

Communication Barriers between Students and Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on investigating the communication barriers between students and lecturers of UTM Kuala Lumpur campus. The respondents are from the diploma, undergraduates and postgraduates students and lecturers. These students and lecturers come from various backgrounds with different culture, norms and values. The data was gathered through questionnaire and interviews. Findings show that the most common communication barrier that the respondents face is language, followed by perceptual and emotional. Measures to overcome these barriers have also been suggested to ensure effective communication takes place in classrooms.

Kata kunci: Communication barriers, culture, norms, values

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted among the diploma, undergraduates and postgraduates students and lecturers at the Universiti Teknologi Kuala Lumpur campus. These students and lecturers come from various backgrounds with different culture, norms and values. Thus, this will provide a steadfast ground to investigate the communication barriers that exist among them, and enable the researchers to have valuable insights in analyzing the causes of these barriers and subsequently, suggest ways to overcome them.

New students at universities, especially the diploma students who have just left school and the undergraduates who are still inexperienced, can sometimes have difficulties in addressing their concerns, questions and ideas about their courses and college life. Faced by a transitional stage of adapting to a new lifestyle and tertiary environment, many students find it difficult to communicate with others, including their lecturers who have different experience, exposure, culture and education than them.

Many of the post graduate students in UTM Kuala Lumpur are from countries such as Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Nigeria. These students definitely have different cultures, values and norms than what their lecturers have. Thus, this triggers communication barriers between them and their lecturers.

This study took three weeks to complete. First, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who were chosen based on their availability, accessibility and readiness to participate.

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Next, the researchers conducted interviews with some of the respondents in order to gather more in-depth information on the issue highlighted. Classroom observations were also carried out by the researchers. This was done with the consent of the lecturers involved. Finally, the data from the questionnaire and the interviews were compiled and analyzed.

2.0 PURPOSE OF STUDY

Teaching and learning require communication. Many classroom activities involve communication. Effective classroom communication ensures that fruitful learning takes place. However, communication is not effective when there is barrier. The barriers in communication can be physical, emotional, linguistic, psychological, gender and culture. Thus, this study aims to ascertain the barriers that students have in communicating with their lecturers within classroom settings. This study also investigates what cause these barriers and eventually, suggest ways to overcome them. It is vital for both lecturers and students to possess such knowledge in order to ensure fruitful teaching and learning.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study, these questions will be addressed:

- 1) What are the communication barriers that exist between the students and the lecturers?
- 2) What cause these barriers to occur?
- 3) What are the measures to overcome these barriers?

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching and learning require communication. Orstein (2009) indicates that most classroom activities involve communication. Effective classroom communication ensures that learning takes place. Thus, all aspects of communication such as verbal or non-verbal communication within the classroom should be observed. For instance, it is crucial for a lecturer to generate different volumes, tones and inflections while delivering his or her lectures. According to Lang, McBeath & Herbert (2005), a lecturer should not slip into a monotone during class lessons. If the lecturer does this, he or she would not be able to sustain the students' interest in the lesson and thus, makes the lesson a boring one. When the students find the lesson boring, they will automatically "switch-off" and learning might not be effective, interaction is lessened, and eventually would hinder communication.

Other than projecting different volumes, tones and inflections in class, lecturers should also be able to express non- verbal cues well. Lang, McBeath & Herbert (2005) indicate that basic non-verbal skills such the awareness of eye contact, facial expression, motion, gestures, physical contact and silence should be well demonstrated by lecturers in classroom. This is because gestures and expressions communicate meanings. Thus, it is vital for educators to possess such knowledge and skills in order to communicate well with the students and to take charge of the class as a whole. When communication is effective, learning and teaching are considered fruitful and meaningful.

