Assessing the Impact of Language Diversity in Interpersonal Communication in Case of Second and Third Year English Language and Literature Students of Bule Hora University

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Abstract

This study dealt with assessing the gap of interpersonal communication among students resulted from diversified language background focused on Bule Hora University second and third year English Language and Literature Students in 2020 G. C. academic year. Students in university need to have good interpersonal communication skills particularly oral communication which takes place in face-to-face interaction through words of the mouth. Ethiopia has multi languages and how it may affect oral interpersonal communication skills of students is the gap to fulfill this study. The research used descriptive research designs both qualitative and quantitative methods. Questionnaire, observation, and focus group discussion tools were employed to gather the data. Totally there are 44 students all of them participated in data gathering process by available sampling technique. The findings of the study indicated that interpersonal communication among Blue Hora University students of English language and literature department mainly affected by diverse language background. The participants have better understanding about interpersonal communication, but they face a great challenge to implement it with any students who have diversified language in the campus except those who use identical mother tongue incase interpersonal communication especially oral communication is highly influenced by language diversity. Students' preference to communicate a person as well as the language resulted in language barrier which resulted malfunction in oral communication. The study reveals that there is a communication breakdown among students who came from different language background Therefore, they mightn't made mutual relationships among students and also there were misunderstanding and misinterpretation among themselves. In case of that they missed knowledge and techniques to solve problems together with different students; this resulted in limitation of knowledge. Actually student students have no lack of knowledge of interpersonal communication, personal problem, and culture difference, but language diverse greatly affected their interpersonal communication particularly oral communication.

Keywords: 1. Communication 2. communication burrier 3. diverse language 4. Interpersona Communication 5. oral communication

Introduction

Background of the Study

Language is a form of communication, whether spoken, written or signed, that is based on a system of symbols. It is a formal system of signs governed by grammatical rules of combination to communicate meaning. This definition stresses that human language can be described as closed structural systems consisting of rules that relate a particular signs to particular meanings. According to Encyclopedia (2004), language is the most common system of communication. Wherever there is human being, there is language, and vice versa. Communication through language plays a great role for human being to express attitudes, feelings, behavior and describe what they see and hear. Communication is exchanging information among people in a desired way through a means of language that is classified under interpersonal communication which has been applied since earlier. However, no one might know when communication began but, most intellectuals believe that using communication began 15,000 years ago (Encyclopedia World Book , 2004).

Interpersonal communication is an exchange of information between two or among more people. It is a kind of communication in which people communicate their feelings, ideas, emotions, and information face to face speaking (oral communication) or in written form in order to share ideas each other. Interpersonal communication is crucial to create for students' mutual relationship among themselves as it is two way of sharing ideas, and this helps students to develop language skills, particularly speaking and listing, ones. According to Devito (2014), communication always has a source; the source is where the message originates, and who responsible for encoding the message or assigning the message. Communication like any other language skills, it needs practice. Communication becomes difficult in situations where people do not understand each other's because of communication barriers particularly language divers. The inability to communicate using one's language is known as language barrier to communication. Language barriers are the most common communication barriers which cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations between or among people.

 Most of the time, students use their mother tongue when they meet each other, and they exchange ideas between or among themselves. According to Bryant and Wallace (1979) interpersonal communication is the sharing of ideas between two or more persons. Sharing of ideas consists of many parts, but the most important aspects can be identified. The first is sharing of facts and information, and the second is the sharing of value. The need to share facts, information and value is the basic and hereunto in human nature. This has been used to develop human cultures, ideas, socializations, and experiences. Among students of Bule Hora University (hereafter, BHU) sharing of cultures, ideas, socializations, and experiences activities are seriously affected because of diversified language backgrounds. In this case, students' interpersonal communication which particularly enhances sharing of ideas to encompass cooperative learning and socializations to build harmonized life among students becomes failed.

1. **Statement of the Problem**

Nowadays, in Ethiopia there are more than 86 living languages which are independently spoken by Ethiopian nation's nationalities and people. This makes Ethiopia to be called one of multilingual countries of the world. However the number of speakers and the geographical area coverage is different from language to language, they are equally functioned, and accredited by Ethiopian government. There is education access, equality and equity for all Ethiopians with no language bigotry. This means in other word any Ethiopian who competitively completed the secondary school can join anyone of Ethiopian universities. Students before joining a university uses the same language and share the same culture with people in which they have grew up. But when they enter into the university, the language diversity which directly affects their interpersonal communication appears. It is the fact that students in the university never desist from interpersonal communication. Therefore,

university, where people of various languages and cultures background come together and interact, is normally the hub of diversity. It is the place where Interlingua communication is the most practiced; however, the researcher's live observation indicates, the interaction among the students of various languages in BHU is not effective as it supposed to be. The students are not effectively interact with each other because of language related various communication barriers since they come from different language background. Particularly, it is observed that students often face problems with regard to their interpersonal interactions. It indicates that language barriers resulted barriers in their interpersonal communication. Therefore, the researcher assessed the extent of impacts of language diversity on interpersonal communication among students who currently study English Language and Literature in 2020 G. C. at Bule Hora University.

