between culture and communication. It has also looked at theoretical perspectives as well as bringing on recommendations on resolving cross-cultural communication challenges that are amongst different cultural groups at University of Fort Hare. Intercultural communication needs to be taken seriously at the University of Fort Hare as it is one of the international universities and one of the biggest and well-known universities in Africa and abroad.

Chapter three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two reviewed the empirical literature that is relevant to the study variables. This chapter presents the research methodology selected for the purpose of this study. Research methodology comprises variables such as the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedures and techniques used to extract the subjectivity of the research, and the research instruments used. Furthermore, informed consent and ethical issues pertaining to this study are examined.

3.2. Research approach

According to Kothari (2004: 8), "research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. However, it may be understood as the science of studying how research is done scientifically. Therefore, this means that research methodology is directly underpinned by the researcher in relation to the type of the study conducted. Qualitative research methods were used in this study, especially for focus group discussions as the research method to collect data. This study employed descriptive research patterns to evaluate intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of university of Fort Hare students.

3.3 Research Domain

University of Fort Hare was selected as the research domain for this study. For eminence and precedence reasons, the researcher decided to narrow down the study to focus the research on the Alice campus only. The feeling was that Alice campus is the main campus of the University of Fort Hare. Furthermore, Alice

campus has a huge number of students as compared to other campuses, and the researcher assumed that the views and responses would be the same even if the study was extended to other campuses.

According to Boucher-Yip (2014:17), University of Fort Hare, Alice campus is located in a rural village called Alice about one hundred kilometres inland from the port of East London. This village is under Amathole district of the Eastern Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa.

3.4 Research population

Cargan (2007) defines research population as a collective that a researcher uses to describe the quantity and type of cases in the study, whether they are events, objects or people. In this research study, the population of this study is based on the University of Fort Hare students. For intercultural communication challenges to be evaluated based on their impact on the academic performance of students, the researcher had to have University of Fort Hare students as the main population of this study.

3.4.1 Target population

The research population for this study were all the students of University of Fort Hare. Namey and Guest (2015) note that target population is a set of elements to which a researcher wishes to apply the findings of study on. However, in this study, the target population are the students who possess qualities and characteristics of being local (South African) or/and international students. Nevertheless, due to a variety of impediments like financial resources, time, and for convenience purposes,

this research's attainable population were students of University of Fort Hare, Alice campus. This research's population was constituted of two entities which were local students (South African) and international students. The researcher felt it was pertinent to collect data from a lone entity, that is, either from local students or international students. Therefore, the researcher decided to consider both local and international students to complete the data collection.

3.5 Sampling procedure

The researcher employed qualitative non-probability sampling based on the purposive sampling method. Johnson (2013: 264) argues that "in purposive sampling (sometimes called judgemental sampling), the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest and then tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics. According to Shamar (2008), purposive sampling is well-known because it produces well-matched groups. Although in some cases, the reliability of the criterion in purposive sampling might happen to be questionable, it uses the best available knowledge pertaining to the sample subject. However, it provides much better control of important variables and from it, sample groups of data can be easily matched. Hence, the researcher was interested in the students who possess characteristics of being South African and international students and thereafter, the researcher asked those who met the criteria to partake in the research study.

3.5.1 Sampling techniques

This study employed non-probability sampling techniques for collecting data. Gerrish (2010:148) notes that "in qualitative research, the problem of diversity or variation is

addressed through the development of a sampling strategy designed to ensure that a range of data are identified and collected, as this increases the validity of the findings. Purposive sampling was used in this research study to draw samples for analysis. The researcher considered this sampling technique to be appropriate for qualitative data collection as this study was based on qualitative methodology.

3.5.1.1 Purposive sampling

This sampling technique is applicable and considered by the researcher when he/she is able to judge the units of analysis based on their characteristics for data collection. Furthermore, the researcher can then ask these units of analysis to participate in the study. Hence, they are called respondents after they have formed part of the research study. Johnson (2013: 264) argues that "in purposive sampling (sometimes called judgemental sampling), the researcher specifies the characteristics of a population of interest and then tries to locate individuals who have those characteristics. For this research study, purposive sampling was used in the establishment of focus groups in both local and international students of the University of Fort Hare. For purposive sampling, the researcher used his judgement to consider the participants in the study. This type of sampling technique reduces biasness, as the researcher has to only consider the units of analysis that possesses certain characteristics required by the research study. On the other hand, this sampling technique is unlikely to produce errors in terms of data collection. Hence, the researcher is able to judge units of analysis if they qualify, based on their characteristics as required by the research study. For this research, the two focus groups consist of local and international students at the University of Fort Hare, Alice campus.

3.5.2 Sample size

Although qualitative studies commonly use a small number of participants, determining the sample size is still vital (Pitney, 2009). Considering the number of students available at University of Fort Hare as the population sample for both international and local students, the researcher felt it is necessary to make one focus group for each entity to collect data. Datallo (2008) notes that sample size is a significant element in determining the quality with which the population values can be determined. In this regard, one focus group of ten (10) participants from local students and another ten (10) participants for international students were established, thus making a total of two focus groups. Hence, a sample of twenty (20) participants was drawn from both local and international students. According to Wimmer (2009), the focus group method invites four (4) to twelve (12) people to a research location and have a controlled discussion of one or two hours, after which a report is compiled by the researcher. The focus group questions were, therefore, informed by the objectives of this study, and the pilot study was conducted as well.

The researcher was careful when selecting units of analysis; hence there was a balance in terms of sex, age and level of education. This means that both females and males were considered to participate in this study. However, the researcher felt it is was necessary to consider different age groups (from eighteen to thirty five) and different levels of education (from first year to postgraduate). The researcher assumed that the different sexes, age groups and levels of education would produce different views regarding the intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of University of Fort Hare students. It would have been desirable to have more than two focus groups, but there is a feeling that there would be a repetition of responses from respondents. Hence, the researcher

assumed that two focus groups (one for from the local students and one from the international students) would do.

3.6 Research design

Research is about putting together information in a systematic and orderly manner on a given topic (Oliver, 2010:2). According to Gardner (2012: 3), research design is the basic method of collecting evidence and combination of research methods. Gardner (2012: 3) contends that the "design is fundamental because everything ultimately flows from the design choice, and because this choice is the one most closely tied to the investigator's research questions and theories". This study is a qualitative research which has employed qualitative methods to address objectives and research questions of this study.