Communication is complex and multidisciplinary in nature. It tends to be abstract and have multiple meanings. Littlejohn (2008), states that communication is not easy to define. This is due to the fact that communication is intangible and opened to different interpretations. Problems also arise in defining communication because the ordinary, everyday communication is different from those which are studied by scholars. However, to overcome the complexities of coming out with the definition of communication, Dance (1976) had outlined several dimensions that can be used in critically differentiating the concepts of communication. The differentiation can be done according to these three levels:

a. Level of observation

This dimension states that communication can be both general and specific. As what has been observed and defined by Ruesch (1957) who stated that “communication is a process that connects the separated parts in this world”. From this, it can be implied communication is general. Another definition of communication is given by the American College Dictionary (1994) which asserts that communication refers to the act of sending messages through media such as telephones, telegraph, radio, mails, electronic mails, courier, etc; it transpires at a certain time and place to another party or receiver. Thus, this definition is more specific than the one given by Ruesch earlier.

In this study, the definition of communication that is studied can be considered as specific, whereby it distinctively looks at the communication between students and lecturers in a classroom setting.

b. Level of intention

This dimension looks at communication as defined through the intention of the communicator. Miller (1966) suggested that in a communication, the source must have an intention to influence the receiver. Thus, with this definition, any interaction done without any intention is not considered as a communication. In relation to this study, the communication studied can also be defined using this dimension, whereby the communication is intended by the source (in this study the lecturers) to impart knowledge to the receivers who are the students.

c. Level of normative (Normative Judgment)

This dimension defines communication based on the certain norm or standard involves in the process of communication. Based on this definition, a communication happens only when there is a certain standard attained or norm formed. For example, Hoben (1954) defined communication as the verbal exchange of certain views or opinions. Thus, communication is only defined when there is a standard accomplished or a norm created, in Hoben’s case it was the verbal exchange of opinions or views. So, if verbal exchange was not done, then communication did not happen. For this study, the researchers also use this dimension to define communication.

Based on the three dimensions, the researchers have come out with the definition of communication for this study, which is the interaction between sources (who in the context of this study are the lecturers) and receivers (who in the context of this study are the students) in a specific setting (in classrooms), with intended purposes (imparting knowledge through teaching) and achieving certain standards (learning and teaching become meaningful). The definition of communication for this study is illustrated in the Figure 1.

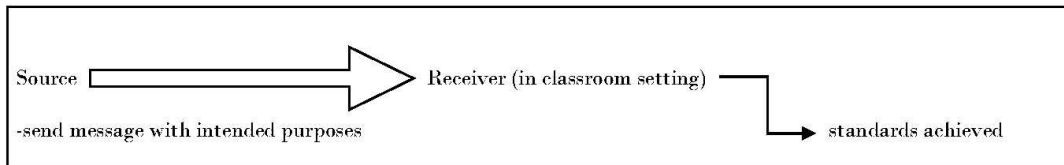


Figure 1 Definition of communication in this study

The issue that is highlighted by this study is the communication barriers that exist between students and lecturers. Garner (2009) stated that there are seven top barriers in communication. They are:

1. Physical barrier – can due to tiredness, sight or speech problems, environment, technical problems and space
2. Perceptual barrier- due to the different perceptions, views, opinions, values or experiences that one has over others
3. Emotional barrier- caused by fear, mistrust, hostility, anger, resentfulness and suspicion. Or, due to over-expressing of emotions and vice versa, being negative, being defensive
4. Cultural barrier- due to differences in norms, practices, beliefs or even lifestyle
5. Gender barrier- relate to the sex one is, has to do with roles, expectations and traditions that are associated with either sex
6. Language barrier- due to not knowing the language, the influence of one language on another, accent, idiom, tone, jargon, varying responses of meaning of words, different abilities with language. Inability to converse in a language that is known by both the sender and receiver is the greatest barrier to effective communication. When a person uses inappropriate words while conversing or writing, it could lead to misunderstanding between the sender and a receiver.
7. Interpersonal barrier- reclusiveness and distancing oneself from others

The researchers would like to identify which of these barriers that exist between the lecturers and the students. This is important because if the barriers are identified, then right measures can be suggested to overcome these barriers and thus, effective communication can be ensured in classrooms. When classroom communication is effective, teaching and learning are said to be fruitful.