2. Objectives of the Study
3.1. General Objective

The main objective of this study is to exhibit diversified language impact and its barriers resulted in interpersonal communication process among students of different language background in Bule Hora Univesity.

3.2. Specific Objectives

1. To identify the impacts of language diversity in interpersonal communication among English Language and Literature students of Blue Hora University.
2. Investigate the barriers that affect interpersonal communication among students with diverse languages.
3. Identify the ways how to communicate students with diverse languages.

4. Research Questions

1. What impact dose language diversity has in interpersonal communication?
2. What are barriers that affect interpersonal communication among students with diverse language?
3. How do students of diversified language communicate each other?

5. Significance of the Study

The study is expected that it would be helpful in giving direction to students from diversified language background to develop effective interpersonal communications as well as to build siblinghood friendship which enhances cooperative learning through sharing ideas. Also it may solve language handicaps among students during theme work. It would serve as one of references for further research attempts on this area.

6. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study mainly focused on the gap the language difference resulted in interpersonal communication among students from diversified language background at Bule Hora University. The study restricted to face to face interpersonal communication giving especial emphasis to second and third year batches of 2020 academic calendar. It focused on verbal communication particularly oral communication which takes place in the form of spoken language. Actually there are other diversities such as race, culture, ethnicity, and other things may affect one's interpersonal communication with others. But to make this study more manageable and bring clear research findings, they are excluded and the priority is given only for language diversity.

7. Operational Definitions of Terms

Interpersonal Communication: a communication which takes place among people through

words of a mouth where a speaker and a listener are both together.
Diverse Language: a number of distinct languages that used in the same place where the
speakers are there and they are different as a language diverse.

Research design and methodos
Research Design
The researcher used descriptive research design to assess the impact of language diversity in interpersonal communication to get relevant and necessary information from participants. It enables the researcher to reveal the existing phenomena of the issue under study. Furthermore it encompasses both qualitative and quantitative research methods which enable the researcher to analyze the data by using both of them either simultaneously or consecutively.

1. Participants of the Study
The target population of this study was second and third year English language students of Bule Hora University. The total number of second year students' is 14, and the third year students' is 30. The total participants became 44.

2. Sampling Technique, and Sample Size
The sampling technique employed for this study was available sampling technique. Hence all second and third year English Language and Literature students participated in the study. Thus the sample size became 44, and the concerned data collected from all of them.

3. Data Collection Tools
In order to collect data from the respondents: observation, questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were mainly used.

3.1. Questionnaire
In this study the researcher used both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. 8 close- ended questions and 4 open-ended questions were developed by the researcher and distributed for all participant students. Totally there were 14 identical questions.

3.2. Focus Group Discussion
 The researcher made focus group discussion with 10 purposively selected students. The students were taken based on the language difference and dominant number in the class. Amhara, Oromo, Sidama, Tigray, and Wolaita; two students were taken from each language speakers respectively. The discussion made on the issue concerned how language diversification affects their interpersonal communication, and what impact it resulted in.

3.3. Observation
The researchers observed students both in class and out of it. The researcher observed the students with whom the more made their day to day interaction, and having checklist with him.

4. Data Analysis Method
The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data gathered through close-ended questionnaires expressed in the form of table and changed into quantity (number and percentage). On the other hand, the data gathered through open-ended questions, observation and focus group discussion were expressed in the form of qualitative narration. All of them were thematically intermingled in analysis. Finally, based on the results, the conclusion was drawn and recommendations were forwarded.

Results and discussion

This section provides the analysis and interpretations of the row data that collected through observation, questionnaire, and focus group discussion. They all are thematically combined together in discussion, and the finding is concluded.