White (2005) cited in Zheng (2009: 40) notes two words that are fundamental in research design, and such words are validity and reliability. He emphasizes that "validity is concerned with the idea that the research design fully addresses the research questions and objectives one is trying to answer and achieve". On the other hand, "reliability is about consistency and research, and whether another researcher could use the design and obtain similar findings." (White, 2000 cited in Zheng, 2009). All the above discussed methods of this reaseach were therefore taken into consideration and thus influenced the research design choice of this study. This was an evaluation of intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students. The study, therefore, made a use of the qualitative method; the accuracy of validity and reliability was carefully examined against the methods that were applied to this study.

3.6.1 Justification for using qualitative method for this study

The qualitative method was highly appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to deeply review the literature of intercultural communication. Therefore, theories which best explain and define intercultural communication were qualitatively discussed in this study. Denzine and Lincoln (1994:2) note that "qualitative method is highly appropriate for studying phenomena that are in natural settings such as cultures". However, the qualitative method allows the researcher to study diverse materials that include case-studies, personal experiences, and observational interviews, focus groups that define procedure and problematic moments and understanding in individuals' lives.

3.7 Data collection techniques

Connaway and Powell (2010) emphasize that after identifying characteristics of the population, it then becomes vital and significant to estimate their proportions in the population. Data collection techniques are the research tools that the researcher make use of to collect and gather primary data for analysis (Connaway & Powell, 2010). Jakubiak, Mudge and Hurd (1990) note that data collection techniques are mostly categorized according to the type of analysis they support. Hence in this study, focus groups were used as a data collection tool.

3.7.1 Focus groups discussion

Focus groups are small structured groups with selected participants normally led by a moderator, as noted by Litosseliti (2003:1). They are set up in order to explore specific topics and individuals' views and experiences, through group interaction. According to Wimmer (2009), the focus group method invites four (4) to twelve (12)

people to a research location to have a controlled discussion of one or two hours and then a report is compiled by the researcher. The focus group questions were, therefore, informed by the objectives of this study, and a pilot study was conducted as well. Both focus group discussions of local and international students were held and conducted at students' residents at the University of Fort Hare. The researcher was monitoring these focus groups throughout the process of data gathering, and then data was interpreted for analysis. The gathered information helped the researcher to evaluate intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students.

3.7.2 Justification for using focus group

The focus group method is directly linked to qualitative research as it relies on words from participants (not numbers) which are called perspectives of themes (Creswell, 1998). On the other hand, Krueger (2000) notes that a focus group consists of ten (10) to twelve (12) participants who are expected to produce high quality of data. Culture is one of the sensitive issues or topics to discuss. The researcher decided to use two (2) focus groups, one for local students and one for international students. This was done so with the assumption that local students relate very well with one another and they would freely participate in this study. And there was the same assumption also in the side of international students. Although there was a desire to have many focus group but there was a feeling that there would be a repetition of answers.

3.8 Data Sources

Aggarwal *et al. (2002:14) emphasize that* "data can be mainly sourced from two kinds of sources, namely, primary data and secondary data".

Primary data are data collected by the researcher for his own study, for the first time, and from start to end, the primary data are therefore, first-hand information. The example of primary data can be data collected through conducting interviews with participants or science experiments. In the case of this study, focus group interviews were sources of primary data as the participants were put in manageable groups and then interviewed. Secondary data, in the words of Aggarwal (2002), are those data which are already in existence and which have been collected for some purpose other than the answering of the question in hand. Internet, journals, dissertations, textbook and web pages are examples of secondary data, and this study also made use of such data to strengthen the depth of this study. Aggarwal (2002:15) differentiates between the two kinds of data sources as that primary data are original because these are collected by investigators from the source of their origin. On the other hand, secondary data are already in existence and, therefore, are not original.

Regarding secondary data, the main problem constitutes the recurrent question of validity because when one researcher gathers data for a particular study, there is no guarantee that such data will be convenient to the research interest (Maxfield 2012:14). This means that secondary data alone cannot help to answer the question (Zheng 2009: 42). Therefore, this study used mostly primary data from focus groups as this is suitable for this study and the research problem being investigated.

3.9. Data analysis

3.9.1 Analyzing qualitative data

Auerbach (2003:3) notes that 'qualitative research is research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of a particular phenomenon'. On the other hand, Grbich (2013:1) emphasizes that "the process of data analysis in qualitative research is complicated in that it is not simply a matter of choosing and applying an accepted process such as thematic analysis". Data collected in this study were, therefore, analyzed qualitatively bearing in mind the key issues highlighted.

The researcher conducted in-depth discussions in the form of focus groups and interviews with students of the University of Fort Hare with the objective of evaluating intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students.

3.10 Ethical consideration

There are variables which might contribute towards unwillingness of participants to partake in this study, such as: fear, authenticity, expectations, hopes, privacy and other factors, and the researcher bore all these in mind. First of all, the researcher explained to the participants that participation is voluntary and there would be no incentives in return of their participation. Secondly, the participants were told that their responses would be absolutely confidential, so there should be no fear of being explicit in terms of answering questions, and lastly that they were informed that the study would be used for academic purposes only. By explaining all these to the participants before giving out information, they were able to freely give out all the

necessary information. The study abided by the University of Fort Hare's ethical policy that guides research at the university.

3.10.1 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are terms that are often used interchangeably by researchers in carrying out studies. However, ethical issues of each one are quite different. Confidentiality refers to concealment of information that is discussed between researcher and research participants during data collection. The researcher therefore, has to inform research participants that the research information will be collected, analysed and reported anonymously without disclosing names or particulars of participants (Hennink, 2014). Hence, the researcher has to embrace ethical considerations, informed consent, voluntary participation and avoidance of harm to participants.

Furthermore, research subjects were assured and informed of their mutual obligation to one another not to disclose any personal information which emerged during focus group discussions to anyone else at any point in time after the discussion sessions. The researcher had to ensure that all the research participants from both focus groups and interviews understood that all discussions pertaining to this research were electronically recorded. All recorded transcripts were kept confidential in a secure place in the researcher's place, and only the researcher and his supervisor had access to these records. The researcher also made clear to his research subjects that the recordings would be destroyed as soon as the study is done.