Effective communication can be defined as “transmission of meaning from one person to another, as it was intended by the first person” (Maznevski, 2000). But it is also about minimizing misunderstanding among a group of people working towards a common objective, since effective communication depends on “the degree to which the participants attach similar meanings to the messages exchanged” (Gudykunst, 1998). It requires that the parties involved share a common “knowledge” and that they all understand each other’s intended meaning. Unfortunately, in real life, effective communication between people is difficult because the message is often understood differently by different people; the same message may carry different meanings as “we attach meaning to messages we construct and transmit” to others and also “attach meaning to messages we receive” (Gudykunst, 1998). Ineffective communication often leads to conflict and tension.

In classroom interaction, it is imperative that the lecturers send the message effectively. However, as what has been described by Gudykunst, often the messages are decoded wrongly by the students, which resulted in ineffective communication. So, the researchers would like to identify what cause the messages to be decoded incorrectly.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

In the attempt to ascertain the communication barriers that exist between the students and the lecturers, the reasons for these barriers to occur and the appropriate measure to overcome these barriers, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The selected instruments used to do these were questionnaire, observation and interview.

The questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on several constructs of communication theories and own assumptions on the issues highlighted. The questionnaire had undergone pilot test to check its reliability. This is to ensure that the questionnaire would be steadfast source of data in addressing the research questions. The content of the questionnaire was validated by content experts.

The respondents of this study were the diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students and lecturers at the Centre for Diploma Studies, Universiti Teknologi Kuala Lumpur. The type of sampling that was used by the researchers was the non-probability sampling. The respondents were selected on the ground that they were available, convenient to access and prepared to participate. The technique of sampling used was convenience sampling whereby the researcher studying whoever was available.

The sample size was determined by using Yamane's formula. According to the statistics provided by the Academic Management Unit, Centre for Diploma Studies, Registration and Application Division of MJIIT and Graduate School of Universiti Teknologi Kuala Lumpur campus, the current diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students' population is 3,352. Hence, the sample size was determined by using the following formula:

$$\text{Sample size}(n) = \frac{\text{Population}(N)}{1 + N(e)^2}, \text{ e: the degree of accuracy } 0.05 \text{ at } 95\% \text{ confident level}$$

Therefore, the sample size is for this study is:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Sample size of students}(n) &= \frac{3,352}{1 + 3,352(0.05)^2} \\ &= 39 \end{aligned}$$

From these 39 samples, 23 were local students and 16 were foreign students.

Besides questionnaire, another instrument which was employed by the researchers was interviews with the students and the lecturers. In such a study, interviews are essential as they could be used to get both students' and lecturers' insights on the issues highlighted in the study and thus, help the researchers in finding the answers to the research questions.

Before the subjects were interviewed, they were promised the anonymity and confidentiality of information that they would give. They were also told that they would be given pseudo names to protect their identity in the analysis of data. Eleven students and five lecturers were interviewed. These subjects were selected based on the ground that they were available at the time the researchers conducted the study and they were ready to participate. The interviews conducted were transcribed. Then, the transcription was analyzed using open-coding (e.g to form classifications) and then using axial coding (e.g to form main and sub categories). Finally, data was cross-checked with one another in addressing the research questions.

The researchers also conducted observation in attempting to seek answers to the research questions. The overt, non-participant observations were conducted in the classrooms, with the consent from the lecturers. The researchers observed the subjects (both lecturers and students) interpersonal interactions which were related to teaching and learning activities in classroom. In observing these, the researchers used the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC). Flanders

Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) is an effective instrument typically used to evaluate classroom interaction. Ismail and Idris (2009) studied classroom communication and its effects onto students' academic performance by using Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) as one of their instruments.

In a nutshell, it can be said that in this study, the qualitative data was used to substantiate and complement the quantitative data.

6.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study only involved the lecturers and students of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, the outcome of the study can only be generalized to this campus only or to other campuses which share same research perimeter.

7.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results gathered indicate that there were communication barriers between the students and the lecturers. These barriers are the same with top seven barriers as suggested by Garner (2009). Table 1 depicts this data. In addition, interview data were included using pseudonym of the respondents.

