

Communication and Interaction Barriers among National and International Students at the University Campuses

Ali Ouedraogo¹, Sefa Bulut Ph.D²

^{1,2}*Department of Counseling Psychology, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey*

ABSTRACT

Due to the current request for globalization and internationalization of our earth, many university campuses around the world have become full of a mixture of both national and international students. Turkey is one of them. However, although the universities are mixed with local and international students, due to some barriers, the level of integration, interaction and/or communication between both domestic and international students tend to be very low. These barriers can be included language, culture, gender, religion, etc. Therefore, the primary aim of this study was to explore the major problems that lay behind the communication and interactional barriers among national and international students around the world and to investigate if there is a correlation between students' interaction in the campus environments and their academic achievements. To explore the types of barriers that restrain student to interact with each other in the campuses and maybe out of the campuses, the researcher will benefit from the previous literature, to see what the previous researchers had touched upon about this issues and to be able to compare and contrast the barriers that prevent students to interact or communicate among one another in the campus environment across the world from different authors' perspectives and findings.

Key words: Interaction, communication, barriers, international students, domestic students.

INTRODUCTION

Going abroad to seek knowledge is one of many students' dreams around the world. Having an opportunity to study. Beliefs such as Islamic religion strongly emphasizes the importance of studying abroad. As it is mentioned in Hadith "seek knowledge even if you have to go as far as China"^[1]. The number of students who go abroad to enhance their academic, knowledge skills, investigate new cultures, increase social network and broaden their life horizons continues to increase year by year^[2]. Moreover, the high number of students leaves their own homelands and goes to other countries to seek a quality of knowledge. Therefore, the reason behind this can be that there are no sufficient educational facilities such as shortage of faculty departments, instructors, or due to the negative political impacts, and

social factors in their own community^[3]. In addition, Çetin, Bahar&Griffiths^[4] argued that experiencing new cultures and new education systems, and enhancement of self-esteem and self-confidence are some of the reasons why students go abroad to study. The number of international studying in the United State has risen to 1,095,299. In addition, international students consist of 5.5 percent of the total U.S. population of higher education^[5].

Turkey In the last decade, has become one of the countries that host a high number of international students; especially with the establishment of the Turks Abroad and Related Communities foundation (YTB) in 2012^[6]. The number of international students in 2012 has increased from 26,000 to 150,000^[7]. Furthermore, this number is expected to increase from 150,000 to 200,000 until 2023^[4]. Each country has its own reason or expectation for opening its door for

Address for correspondence:

Ali Ouedraogo, Department of Counseling Psychology, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul, Turkey.

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international students. One of the reasons that Turkey opens its universities' doors for different students coming from different backgrounds is to build a relationship between the Turkish state and those countries with the help and efforts of the students coming from those countries. As Turkish president said that he sees international students as Turkey's 'mission chiefs' when they go back to their countries [7]. However, how is Turkish domestic students' relationships, perceptions, communication, and interaction with international students in schools and universities in Turkey?

Statement of the problem

The topic of communication and Interactional barriers among domestic and international students has been studied by a few researchers. The rate of students who go abroad has been augmented in the last few decades. These students face different kinds of problems in the places that they go to. One of these issues is the challenges in creating a relationship with the local students in the state that they exist. Taking this into consideration, it can be said that the study that had been done on such as this topic is not sufficient and needed to be increase. Therefore, this sort of studies should be considered as an important step in examining and finding out the ways that will facilitate and be a great contribution for both domestic and international students in building good relationships in the campuses.

Terms Definition

In a place where the diversity of people lives in, it is quite normal for them to confront some barriers in their communication or interactional process. In the last decades, many students from different backgrounds go to different places around the world to seek knowledge and these students will come together under one roof. Therefore, these students also face different types of barriers while trying to communicate or interact with each other. Especially with local students.

Interaction—there is no exact definition for the term interaction. Therefore, there have been many conflicts among authors in defining the term interaction [8]. Furthermore, Su et al [8], claimed that interaction is a complementary matter that needs at least two objects and two actions. Therefore, it emerges when these objects and events mutually affect each other. In addition, there are three types of interaction. These are A) Learner-Content Interaction, B) Learner-Instructor Interaction, and C) Learner-Learner Interaction (Moore, 1989). From the above perspectives, Su et al. [8] concluded that interaction is likely to be more process-oriented and concentrated on dynamic actions.

Communication—the definition of the term communication differs from person to person [9] has proposed different types of communication which are communication as information, communication as behavior, communication as a medium, and communication as a process. On the other hand, the

term communication according to Losee [10] is composed of information transferring, processing and the information sender and the receiver are in fact included in the process. Therefore, communication emerges only when there are two affiliated information producing processes and the output from one process is the functional invert of the other process's output [10].

Barriers—the term barriers in this study can be shortly defined as anything that prevents students to communicate or interact with each other. However, according to Kocaman [11] barriers anything that impacts the process of students' learning positively.

International Students—the term of the international student which sometimes calls foreign students can be shortly defined as students who left their own country to another country for educational purposes. According to Schreiber [12] International students can be defined as students that came from abroad, registered in courses in the school or the university that they went and are accepted under a provisional visa. On the other hand, Huizinga [13] defined international students as those who migrated and own temporal residence permits.