3.10.2 Informed Consent

The most fundamental principle for ethical acceptability in research of this type is informed consent. According to Marshall (2007) and Silverman (2013), obtaining an informed consent means that all the information regarding the study such as its procedures, benefits and the risks which it may entail will be rendered to their legal representatives. Therefore, the study participants for this study needed to be informed of the nature and rationale of the study and its potential dangers and benefits. Research participants had to agree voluntarily to participate without coercion. All of the participants were given an informed consent form to sign and were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and that their choice whether or not to participate would not affect their professional progress in any way.

3.11. Envisaged Ethical Issues

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:54), ethics are sets of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group and are subsequently widely accepted and offer rules and behavioural expectation about the most acceptable conduct towards participants, employees, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) also note that integrating ethics into the entire research process, from selecting the research problem to carrying out research goals, interpretation and reporting research findings, is critical to ensuring that the research process is guided by ethical principles beyond informed consent. Bless (2006:139) is of the view that there have been many issues of abuse of people`s rights in the name of intellectual property interests hence, the researcher applied for an ethical clearance certificate from the University Research Ethics Committee. This study has the following ethical

considerations: include informed consent, protection from harm and confidentiality which were all duly observed and adhered to.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology that was used in this study. The chapter began with a review of the research methodology. It discussed how the research was designed and provided insight into the sampling method. The chapter highlighted in detail the qualitative approach and design adopted in this research, the purposive and convenient sampling used, the population, the sampling procedures, the unit of analysis, the research tools used to collect data, the analysis of the data, the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations which were respected during the conduction of the research. An attempt was made to justify research methodology and sampling techniques that were employed in this study. In addition, this chapter also looked at the data collection instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis. Ethical issues related to this study were also discussed. The chapter presented the research methodology touching on the research design, the sampling design, the data collection methods and instruments used. The chapter that follows focuses on analyzing data collected through the instruments outlined above and also involves presentation of data. It also presents the results of the findings and also provides a discussion of these results in connection to an evaluation of intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students.

Chapter four: Data analysis and presentation

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, research design and methodology was discussed. This chapter focuses on data analysis and presentation. Data were collected through focus group interviews and personal interviews which are of qualitative approach. Data were, therefore, analyzed qualitatively through thematic analysis of major issues emanating from the data. This means that essential information was categorized into themes for discussion.

4.2 Data analysis from Focus groups

4.2.1 Number of focus groups and participants per focus group

Two (2) focus groups were conducted by the researcher in the process of data gathering. However, it would have been desirable to have more than two (2) focus groups such that there was a feeling that there would be a repetition of responses from the participants. The researcher had to take into consideration the diversity of culture at University of Fort Hare. Hence, each focus group consisted of various cultures that exist at University of Fort Hare. The first focus group of local students was arranged and held at students' residence. It had ten (10) participants similarly to the second focus group of international students which was also carefully organized and held in students' residence and consisted of ten (10) participants.

4.2.2 Biographic information

4.2.2.1 Nationality

The University of Fort Hare is constituted of different cultures from different nationalities. The researcher found it vital to firstly outline different nationalities

existing at the University of Fort Hare. It was noticed by the researcher that local students (especially Xhosa speaking students) are dominating the university. South African students mainly formed local students' focus groups. In the second focus group which was for international students only, the researcher felt it was necessary to have a variety of distinctive nationalities with the assumption that in return, there would be different views and experiences. Hence, there were four Zimbabweans, two Nigerians, two Kenyans, and two Botswanans.

4.2.2.2 Cultures of participants

The University of Fort Hare is an international university, and therefore, there are multiple cultural groups existing in this institution. The researcher found that Xhosa culture is dominating at this university, hence there were four Xhosa participants, two Zulu participants, two Basotho participants and two Afrikaner participants. For international students' focus group, there were two Shona participants, two Ndebele participants, two Ibu participants, two Batswana participants and two Swahili participants. Hence, a total of twenty participants were drawn from the sample.

4.2.2.3   Age composition of participants

Different age groups were considered by the researcher with the assumption that they will provide different experiences and views. All participants were between the ages of eighteen to thirty.

4.2.2.4   Gender composition of participants

It was noticed by the researcher that females are dominant than males at University of Fort Hare. From the researcher's view point, females are dominant because there

are more females than males at University of Fort Hare. From the sample of twenty participants that made up two focus groups, both local and international students, thirteen participants were females and seven were males.

4.2.2.5 Level of Study of participants

The researcher had to take into consideration different levels of study to have different levels of experience and views throughout the process of data collection. The researcher confirmed that students of distinctive levels of study are represented in the sample. Such levels of study constitute first year, second year, third year, fourth year and also postgraduate students, taking into consideration that they all have different experiences of university life to share. Third year students were common in this study as there were seven participants from third year level. They are in the tail of finishing undergraduate studies at the university. Therefore, the researcher assumed that they hold extensive experience and knowledge of the university. In addition, there were six postgraduate participants, four second year participants and three first year participants.

4.3. Analysis of Some key questions that were asked during focus groups discussions

Two focus groups were separately conducted by the researcher. However, the two focus groups conducted constituted of local students only and international students only. There was a desire for having more than two focus groups, but there was a feeling that there would be a repetition of answers from the respondents. Hence, results are presented separately in paragraphs below.

4.3.1 Communication across culture

The researcher had to have this type of question as the opening, first and the starting point of questioning for data gathering. This question was the first to make sure that the participants are the most relevant and valid ones for this study.

From the first focus group consisting of local students only, all the respondents agreed that they are communication across their cultures, meaning that they all engage in intercultural communication. One of the female participants emphasized: "whether you like it or not, everyone at this university is bound to communicate across his/her culture".

From the second focus group consisting of international students only, all respondents also agreed that they engage in intercultural communication with other students. One of the male participants said, "in one way or the other, we are obliged to engage in information exchange with other students of different cultures, as the university is diverse on its own, and if we are not communicating with other students of other cultures, there would be no academic progress".

From the researcher's point of view, once the institution becomes diverse, whether multicultural or international, people inside it are bound to exchange information whether they like it or not. Hence Zheng (2009) notes that in an institution that has many languages spoken and many cultures existing in it, intercultural communication happens. In this regard, University of fort Hare is a diverse university with many cultures in it. Hence, intercultural communication is compulsory.

4.3.2. Intercultural communication challenges

Throughout the evaluation of intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of University of Fort Hare students, the researcher found that all participants think that there are intercultural communication challenges at University of Fort Hare.