Table 1 The communication barriers identified and the number of respondents

Communication Barriers Identified	Number of respondents
language	16
perceptual	9
emotional	5
cultural	4
interpersonal	2
physical	2
gender	1
Total number of respondents	39

From the table, it can be seen that 16 or 41% of respondents have selected language as the barrier that exists between them and the lecturers. From the interviews conducted, respondents noted the following reasons:

1. Many of the lecturers who taught in English did not code-switch from English to Bahasa Melayu (Malay language). This was especially true with the diploma students, who are mostly Malays. When the lecturers did not code switch, these students could not understand the lecturers, they lost interest in learning and apparently, this had created a barrier between them and the lecturers. Hasyim, a diploma student said:

I didn't understand many of the words that lecturer Y used in his lecture. He didn't explain in Bahasa Melayu, when I asked him, he just explained in English. I felt very frustrated... I didn't understand the topic, and it's going to come out in the next quiz. Matilah! (That's the end of me!)

2. Some of the foreign students could not understand the lecturers' accent. This had caused interactions in the classroom to be very minimal. These foreign students did not understand what the lecturers had said, so they preferred to be "quiet" and only talked among themselves. Kareem, a postgraduate student said:

The lecturer has this very thick local accent. I really have to listen to him. Very tiring, you know when you have to do that all time in class. I didn't learn much from him. I might as well read the textbook at home or at the library. I don't see the point of going to class. Yes, I often skip his classes.

Nine or 23% of the respondents have chosen perceptual barrier as the barrier that exists between them and the lecturers. From the observation and interview conducted, the following reasons were noted:

1. Due to the different perceptions, views, opinions, values or experiences that students and lecturers have over another, communication was not that effective in class. This is especially true with the postgraduate classes. In one of the observations, the researcher noticed that the students refused to listen to the lecturer's instructions due to the different views they had on a certain issue. Hence, they did not complete the task assigned on time, the lecturer seemed to be very dissatisfied with the students. This could be observed from her body language, especially her facial expressions.

2. During the interviews, many subjects said that differences that they had with their lecturers did affect the communication process between them and their lecturers. Alice, a third year diploma student said:

I did not like to go into that lecturer's class. He is always critical of our work. He rarely wants to listen to the problems that we have in completing the work. He doesn't seem to understand us. He thinks that he is the only one who is smart here. I really feel like changing my class but what can I do? It's almost half of the semester already. God! I didn't think I learned much from that kind of lecturer.

Moghaddam, a foreign postgraduate student said:

I think my lecturer couldn't accept what I said to her about polygamy the other day. We were discussing the topic after we read an article about how a man managed his three wives. I just don't understand, if she didn't like the topic, why did she bring it to class and ask us to read? I am afraid that now my grades will be affected. I don't want to be in her class next semester.

Another selected communication barrier identified is emotional. Twelve percent (12%) of the respondents has chosen this as the communication barrier that exists between them and their lecturer. Anxiety, is one of the emotional factors that affect the communication in classroom. Yoke Ling, an undergraduate student said:

I have high anxiety going to that lecturer X's class. Lecturer X is so fierce. She doesn't smile, and very strict in her marking. Once, she threw a book at my classmate for sleeping in class. She also likes to yell, especially to those who come late to class. That really frightens me you know. Lecturer X should not be here. She should be working at the prison.

Salina, a diploma student said:

I hate A class. This class' lecturer Mr K has humiliated me in front of my friends. He enjoys doing that, doesn't he? Yeah, I know that I am not brilliant...but that's why I am here, I want to study. I just

don't want to see him, not even in my dreams. That's why I hate A class. Maybe, if different lecturer teaches this class, I can do better I think. Yes, maybe I can.

The next communication barrier identified is cultural. Cultural barrier is caused by differences in norms, practices, beliefs or even lifestyle (Garner 2009). This barrier is identified mainly among the undergraduate and postgraduate students because majority of them are foreigners. In fact, all the four respondents who have chosen this barrier are foreign students.