Domestic Students— this term can be defined as the students who are permanent in their country and did not go abroad and enrolled in any school or a college in their own state. Schreiber [12] defined the term domestic students as those who are countrymen or constant habitant of a country. In this study, Turkish students are the domestic students.

Theoretical Framework

Many students across the world come together and are living on the same campuses. Therefore, although there are many benefits of being in an international college or university such as having the opportunity to explore different cultures, broaden their horizons, and facilities to make new friends, there are also several difficulties that these students confront at the same time. These difficulties include cultural differences, language differences, etc. Beyond the difficulties, there are also communication and interactional barriers that they face in the campuses. Language, cultural, religion, and some students who stay co-nationally (staying in a group with the same race) tend to be the main barriers that students face while trying to communicate or interact with each other. However, students who are able to cope with these difficulties and barriers are likely to have high academic achievements than those who do not.

Literature Review

Based on the previous literatures, there are institutional and individual communication and interactional (e.g., language, culture, time, etc) barriers to overcome when integrating International and domestic students on campuses. Especially, if there is a high number of students in the campus. However, being able to integrate or make both international and domestic

students interact with each other will definitely increase students' learning on the campuses and increase institutions' capacity in preparing for global-ready graduates^[14]. Another study also claimed that even though many studies show that domestic students have good perceptions of international students, interest from domestic students in building contact or relationship with international students is low Schreiber^[12]. The reason is that domestic students claim that international student chooses to have friendship with "co-nationals more than with the students form diversity cultural ethnics^[13]. Other studies also found that not only because international students prefer to stay with the same group but there are also several reasons behind it. Schreiber^[12] argued that the language barrier, international students always being together in large groups of co-nationals as the most major barriers to contact between national and international.

Furthermore, a different study found that when students are interacting with a person from different ethnic backgrounds, mostly it tends to be for academics rather than socializing. However, this number shows that international students are more likely to have considerable friendships with domestic students. Therefore, he claimed that most of the contact that international students have with domestic students was more only in classroom activities, in an academic setting, rather than in the social areas^[12]. One study also claimed beyond the barriers that have mentioned above there are several barriers that challenge people in interaction and communication. These barriers include physical, perceptual, emotional, gender, interpersonal barriers^[11]. Aydın in his study under the title of "*Social Interaction Between Students: Local and International Students' Experiences at a Turkish University*", found personality traits (i.e., shyness attitudes and introversion personality of both national and international students), university policies on internationalization (I.e., lack of social club for international students and lack of common activities with national students), personal factors (i.e., unwillingness to make friends from host country), and school management's lack of intervention in their relationships and social factors (eg., socio-economic status, cultural differences) to be the major barriers that affect national and international students in the campuses^[15]. However, some local student claims that the reason behind why they don't want to interact with foreign student is they feel that international students have nothing to offer them in their personal development. Therefore, this claim or hypothesis raises the question of what is the importance of student's interaction.

The Importance of Student's Interaction

Both national and international students who frequently interact with each other show perform better than those who do not. Luo^[16] argued that when we compare students who regularly interact with each other to those who never interact with others, the excessively interactive students show a

dramatically higher degree of skill enhancement in several ways. (1) In reading or speaking a foreign language. Both local and international students who actively participate in interactive programs in their schools are likely to improve their language skills immediately. (2) In establishing good relationships with different races, nations, or religions. The student who feels free to interact with others are tolerant to other students, religion, races, etc. (3) In obtaining new ability and knowledge themselves. Pupils who interact with each other teach and learn by one another. (4) In devising creative or original viewpoints or resolutions. (5) In acquiring an intensive knowledge of a certain field. Moreover, he added that skill development of students is affected by different factors including; individual characteristics, interaction with friends, and joining in academic and extracurricular activities^[16]. Moreover, Nyandara&Egbuonu^[17], argued that students who interact with their friends regularly gain a diversity of views and enrich the potential to analyze and utilize the information that they receive to manipulate their understanding. In addition, according to social constructivists' views, learning occurs when an individual frequently engages with others^[17]. Furthermore, in Aydın's study, the opportunity to practice foreign language, experience or learn new culture, producing new ideas and innovations were stated by the participants to be the contributions of international students to their both academic and personal development^[15].

CONCLUSION

Going abroad to get education is among the primary wishes of many students around the world. Even though the country's education and economy system is good, still there is a desire to go abroad to get education for multiple reasons, such as opportunity to learn new language, experience new culture and broaden one's horizon. However, students who leave their homelands to settle in a foreign country for academic purpose face some challenges due to the environmental factors that they will live in, such as the university campuses. In addition, it is not only the foreign students who face this issues in the campuses, the domestic students also face some difficulties in communicating and interacting with the guest students due to some possible barriers. This paper investigated these obstacles and found language barrier, personality traits, university policies on internationalization, personal factors and social factors to be the primary reasons that lies behind of affect both national and international students' interaction among one another in the campus environments. Therefore mentioned factors should be taken into consideration by the university policy makers to facilities students' interaction and communication in the campuses. Increasing social and cultural activities, conversation clubs or activities, trips are some recommendation that can contribute to overcoming with these obstacles.

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