 From the first focus group of local students only, all the respondents agreed to be experiencing intercultural communication challenges when communicating with other students. However, one of the female respondents mentioned that "one way or the other, there are intercultural communication challenges at our university in the sense that every culture has its own given stereotype by other cultures at University of Fort Hare and those are not positive stereotypes; therefore we react differently towards them, and these stereotypes are the intercultural communication challenge on their own". In the same focus group, one of the male respondents added "these stereotypes make it hard, at times, to peacefully and effectively communicate across one's own culture".

From the second focus group which consisted of international students only, all the participants also agreed that there are intercultural communication challenges at University of Fort Hare. One of the male respondents mentioned that "the way we dress, our accent and our values and beliefs are, in a way strange, to other cultures, and we end up not talking to one another, in that sense, intercultural communication is hampered." However, one of the respondents also mentioned, "I also experience intercultural communication challenges when a culturally mixed group in the classroom has a lot of tension because of cultural differences".

From the researcher's view point, judging from the responses from the participants, ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice are the strongest variables that are challenging smooth intercultural communication among students of University of Fort Hare. According to the communication divergence theory, intercultural communication challenges mostly begin with distinctive expectations based on appropriate or inappropriate conflict behavior in a conflict scene, and people end up neglecting adapting to other cultures (Fong & Chuang, 2003).

4.3.3 Analysis of cultural accommodation

Participants (only international students) were asked if they are being accommodated well by local students, especially the Xhosa culture, which is the culture where the University of Fort Hare is located. However, this question was only asked in the second focus group that consisted of international students only. This was not a tricky question for almost all of the participants in the second focus group. Many participants agreed that Xhosa culture is accommodative and welcoming enough for other cultures to co-exist. Few of the participants said that "a little", which means from researcher's view point, they were agreeing with the question, but they suggested that there are some hidden issues that they could not talk about. The least participants disagreed, saying that Xhosas are not accommodative and welcoming enough.

One of the respondents from the second focus group mentioned that "Xhosa students think they are better than any one other culture (ethnocentrism)". One of the respondents in the same focus group added that "Xhosa students think they are superior to other people of different cultures, that they even call international

students Makwere-kwere or Magrigamba, however, they think their language is better than any of the other languages existing at Fort Hare University". From the researcher's view point, this actually shows that there is ethnocentrism amongst students of this university.

4.3.4 Participants' views on international students' cultures

This question was only asked in the first focus group that consisted of local students only. The researcher saw it necessary to have a question strictly for local students as there was a question meant for international students. The researcher wanted to know how the accommodating cultures (local students) think of other international students' cultures. Many respondents brought up negative arguments towards international students whereas a few had positive opinions towards international students. One of the respondents in the focus groups of local students mentioned that "international students think that they are mentally brilliant or clever in simple terms". One of the respondents in the same focus group added that "in lecture rooms, international students form their own study and work groups (especially Zimbabweans)".

Few of the respondents from local students (Xhosa) had positive responses towards foreign cultures. Hence, one of the respondents in the same focus group mentioned that "foreign students are nice and friendly; however, they talk about their culture and how they do things back at their home countries". One of the respondents in the same focus group added that "foreign students think that they are clever and mentally brilliant than others, whilst a few mentioned that "foreign students are nice and friendly; that they can even learn their languages".

4.3.5 Challenges to intercultural communication

From the focus groups that were successfully conducted by the researcher, a number of uniform challenges that are a major barrier to intercultural communication came out. One of the respondents from the first focus group of local students listed intercultural communication challenges as "language, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, and value system". Very few participants think that there are intercultural communication challenges at the University of Fort Hare. One of the respondents from the focus groups argued that "there are no intercultural communication challenges at University of Fort Hare, however, many foreign students talk about their students from similar cultural backgrounds which makes it easy to interact across culture".

From the second focus group of international students, one of the respondents mentioned that "language is one of the contributing factor in intercultural conflict, and it create challenges in intercultural communication in the sense that when you pass by a group of students talking a language you do not understand and they laugh, it is highly possible that you will have a negative reaction on them because you might think they are teasing you".

Guffey and Loewy (2013) testify that the process of interacting, exchanging and understanding successfully with people from other cultures is always restricted by two main barriers: ethnocentrism and stereotyping. These two factors that mainly retard the effective process of intercultural communication, however, can be overcome by developing tolerance, which is a powerful and most effective aid to communication.

➢ **Language**

Culture is a deeply ingrained part of the very fiber of our being, but language which is the means for communication among members of a culture, is the most visible and available expression of that culture (Valdes, 1986: 38).

From the first focus group of local students, many participants had common responses based on how language challenges intercultural communication, as one of the respondents emphasized that "language is one of the factors that makes intercultural communication ineffective and promotes challenges to smooth intercultural communication". One of the respondents from the same focus group also said, "when we are mixed in one group to do an assignment, if there is a dominant culture in that group, they are likely to speak their home language not the common language (English), and there will be no progress in that group because students will end up running away from that group and fit themselves to other groups of their choice".

From the second focus group, one of the respondents mentioned that "language is one of the challenges to intercultural communication at University of Fort Hare, and it has a negative impact on our success academically". The researcher also believes that language is a challenge on its own and can hinder and distort effective communication among students. Hence, Singla (2011: 46) also argues that "because of obscurity of language, there is always a possibility of wrong interpretation of the message". This is mostly created by the wrong choice of words or un-understandable words.

➢ **Stereotypes**

Basically, stereotype is a generalization of a view or perception of attributes or characteristics possessed by the roles that are or should be performed by members of a particular group, for example, Zulu people are mean (Cook & Cusack, 2010: 9) The researcher found that every cultural group has its own generalized stereotype that is known by other cultural groups. During the focus groups that were conducted by the researcher, each group in the focus group named a stereotype against the other.

From the first focus group that consisted of local students only, many participants had common responses based on how stereotype challenges intercultural communication. From common stereotypes that were given from this focus group, one of the respondents mentioned that "each culture is given a stereotype. For instance, Xhosas are thought to be ethnocentric, Zulus are cruel, Basotho are livestock thieves and so forth". One of the respondents from the same focus group added, "Zimbabweans are associated with poverty, and Nigerians are drug dealers". One of the respondents added, "These stereotypes result into prejudice and bring tension among students, and then intercultural communication is compromised".

From the second focus group that consisted of international students only, common responses were received and recorded by the researcher. However, from the common responses, one of the respondents said, "South African students, especially Xhosas and Afrikaners, are so spoilt and live the western life or behave like Americans". One of the respondents from the same focus group added, "To some extent that makes most local students undermine international students and assume that their cultures are better or superior than that of international students".