Each culture has its own rules about proper behavior which affects verbal and nonverbal communication. Whether one looks the other person in the eye-or not; whether one says what one means overtly or talks around the issue; how close the people stand to each other when they are talking--all of these and many more are rules of politeness which differ from culture to culture. In addition to this, different cultures also regulate the display of emotion differently. Some cultures get very emotional when they are debating an issue. They could yell, they cry, they exhibit their anger, fear, frustration, and other feelings openly. Other cultures try to keep their emotions hidden, exhibiting or sharing only the "rational" or factual aspects of the situation. Through the interviews, these insights on cultural barrier have been recognized:

Many foreign undergraduate and postgraduate students in UTM Kuala Lumpur Campus do not have high awareness of the norms, values and practices in Malaysia. They did not have much exposure on the local norms, values and practices before they came to Malaysia. During the registration, there was not much information on these either. They just learn about these through the daily interaction with their local friends and people. Ma Sida, an undergraduate student said:

Where I come from (The People's Republic of China), we don't write using red ink. This suggests that the writer will die soon, but my lecturer always scribbles her comments on my assignment in red. I really feel uncomfortable about this, but I don't know how to tell her. I am afraid I might offend her if I tell her if she keeps on writing in red, she is dying very fast soon.

What this subject did not realize is that the lecturer perceived that there was nothing wrong to write in red ink. The locals, especially the Malays, do not embrace this kind of cultural belief. The lecturer is also unaware of the subject's cultural belief. Suleiman, a postgraduate student from Middle East stated that:

In my country, the law prohibits the wearing of neck jewelry by men, and westerners have been arrested for neglecting to observe this rule. But, it is not like that here. My lecturer who is a man, and he wears a golden bracelet you know, and he is a Muslim. I feel very disturbed, and I think I don't like that man. I don't respect what he says, because I think he doesn't have the respect for his own religion. I came here because I know that Malaysia is an Islamic country, but I am sad to see my lecturer like that.

The next barrier identified is interpersonal. Two respondents identified this as the factor that affects their communication with the lecturers in class. Maria, a local diploma student said:

I did not want to study here. I prefer Y university instead, but my parents force me to study here and they say that if I buat hal, they will tarik balik the car that they gave me. (...and they say if I caused them any trouble, they will take back the car that they gave me.) And, they are also good friends to many of my lecturers here. So bosan! (It's so boring!) So, dalam kelas, I just keep quiet lah, malas nak cakap. (So, in class, I just keep quiet, I don't feel like talking.) Nanti my lecturers report pulak kat my parents. (If I say something, they would report it to my parents.)

This subject did not like the fact that her parents forced her to study at UTM. However, due to the condition that her parents posed onto her, she had to study there. So, she retaliated by closing

herself to her lecturers, who also happened to be her parents' good friends. Now, this had caused almost no communication with her lecturers in class.

This subject's situation fits axiom 5 of the Interactional View Theory proposed by Watzlawick (1976). This axiom explains that relationship in a family can be symmetrical or complementary. In the case of this subject, her relationship with her parents can be symmetrical, whereby her parents control her life and she does not complement their treatment towards her, and this has caused tension between them and has also resulted in her withdrawing herself from any contact with her lecturers, whom she perceives as complementing her parents. Another subject, Zubaid is a postgraduate student from the Middle East. He said:

I don't have anyone here or back there in my country. During the war, my family members were killed in a suicide bombing near my village. My father was shot right in front of my eyes. I had to leave my country, it was too sad for me although I love my country very much. I find it hard to make friends here after what I have been through. I don't think that I can trust anyone. Even my lecturers, I find them don't understand me.

It can be observed that this subject was very much influenced by what he has gone through. The war has composed him into a person who cannot trust anyone, besides not being able to make friends with others. It seems that his level of uncertainty is very high which is probably formed by what he has been through, thus he is not able to open up, and share his feelings with others. This has made him not being able to communicate with his lecturers in class. In addition, he also perceives that his lecturers do not understand him.

Physical barrier is another one that has been identified by the researchers. In this study, the physical barrier refers to the tight class schedules that these students have. From the observation and the interviews, the following scenario is noted:

1. The students' class schedules are rather packed. For example, the diploma and undergraduate students' classes usually begin at 9am and stop at 1pm. They only have an hour break for lunch and classes start again at 2pm and finally end at 5pm. Their laboratory or studio work will usually end at 8 or 9 pm. The crammed schedules have definitely caused them to be tired, which is one of the causes of physical barrier (Garner 2009). When they are too tired in class, they could not concentrate and thus, could cause ineffective communication between them and the lecturers.