In the first item that asks students to define interpersonal communication as oral communication, the respondents' information summarized preceding the conclusion. It is a communication which takes place through sharing ideas, thoughts, and feeling between two or among more people in the form of face-to-face interaction through spoken language when the one speaks, the other listens and vice versa in order to catch-up the intended meaning of the original sender. This definition again supported by Pearson, (2003) as it takes place through the process or coordinating meaning among more people in a certain situation giving mutual opportunity for both the speaker and the listener. This indicates that the participants of this study have good understanding what interpersonal communication is particularly as oral communication. Therefore, they have better basement to implement interpersonal communication on their daily life with whomever. Hereafter, it is better to know the students preference whom they are interested to communicate with. The second item indicates the students' choice to communicate as pointed out in Table 1.

The data on table 1 shows that 3(6.82%) of the respondents volunteer to communicate with any student in the campus. 6(13.64%) of the respondents wants to communicate with their classmates. Another 6(13.64%) restricted their interpersonal communication to their dormitories. At final majority 29(65.90) of the respondents are interested to communicate with the one who uses the same language of them.

The raw data of table 1 reveals that the majority of participant respondents want to make interpersonal communication with the one speaks their language. This mean in other word, they communicate with the student who has the same language background. In the first item the way the students define interpersonal communication as oral communication, indicated that they know how to implement interpersonal communication, but there is restriction with whom to communicate. This may resulted from language diverse. Therefore, language diverse affects the participant students' interpersonal communication by restricting whom they communicate with.

As the above finding indicates, students more interested to communicate with the one who speaks the same language with them. However, it should not be the final finding because it leads the researcher to another question that to know why they prefer to communicate with the one who has the same language background. The third item which requested to reason out the preference of the same language background to make interpersonal communication brought answer and it was summarized and interpreted as follow.

Actually oral communication takes place within face-to-face interaction. Its key tool is spoken language. The spoken language takes place between or among those who use the same language. If the language is diverse from one another, the people do not understand each other; sometimes even they may not communicate together at all. In very rare case the listener may partially understand the diverse language, but still it is a barrier of oral communication because basically communication is the insight of understanding. When the listener handicapped with the language, there is no understanding and the communication failed. This idea also supported by Gamble (2009) as if there is less understanding or no understanding at all, the communication becomes failed or less effective. As the researcher observed and the focus group participants discussed, majority of the students do not show their interest to communicate the one who speaks diverse language. Therefore, making oral interpersonal communication with the ones who speak the same language is a mandatory for the participants of this study. This is the reason why the students are more interested to communicate with the individuals who speaks a language of the same background. In focus group discussion

the participants more emphasized that making oral interpersonal communication with the same language background realizes them the massage sent and received with a great accuracy. It also helps them to give stress to their issue, and develops the confidence to give adjacent feedback on the content of the issue being communicated. This finding also leads to know the benefit the participants gain from interpersonal communication, and item 4 deals with it in Table 2.

The data on Table 2 shows that 8(18.18%) of the respondents gain the benefit of secure stimulation while 4(9.90%) gain a good friends to entertain together. But the majority of the respondents 23(52.27%) benefited meaningful relationship to work together, and the last one 9(20.45%) gets advantage to maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain.

The above data shows that the meaningful relationship to work together is the benefit students' gain from oral interpersonal communication. It is important to explicit the benefit into two equal parts: meaningful relationship and working together. Both of them have necessary contribution in human life beyond interpersonal communication. As Gamble (2009) the human being in building relations with others concerned themselves and others' need and wants trough sharing idea, meeting social goals, managing personal identity, and conducting relationships. In this case, however students build relationship, it is based only with the same language speakers that lead them to miss chance to gain more idea, information, knowledge, and other issues from other students. If they make relationship with other diverse language speakers, it may help them to have satisfaction from social relationship which made through interpersonal communication. Human being by nature, inherently, live social life, need to live together to fulfill its desire from others since not all things is done by a single individual. Rao and Das (2009) concluded it as each person in the world pursues a relationship for unique and individual reason. But the participants of this study missed this opportunity because of language diverse.

To work together meaningful relationship which built through interpersonal communication is very important. Working in groups or teams students gain different and new knowledge and experiences through sharing ideas. Particularly in teaching-learning process a good interpersonal communication builds cooperative learning. It opens wide range of doors for students to learn from each other; at meantime they work together more effectively and efficiently that interpersonal communication enables them. They solve problems encounter them. In addition to effective working students solve the problem together and gain new knowledge, and they minimize stress, anxiety, and keep their mind set up healthy. Rao and Das (2009) strongly support this as people who are isolated from other people lack social relationships more likely encounter health problem and die earlier than people who have good social relationship. Naturally or generally through oral communication human being knows that the both communicators speak and listen turn by turn, and this gives a good and equal opportunity for both of them to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings. This by its turn builds good social life as human being and especially enhances cooperative learning among students. The participants of this study missed such opportunity by making interpersonal communication usually with limited, constant, and identical group members because of language diverse. This finding leads the researcher of this study to look further barriers of communication; item 5 in Table 3 deals with barriers of communication.