➢ **Ethnocentrism**

According to Jandt (2012: 104), "ethnocentrism is negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standard of one's own culture". In other words, ethnocentrism is when we appraise our values, norms and traditions or culture to be the main reference for others. Many participants had common responses based on how ethnocentrism challenges intercultural communication.

From the second focus group that consisted of international students only, common ideas were mentioned as one of the respondents mentioned that "ethnocentrism is one of the main challenges in intercultural communication. However, when one student believes that their culture is more superior to others, there will not be effective intercultural communication in that scenario".

From the second focus group that consisted of international students only, many foreign participants had a common point that local students, especially Xhosas, are ethnocentric. One of the respondents emphasized that "the accommodating culture (Xhosa) is ethnocentric, and some of them cannot accept the differences we have amongst our cultures, and that happens inside and outside of lecture rooms".

➢ **Value system**

De Villiers and Tjale (2004) note that other values that are held by distinctive cultural groups may actually influence and cause conflict in effective intercultural communication. For example, in America, success is always associated and linked with personal and individual achievement. This always conflicts with the African values, to be specific *Ubuntu* that Africans live by, which is mainly based on

humanity; the sharing of cultures, ideas and traditions; and the construction of knowledge through mutual understanding.

From the first focus group that consisted of local students only, many points were raised on how value systems can be a challenge in intercultural communication. One of the respondents mentioned that "value system is a factor that hampers intercultural communication". One of the respondents from the same focus group added, "Most students tend to undermine other students' cultural values, and some students even make fun of those cultural values". In the same focus group, one of the respondents mentioned that "the good example is the bucket system for bathing that is used by most of the Zimbabweans which is their way of bathing, it is hated and undermined by other cultures as they believe that it is untidy and makes the bathroom looks filthy".

From the second focus group of international students, all participants agreed that cultural values can also be a challenge to intercultural communication. One of the respondents mentioned that "most of our cultural values as Africans are mostly the same. For example, every African carries "Ubuntu" values (humanity), but there are other values that differ from culture to culture". One of the respondents from the same focus group added, "for instance, as African females, we tend to have a negative attitude towards a smoking female solely because it goes against our values".

As the researcher, I also believe that value systems can act as a factor and challenge to effective communication. Hence, Dwyer (2012: 137) also emphasizes

that "stereotypes, cultural practices, value systems, ambiguity and conflict can also cause communication barriers".

4.3.6 Measures to be taken to reduce eliminate challenges to intercultural communication

Galloise *et al.* (2013) note that culture impacts how conflict is perceived and interpreted. Furthermore, effective intercultural communication challenges management, therefore, requires intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Therefore, the researcher had to ask this kind of a question to seek for resolution on what the university, students and lecturers could do to eliminate intercultural communication challenges.

From the first focus group that consisted of local students only, the common answer from the participants was that the University should have a cultural day. Hence, one of the respondents mentioned that "the University of Fort Hare should reinforce and strengthen the Cultural Day as much as possible where there will be a show of cultural food, clothing and even music". From the same focus group, one of the participants added, "Cultural Day could help students to gain information and interest about other cultures, as well as reducing stereotypes, ethnocentrism and prejudice among students".

From the second focus group that was composed of international students only, many respondents had common responses saying students must also do something to reduce challenges to intercultural communication. Hence, one of the respondents mentioned that "students should possibly form some sort of Student Intercultural

Organization where they could ensure that there are campaigns and programmes that run against intercultural conflict at the University of Fort Hare". In the same focus group, one participant said that "lecturers should always force students to mix when group assignments are issued out". One of the participants also mentioned that "there should be no group that only constitutes Zimbabweans or South Africans only or other cultures exclusively". One of the respondents also added, "Lecturers should encourage mixed inter-cultural study groups to increase intercultural awareness and reduce intercultural communication challenges".

According to Clausen (2006), it is highly possible to eliminate some intercultural communication challenges that are experienced at that particular moment, and the main way to overcome those intercultural communication challenges is through raising awareness. This means that if cultural day could be taken to the higher level by the management of University of Fort Hare, it could help to raise awareness among students by knowing more about cultures, like the way they dress, their traditional food and so forth. This could, however, reduce stereotypes among students.

4.3.7 Witnessing or receiving racial or cultural prejudice.

The original question was: 'have you ever received any racial or cultural prejudice from students of different cultures or race or witnessed it'? The researcher wanted to hear directly from the participants (students) to evaluate intercultural communication challenges among students.

From the first the focus group that consisted of local students only, the researcher found that out of ten participants, many respondents have not received racial/cultural prejudice from other students of different cultures, and a few participants said they have received prejudice from other students. One of the respondents from the local students' focus group said, "I have not received any racial or prejudice from other students but lecturers". On the other hand, in the same focus group, one of the respondents said, "I have received prejudice from other students when I was put in a group by my lecturer which constituted of only Zimbabwean students. They had an assumption that I will not have a contribution in the group because I am a local student because they have an assumption that local students are lazy".

From the second focus group that consisted of international students only, the respondents all agreed that they have received prejudice from other students. One of the respondents said, "Mostly when I say I am from Zimbabwe, many students suddenly assume that I am from a very poor background because of the stereotype that the Zimbabwe has".

4.3.8 Views of the participants on biased lecturers

When asked to comment on whether lecturers are biased with regards to information supply, most participants disagreed while few of the participants agreed.

From the first focus group that consisted of only local students, many participants disagreed with the notion of biased lecturers in term of information supply. One of the participants mentioned that "so far I have not yet seen a biased lecturer". On the other hand, in the same focus group, one of the respondents mentioned that "University of Fort Hare is dominant of international lecturers, most are biased

towards students of their cultures and give them better test scopes than other students".

From the second focus group that consisted of international students only, many participants also disagreed with the notion of biased lecturers in terms of information supply. One of the participants from international students' focus group mentioned that "local lecturers, especially Xhosa lecturers are biased because sometimes they lecture and crack jokes in Xhosa during lectures while some international students cannot understand Xhosa language; they cannot even follow one sentence in this language". Another respondent from the same focus group mentioned that "the issue of lecturers speaking local language in lecture rooms promotes intercultural conflict because foreign students develop negative attitudes towards the language and maybe the culture as whole".