Finally, gender is the last barrier that has been identified by the researchers. Only one respondent has chosen this to be their barriers in communicating with the lecturers. When interviewed, this respondent who is a female, local undergraduate student said:

I doubt that the female lecturer of X subject gave me a fair assessment. She likes the guys better, I know. I know the guys did the assignment in tatters. Cincai bocai, you know? (Shabbily done, you know?) But, they still got good grades. My group and I spent the whole weekend doing that assignment, carefully and meticulously checking and rechecking the facts, the numbers, the paragraphs... everything, but what did we get? Not even a B! The guys dapat A, you know? (The guys got A, you know?) Just sebab the guys ni puji kecantikan dia, she gives them A! (Just because the guys compliment her beauty, she gave them A!?) Now, that is so, so, so unfair and biased of her.

Based on the data gathered and analyzed, the most common communication barrier identified is language.

From the lecturers' point of view, the communication barriers that they have in communicating with the students can be classified into three main groups. These barriers were identified through the interviews conducted with five lecturers. The barriers are shown in Figure 2.

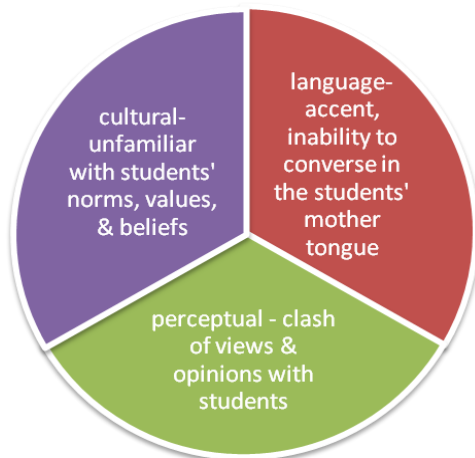


Figure 2 The three main communication barriers that lecturers have in communicating with students

From the interviews that the researchers conducted with the five lecturers, it has been found that language, perceptual and cultural barriers are the ones that these lecturers usually face in communicating with the students. Mimi, an English lecturer said:

I always have problem with the students' accent. I really have to listen to them and decipher what they say. The students also have limited vocabulary, which makes it even more difficult for them to express their ideas or thoughts in class. Other than vocabulary, their sentence structure is another factor that contributes to the language barrier. Their sentence structure is very much influenced by their mother tongue. So, their sentences sound a bit awkward, and non-English. I also have difficulty in explaining to them on the things that they do not understand. I could not code switch to their mother tongue. Sometimes, it's just like "a chicken talking to a duck".

Ahmad, a civil engineering lecturer said:

These students (foreign students) cannot speak Bahasa Melayu. It's a bit difficult when you explain in English, and they do not understand, and unfortunately, I cannot speak Persian, Mandarin, Swahili or Arabic. I use "sign language" a lot to ensure that these students could understand what I deliver to them. Sometimes, they also misinterpret the words that I use, because they have limited knowledge or for some other reasons.

Other than language barrier, perceptual is another barrier that the lectures have in communicating with their students. Abdullah, a mechanical engineering lecturer said:

The matured students tend to be more outspoken and vocal than the diploma or undergraduate students. They like to refute what you say, but I allow that to a certain extent. I appreciate their opinions, but sometimes I think they are not knowledgeable and experienced enough in handling the subject matters. They also frequently do not follow exactly what you have advised them to do, especially when it comes to their research or assignment. So, our views often do not meet. Besides that, their attitude and behavior can be very insolent at times. All these can draw a lot of tensions in class and affect the communication that I have with them.

Finally, cultural barrier is the last one identified. The cultural barriers are in many forms, such as unfamiliarity with the students' practices, norms and values or not understanding the students' beliefs or customs. Aminah, a mathematics lecturer said:

One day I sat cross-legged in front of an Asian student. However, I did not know that as I sat like that, I had exposed the sole of my shoes to this Thai student. She found that my action was offensive. I got to know about this from her classmate. No wonder after the incident, she did not look at me anymore. I apologized to her then, and she was okay.

