

The Role of English Language Proficiency on Increase of Intercultural Communication Competence among International Postgraduate Students

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Abstract

Postgraduate students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds enrol at Malaysian universities to have better learning opportunities, and gain some new social and cultural skills. Students may also gain some essential competences through their contacts with their peers from different cultures, but some factors may affect their daily interactions. As English language is the main means of interactions among international students of Malaysian universities, thus this study was conducted to examine the role of English language proficiency (ELP) on increase of intercultural communication competence among international postgraduate students of a Malaysian public university. A mixed methods research design which includes both of the quantitative and the qualitative methods was applied to conduct this study. This study had 120 participants from 17 different countries and based on their agreements 12 of them were interviewed to further the information. The findings of this study confirmed that ELP is among the main factors that influence interactions among postgraduate students from different nationalities and their good levels of ELP helped them to improve their intercultural communication competence and gain some new social skills. The results also illustrated that intercultural communication among postgraduate students from different countries helped them to improve the level of their ELP and find out some new strategies to deal with the different accents and slangs which use by students from different countries.

Keywords: English language proficiency; Intercultural interactions; Intercultural communication competence

1 INTRODUCTION

English language proficiency (ELP) is among the main factors that influence intercultural interactions among students from different nationalities in a multicultural academic environment. According to Zhang et al. (2012), English language proficiency is accepted as a significant factor that affects the psychological condition of sojourners and minorities. At the same time, their daily interactions with their peers at the university campus enable international students to evaluate and improve the level of their ELP. Their daily interactions and conversations mirror the social skills such as language proficiency and also outline the way the learners decide that how to use language and how fit