4.3.9 Intercultural communication challenges hindering one's academic and social well-being

The researcher found that most students are negatively affected by intercultural communication challenges, both academically and socially. The original question was: 'do you think intercultural communication challenges hinder one's academic and social well-being'?

In the first focus group that was consisting of local students only, most participants agreed that intercultural communication challenges hinder their academic and social well-being, and very few of the participants said that intercultural communication challenges do not affect their studies and social well-being. One of the participants

said, "Intercultural communication challenges do not affect my progress in academic work; I just ignore everything that is negative and focus on the positive things". On the other hand, in the same focus group, one of the respondents said, "intercultural communication challenges are directly negatively affecting our academic progress and social well-being in the sense that in our mixed work groups in lecture rooms said, there is a lot of tension among students because we prejudge other students, and others are ethnocentric".

In the second focus group that only had international students, all participants agreed that intercultural communication challenges are negatively affecting and therefore hindering one's academic and social well-being. One of the respondents mentioned that "when we are mixed in one group to do an assignment, if there is a dominant cultural group in that group, they are likely to speak their home language not the common language (English), and there will be no progress in that group because students will end up running away from that group and fit themselves to other groups of their choice". The same respondent concluded, "in that sense, language is one of the challenges to intercultural communication at the University of Fort Hare; however, it has a negative impact on our academics".

The researcher also believes that intercultural communication challenges can have a negative impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students. Remland, Jones, Foeman and Arevalo (2015) note that even when intercultural communication challenges do not rise to the level of xenophobia, they can have devastating effects towards academic performance of students.

4.3.10. Views of the participants on xenophobia at University of Fort Hare

According to Jandt (2014), xenophobia is a dislike or fear of people from other countries perceived to be foreign or strange to them. In the first focus group consisting of only local students, participants were asked to comment on whether xenophobia exists at Fort Hare. However, all participants in this focus group agreed that there is no xenophobia at University of Fort Hare. One of the respondents mentioned that "there is no xenophobia at Fort Hare and if there was any form of it, the university would be closed and there would a lot of chaos".

In the second focus group that consisted of international students only, many participants agreed that there is no xenophobia at University of Fort Hare. One of the respondents mentioned that "there is no xenophobia at University of Fort Hare yet or it has not yet happened to me". On the other hand, there was one respondent who said there is xenophobia at Fort Hare and mentioned that "sometimes when we are watching soccer, for instance, in residence TV rooms, the local students get in fiercely demanding to watch rugby, we usually become so scared of them and even resort to moving out of the TV room".

The researcher believes that if other students are bullied in any way that could at some point, lead to xenophobic attacks. Hence Loue and Sajatovic (2012) mention that bullying between different cultures can lead to xenophobic attacks and possibly place immigrants at greater risk of injury and harm.

4.3.11 Views of the participants on ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice amongst students of Fort Hare

Participants were also asked whether there are ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudice amongst students of Fort Hare. In the first focus group that only encompassed local students, all respondents agreed that ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice exist amongst students of Fort Hare.

One of the respondents mentioned that "the fact that local students are labeled as spoilt brats and most international students are thought to have poor backgrounds means every cultural group is misjudged and has its own given stereotype by other cultural groups".

From the second focus group that was consisted of international students only, all participants also agreed that there are stereotypes, ethnocentrism and prejudice among students of the University of Fort Hare. One of the respondents mentioned that "every culture that exists at University of Fort Hare is given its own stereotype, and some other students think their cultures are superior to other students' cultures". One of the respondents also mentioned that "the issue of language is also a problem in the sense that every cultural group believes that their language and culture is more superior to other others".

From the researcher's perspective, these are variables which are vigorously destroying intercultural communication and introducing more intercultural communication challenges. Hence Guffey *et al.* (2013) also agree that once the place becomes multicultural, it is obvious that ethnocentrism and stereotypes are

present, and one factor that is always hampering effective intercultural communication culture is ethnocentrism and stereotypes.

4.3.12. Learning any of the languages

Based on the research conducted, the researcher found that all participants were interested in learning other languages. From the first focus group of local students, one of the respondents said, "I am interested in learning other African languages like Swahili since I heard that it is spoken in many Eastern African countries like Kenya, Somalia and others".

From the second focus group of international students, all participants showed interest in learning other languages. One of the respondents mentioned that "we are all Africans because we live in Africa, it is good for me to learn other languages especially the local language so as to create a peaceful and friendly environment".

4.6. Summary of Findings

It is evident from the research carried out that intercultural communication is extremely poor at University of Fort Hare, and that there is intercultural conflict amongst students of this university. The researcher found that there are strong variables that promote cultural conflict and destroy intercultural communication. Such factors are ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice, as the results showed that all of participants agreed that the afore-mentioned factors exist amongst students of Fort Hare. One respondent who is an international student from the focus group said "Xhosas think they are Americans". One respondent of Xhosa culture (accommodating culture) from the focus group said that "international students,

especially Zimbabweans, think that they are academic, brilliant and clever". The researcher regards all this as ethnocentrism.

4.6.1 Value system as an intercultural communication challenge

The researcher also found that "value system" is also an issue amongst the students of University of Fort Hare. One female respondent from the first focus group of local students mentioned that "international female students, especially Zimbabweans, are fashion outdated". The other students from the same focus group added that "international female students wear very long skirts as if they are old ladies".

In the second focus group that consisted of international students only, one female respondent mentioned that that "local female students, especially Xhosas, think that they are Americans judging from the way they wear their clothes". On the other hand, one male respondent from the second focus group of international students said, "local male students are calling us Nkwe-nkwes (boys) because they are circumcised and we are not". Moreover, the male respondent added that "some us are circumcised, but still local male students are calling us Nkwe-nkwes simply because we have not undergone circumcision way they do".

The researcher feels that there is a clash among certain cultures at University of Fort Hare that somehow negatively affect intercultural communication. However, the researcher also believes that the way we are taught certain values by our parents with regards to some cultures lead to a clash among cultures. Hence, De Villiers and Tjale (2004) note that other values that are held by distinctive cultural groups may actually influence and cause conflict in effective intercultural communication.

4.6.2 Language as a challenge in intercultural communication

Throughout the evaluation, the researcher has found out that language is also an issue and a challenge to a smooth and effective intercultural communication. One female respondent from the first focus group of local students mentioned that "international students tend to use their native languages when we are working as a group, and you cannot even tell if they talking about you, and that is why I tend to develop an attitude". From the same focus groups, one male responded said that just because international students use their languages when they communicate with each other and we cannot understand their language, we developed a name for international students and most local students call them as Makwere-kwere or Magrigamba.