Haris, an electrical engineering lecturer stated:

When my supervisee, a Middle East postgraduate student came to my office and asked about his research methodology, I just said, 'I don't know, I will have to look it up'. What I meant was that I need to assess the literature review that he had done, and reviewed his research questions. You see, I have eleven postgraduate students under my supervision, I can't remember all of their work. And to my surprise, this student went immediately to see the Dean and complained about me. He said to the Dean, "Why is he supervising me? He doesn't know much" Obviously, there's a miscommunication there. It was my fault actually. I did not explain exactly what I needed to do. This has taught me one thing, that with Middle East students, you ought to be very clear and direct.

From the interviews conducted and the data obtained through the observation and questionnaire, amongst the many reasons for these barriers to occur are:

Conflict - Where the communicators or the lecturers and recipients (students) are in conflict; information tends to be ignored or distorted.

Lack of knowledge – Not having enough knowledge on each other's cultures, language and practices has made communication becomes imprecise and thus, affects the learning and teaching process.

Many interpretations of language- This happens because words can be interpreted in more than one way.

Lack language ability- This is due to limited vocabulary, accent or structure that is heavily influenced by mother tongue.

Differing emotional states- Every message contains both a content meaning, which deals with the subject of the message, and a relationship meaning, which suggests the nature of the interaction between sender and receiver. Communication can break down when the receiver reacts negatively to either of these meanings, as what has been discovered through the interviews with the subjects. For an example, a subject who decided not to say anything in class due to her being upset with her parents because they force her to study at UTM. An upset person like this subject tends to ignore or distort what the other person (her lecturer) is saying and is often unable to present feelings and ideas effectively.

Differing backgrounds- Differences in background can be one of the hardest communication barriers to overcome. Age, education, gender, social status, economic position, cultural background, temperament, health, beauty, popularity, religion, political belief, even a passing mood can all separate one person from another and make understanding difficult. This can be seen from the subject who suffered greatly from the war. What he has gone through might be quite difficult for others who do not have the same experience as him to understand him and communicate with him.

Thus, the researchers would like to suggest these measures to overcome the barriers:

1. There ought to be a comprehensive briefing or a course on the local cultures at the beginning of the first semester of the foreign students' study here. This will enable them to have better understanding on the local norms, practices, values and beliefs. Once they have the knowledge on these, they are able to communicate better with the lecturers, and eventually make the learning process more fruitful.
2. Lecturers should take extra effort to learn more about the foreign students' cultures. A short course on this can be helpful to the lecturers. It will help lecturers to feel more comfortable and confident in interacting with the students and delivering the lessons. When the lessons are well-delivered, teaching and learning are considered successful.
3. To overcome language barriers, lecturers can use the most specific and accurate words possible. Always try to use words which students will understand. Increase the accuracy of the messages by using language that describes rather than evaluates and by presenting observable facts, events, and circumstances.
4. To overcome emotional barriers, both lecturers and students have to be aware of the feelings that arise in themselves and in others as they communicate, and attempt to control these feelings. Most importantly, both parties have to be alert to the greater potential for misunderstanding that accompanies emotional messages.
5. To overcome the barriers associated with differing backgrounds, both lecturers and students have to avoid projecting their own background or culture onto others. They have to clarify their own and understand the background of others, spheres of knowledge, personalities and perceptions and they cannot assume that certain behaviors mean the same thing to everyone.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning require communication. Generally, communication is a process by which the message is conveyed to someone or a group of people. And if the message is conveyed clearly and unambiguously, then it is known as effective communication. In effective communication, the message that has been sent would reach the receiver with very little distortion. A communication becomes effective and successful only if the receiver understands what the sender is trying to convey. When the message is not clearly understood, then it should be understood that there is a barrier to communication.

Effective classroom communication ensures that fruitful learning and teaching take place. This study has identified barriers that exist between the students and lecturers in communicating in the classroom setting. The causes of these barriers have also been recognized and appropriate measures to overcome these barriers have been suggested.

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