As the data shown on the table 3 that discusses with communication barriers, majority 30(68.18%) of the respondents' have language diversity barrier while remain others 9(20.45%) have cultural difference, 5(11.36%) have lack of interest to make oral interpersonal communication. But there is no one who has personal problem that becomes 0(0%). This personal barrier data shadows that students have no personal barriers like hearing problem, stress, and other physical problems that hinder sending and receiving massage in communication process. Therefore, the participants of this study are good enough to make oral interpersonal communication with whomever with the absence of any physical barrier; however, as data indicates they have language diversity barrier which explicitly discussed and analyzed as follows.

Language is essential and the only basic tool of oral interpersonal communication for the one who has no hearing problem in the real world, but it is a choice in the process of communication. Since language in a communication is the preference of communicator, the participant students of this study choose to make oral interpersonal communication with the one who has the same language background. Understanding is the only checklist of communication and it is verified by contiguous feedback. To understand the massage of communication and to give it the right feedback, the receiver communicator must listen the language of the sender. The sender should speak at the listener's language level; the listener is motivated in listing to the massage satisfies his interest. This in turn makes the massage of communication more pleasing, interesting, and attractive. The participants of this study have diversified languages in which they may not understand each other. Actually Ethiopia has one official language that is "Amharic" which is one of 86 living Ethiopian languages. But no all students understand it effectively except those who use it as their mother tongue. Again Ethiopia is multilingual country; it is difficult to communicate in one single language with all students. Students by themselves choose their mother tongue for communication. These diversified language resulted in barrier of communication. Therefore, the language barrier is one of the impacts in interpersonal communication which is resulted from language diverse.

Cultural difference has its own impact in communication. However, the data mentioned in Table 3, insignificant 9(20.45%) of participants responded they have cultural barrier. Nowadays there are more than 86 nations with their own culture. But there is no significant difference among them. Therefore, almost all of the respondents have no cultural difference to make oral interpersonal communication.

Conclusion

The participants of this study have no problem with the knowledge of interpersonal communication as oral communication; as they defined it the communication which takes place face-to-face interaction between or among people through the word of mouth to share the intended meaning, and establishes mutual understanding. Since they have basic knowledge about it, they may do it with whomever. In oral communication language plays irreplaceable role to transmit massage, however, if the one do not understand the language being spoken, it resulted in communication barriers which in turn lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretations that again results failed or ineffective communication. Because of the participants' diversified language, they may not communicate with those who do not share identical language background incase interpersonal communication is affected by the impact of language diverse.

Communication is the matter of understanding; language in communication is the choice of communicator. The communicators choose the language they understand well. Thus, participants decided to communicate with the one who shares the same language background, and it is the right decision to keep understanding of communication. By doing so, through interpersonal communication they built good relationship to work together. In relation the participants missed to widen the relation since they do it always with constantly identical people. Working together makes them effective as well as cooperative learners, but because of language diversity they still missed gaining knowledge from their classmates. It is known that different students have different knowledge and techniques to solve problems, and it enables cooperativeness. Except language barriers the participants of this study have no personal problems like hearing, and no intercultural problem; all Ethiopian cultures highly interrelated. In general language diverse has greatly affects oral interpersonal communication of the participants of this study.

Tables

Table 1: the students' interest to communicate with

Item	Alternatives	Frequency	Percent (%)
With whom do you want to make interpersonal communication?	With any student in the campus	7	15.90
	Only with my classmates	6	13.64
	Only with my dormitories	6	13.64
	More with the one who speaks my language	25	56.82
Total		44	100

Table 2: the benefit students gain from interpersonal communication

Item	Alternatives	Frequency	Percent (%)
What benefit does oral interpersonal communication gives you as university students?	Secure stimulation	8	18.18
	Good friends to entertain together	4	9.09
	Meaningful relationship to work together	23	52.27
	Maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain	9	20.45
Total		44	100

Table 3: barrier students face in interpersonal oral communication

Item	Alternatives	Frequency	Percent (%)
What barriers do you face when you make interpersonal communication?	Language diversity barrier	30	68.18
	Personal barrier	0	0
	Cultural difference barrier	9	20.45
	Lack of interest barrier	5	11.36
Total		44	100