Eventually, the researcher found that food is also a factor contributing towards intercultural communication challenges. Shona culture regards mice and rats as part of their food. One Shona respondent from the second focus group of international students said, "We eat mice and it's our special meal". One other male respondent from the same focus group added that "many local students are making fun it and they think Shonas eat mice and rats because there is poverty in Zimbabwe". From the same focus group, other female respondent said, "Local students think that every person from Zimbabwe is coming from a very poor background and poverty". The researcher finds this as prejudice amongst students of Fort Hare University, Alice campus.

4.6.3 Stereotype as an intercultural communication challenge

From the investigation, the researcher found that each culture existing at Fort Hare University is stereotyped by another. For example, Basotho people are associated with livestock thieves. Shonas are associated with poverty. Xhosas are thought to be ethnocentric and impolite. Zulus are thought to be cruel. Ndebeles think they are South Africans. Nigerians are seen as corrupt and drug dealers.

4.6.3 Intercultural communication

The researcher has noticed that intercultural communication at University of Fort Hare is poor and variables such as ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice are a great influence and the same variables are promoting intercultural conflict. From the researcher's experience, the presented results and statistics are true. One of the reasons for this research to be conducted is that the problem of poor level of intercultural communication and existence of cultural conflict amongst students of multicultural and international universities was previously identified. It is also the researcher's opinion that there is still a lot to be done to close gaps, in other words to improve intercultural communication and reduce cultural conflict amongst the students of international and multicultural universities. This will also go a long way to help the university to be proactive enough to prevent related intercultural conflicts like xenophobia.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter focused on analysis of collected data through the use of focus groups and interviews that were successfully conducted at University of Fort Hare. This study found a number of intercultural communication challenges which negatively

impact on the academic performance of University of Fort Hare students which predominantly involve ethnocentrism, stereotypes, value system and language.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

5.1   Introduction

Chapter four presented, analysed and interpreted collected data in order to depict whether or not cultural conflict exists amongst the students of Fort Hare University. This chapter focuses on concluding remarks and recommendations for this study. Most of the recommendations will be beneficial to the students of the University of Fort Hare with the aim to improve intercultural communication and endeavouring to reduce cultural conflict amongst students.

This study evaluated intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students. The researcher made use of focus groups and interviews to collect data from participants, to determine and evaluate intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students and to also ascertain whether there is cultural conflict and poor intercultural communication amongst students of Fort Hare University. This study has come up with multiple conclusions about the essence of intercultural communication challenges and interaction amongst diverse students of the University of Fort Hare.

5.2. Conclusions of the study

Having analysed the data, this study can conclude that intercultural communication is poor at University of Fort Hare, and that there are intercultural communication challenges amongst students of this university that have an impact on students' academic performance. The researcher can also conclude that there are strong variables that impact on intercultural communication and students' academic

performance (such factors are ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice). Hence, Jandt (2015) mentions that anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference; ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, non-verbal misinterpretations and language are six major challenges in intercultural communication.

Throughout the evaluation, all respondents from both local and international focus groups agreed that the afore-mentioned challenges exist amongst students of Fort Hare. One respondent who is an international student from the focus group said, "Xhosas think they are Americans". One respondent of Xhosa culture (accommodating culture) from the focus group said, "International students, especially Zimbabweans, think that they are academic, brilliant and clever". The researcher regards all this as ethnocentrism.

5.2.1 The importance of Value system in intercultural communication

The researcher also found that "value system" is also an issue amongst the students of University of Fort Hare. According to Mathur (2001: 39), "values play an important role in intercultural communication". Hence, if values of one culture are being ignored, misunderstandings will emerge, and effective intercultural communication will suffer. One female respondent of the accommodating culture from focus group said, "International female students, especially Zimbabweans, are fashion outdated. They wear very long skirts as if they are old ladies". On other hand, we have international females students who think that South African females, especially Xhosas, think that they Americans judging from the way they dress.

Empirically, there are intercultural communication challenges amongst students of Fort Hare. Xhosas are calling foreign male students as nkwe-nkwes (boys) because they are not circumcised in their way that they can be considered men. The issue of language is also a problem. Just because international students use their languages when they communicate on their own and South African students, especially Xhosas, cannot understand their language, they developed a name for international students and call them *Makwere*-kwere or/ and *Magrigamba*.

Food is also another factor contributing towards intercultural communication challenges. Shona culture regards mice and rats as part of their food. They eat mice and rats and it is their special meal. South Africans make fun of this and think Shonas eat mice and rats because of poverty in Zimbabwe. South Africans think that every person from Zimbabwe comes from a very poor background and poverty (general stereotype).

5.2.2 Stereotype and associated dangers in intercultural communication

The researcher found that each culture existing at Fort Hare University is stereotyped to another. For example, Basotho people are associated with livestock thieves. Shonas are associated with poverty. Xhosas are thought to be ethnocentric and impolite. Zulus are thought to be cruel. Ndebeles think they are South Africans. Nigerians are seen as corrupt and drug dealers. According to Francuski (2011: 87), "stereotypes often hinder communication process with the members of the other cultures since they offer limited insight on the part of the whole culture". Hence,the researcher believes that awareness among cultures by the students of Fort Hare can reduce challenges to effective intercultural communication, as Francuski (2011)

further states that understanding and knowing stereotypes of one culture does not equal an understanding of that particular culture.

5.2.3 Culture, Intercultural communication and understanding among students

The researcher noticed that intercultural communication at University of Fort Hare is poor, and variables such as ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice are a great influence. The same variables are promoting intercultural communication challenges. From the researcher's experience, the presented results and statistics are true. One of the reasons for this research to be conducted is that the problem of poor level of intercultural communication and existence of intercultural communication challenges between international students and local students at University of Fort Hare were previously identified. It is also the researcher's opinion that there still remains a lot to be done to close gap to improve intercultural communication and reduce intercultural communication challenges amongst the international students and local students at the University of Fort Hare. This will also go a long way to help the university to be proactive enough to prevent related intercultural communication challenges, like xenophobia.

First and foremost, the results from the study clearly showed that there is poor intercultural communication amongst students of Fort Hare. The results evidently showed that the poor intercultural communication at University of Fort Hare is being influenced by three factors: ethnocentrism, stereotype and prejudice. There is also a strong factor which also contributes towards the poor level of intercultural communication, which is value system (food, dress coat, language, bathing system and others).

Secondly, throughout the study, the researcher found that cultural conflict does exists amongst students of the University of Fort Hare, Alice campus. It is also being influenced by the same variables and factors which influence the poor level of intercultural communication. Cultures and rituals seem to be the problem among students of this university. Some of the students from the focus group confessed that they are ashamed to talk about their cultures and rituals because they are scared of being laughed at or mocked. This is so not fair and it really needs attention, because according to the participants from focus groups, it affects one's academic and social well-being negatively.

Based on the investigation results, this study shows that all students of different cultural groups in this university have negative attitudes towards one another. There is no perspective of oneness, and there is no unity amongst cultural groups existing at this university. This study concludes that:

➢ There is poor intercultural communication amongst students of University of Fort Hare, and students are not motivated to communicate across their cultures;

➢ There are intercultural communication challenges amongst students, as a result, other students are ashamed to voice out their cultural practices, saying that they are afraid of being mocked by other students of other cultural groups;

➢ There are multiple factors influencing poor level of intercultural communication and intercultural communication challenges, but ethnocentrism, stereotypes, prejudice and value system are the ones brought to the fore;

- There is a tendency of having negative attitudes towards one another's cultures; and

- Consequently, all this affects one's academic progress and social well-being negatively.

5.3 Resolving Intercultural communication challenges and improving intercultural communication

There are many ways in which cross-cultural conflict can be resolved which can also better the intercultural communication at University of Fort Hare. At the University or college level, students are not being taught discipline, respect and obedience, but they are being taught how to research a particular problem and other academic related stuff.

5.3.1 Lecture room

A multi-cultural setting environment like the University of Fort Hare should always have heterogeneous individuals working as a team when it comes to lecture rooms. This would improve intercultural communication between students and could reduce the afore-mentioned factors which cause cross-cultural conflict.

Sembdner (2011) brings up a very helpful diagram which depicts pros and cons of mingling heterogeneous cultural groups as one team (work group in lecture rooms).

Pros	Cons
Diversity permits increased creativity	**Diversity causes a lack of cohesion**
- Wider range of perspective - More and better ideas - Less group thinking	- Mistrust - Lower interpersonal attractiveness

Diversity forces enhanced concentration	o Stereotyping

➤ To understand others;
      o Ideas
      o Meanings
      o arguments
	➤ Miscommunication
	      o Slower speech (non-active speakers or translation problem)
	      o Less accurate
	 ➤ Stress
	      o More counter-productive behavior
	      o Less disagreement on content.

Increased creativity lead to; ➤ Better problem definitions ➤ More alternatives ➤ Better solutions ➤ Better decisions	**Lack of cohesion causes an inability to'** ➤ Validate ideas and people ➤ Agree when agreement is needed ➤ Gain consensus on decision ➤ Take concerted actions
Groups can become; ➤ More effective ➤ More productive	**Groups can become;** ➤ Less efficient ➤ Less effective ➤ Less productive

Diagram 5.1

Diagram 5.1 depicts the pros and cons of having diversity in working teams, and heterogeneous students in one group in this case. They can be more productive and effective, but on other hand, they can be less efficient and less productive.

5.4 Recommendations from the study

The aim of this study was to evaluate the intercultural communication challenges and their impact on the academic performance of the University of Fort Hare students. The methodology was intentionally decided on, after carefully examining the title of the study.

From the investigation, there were many recommendations from different focus groups which were successfully conducted. Emphasis was mostly on the following recommendations:

➢ The university (especially resident departments) should mix different individuals in terms of their cultures so that students understand and appreciate other's cultural practices and also get used to communicating across their culture.

➢ The international students emphasized that the university should practice more academic programmes that can educate them about the Xhosa culture, as it accommodates all other cultural groups existing at Fort Hare University.

➢ International students also highlighted that to improve intercultural communication and reduce cultural conflict, one must not use their mother tongue in the company of foreign students.

➢ It was suggested that lecturers should do random grouping in lecture rooms so that students can mingle with their classmates from different cultural

backgrounds to encourage acceptance, tolerance and reducing factors like ethnocentrism.

- ➤ It was brought to the fore that the university should showcase more intercultural programmes. Such programmes should involve all students of the university to improve cultural awareness amongst them and to reduce factors like stereotype and prejudice.

- ➤ Local lecturers (especially Xhosa) were mentioned and participants advise that these lecturers be discouraged from using local language to lecture and crack jokes because it motivates negative attitudes towards the language and even to their class slots.

- ➤ A Cultural Awareness Day should be held at the University of Fort Hare to encourage all students to accept, tolerate and get along with one another to reduce tension, intercultural communication challenges, and negative attitudes and also to improve intercultural communication.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations are being put forward for further research.

- ➤ A bigger sample can be used to source more valid results.

- ➤ A comparative study involving other universities would be more acceptable, and results generalizable as well.

- ➤ Involving more cultures would also be ideal as other interesting views will surely emerge.

This is to ensure that students from diverse cultural backgrounds are able to co-exist and live in harmony.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the conclusion of this study and the summary of key findings from the data analysed. The chapter also looked at recommendations from the study which will be beneficial to the smooth running of the University of Fort Hare as a multicultural and international university.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The following were the questions asked from the focus groups that helped to gather the required data;

1. Do you converse across culture?

2. What is your understanding of culture?

3. Are there any intercultural communication challenges at Fort Hare? If yes, what are they?

4. Have you witness those factors? If yes, how was your reaction?

5. In your view, why do these factors or attitudes prevail?

6. What measures are to be taken to eradicate such factors or attitudes?

7. Is the accommodating culture welcoming and accommodative enough for foreign cultures? If yes, how? (This question was for foreign cultures only).

8. What do you think of foreign cultures (this was for accommodating culture only).

9. Have you ever received any racial/ cultural prejudice from students of different culture or race or even witnessing the mentioned factors?

10. Do you think Fort Hare lecturers are biased in terms of information supply to students of their culture? If yes, how?

11. Do you think all these intercultural communication challenges hinder one's academic and social well-being? If yes, how?

12. Does Xenophobia exist at Fort Hare?

13. Would you consider learning any of the languages of different cultures existing at Fort Hare? If yes, how?

14. What do you think the university, lecturers and students should do to rectify and better intercultural communication?

15. Do you think ethnocentrism, stereotype, value system and prejudice do exist at Fort hare?