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Communication Barriers in Flexible Learning of AB English Language Students

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Abstract *– This study was conducted to identify the communication barriers in flexible learning of 2nd year AB English Language students in the A.Y. 2020-2021. Specifically, it sought to answer the following: The GPA (Grade Point Average) in the first and second semesters of the respondents. Additionally, this study intended to identify the communication barriers in flexible learning in terms of (a) Cognitive Barriers, (b) Emotional Barriers, (c) Environmental Barriers, and (d) Technological Barriers. This study also intended to examine the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their encountered communication barriers in flexible learning.*

The researchers used the quantitative correlational research design. Questionnaires were administered through google forms to gather data. The subjects of the study included the 154 2nd-year ABEL students. Frequency counts and percentage, Average Weighted Point, and Pearson r were used as statistical tools.

Findings indicated that most of the students have satisfactory grades for both semesters in A.Y. 2020-2021.

In terms of the communication barriers, when it comes to cognitive and environmental, the respondents usually encountered them sometimes to frequently. For emotional barriers, they encountered these more frequently to sometimes, while technological barriers were the least experienced from sometimes to rarely during flexible learning.

The researchers concluded that no significant relationship was found between the respondents' GPA and their encountered communication barriers.

In addition, the teachers should offer more possible interventions for communication barriers encountered by students to facilitate flexible learning better. Also, the students should work on improving their communication skills.

Keywords *– cognitive barriers, communication barriers, emotional barriers, environmental barriers, technological barriers.*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID19 pandemic has disturbed the global educational system. As COVID-19 continues spreading in many countries worldwide, online learning has become a significant challenge for students and educators alike. Technological equipment became essential for distance education like audio cassettes, telephones, compact discs, etc. It gives a sense of flexibility, but on the other hand, a dimension of loss of motivation due to a lack of face-to-face contact with teachers. Therefore, it does not mean that people can communicate easily without any barriers to distance education. There are lots of barriers to distance education, in the teaching-learning process. (Galusha, 2001).

In the Philippines, face-to-face classes are still suspended. The education sectors were forced to shift to online classes, but this does not work for all. Educational institutions are making it sure that learning is unimpeded during a health crisis. Thus, flexible learning was used as alternative platform. During these times, keeping up with the challenges concerning flexible learning is indispensable, especially with communication barriers because of the lack of face-to-face interactions. Since traditional classroom learning is not allowed, everyone has no choice but to adapt to the

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new normal, even though there are many impediments to this kind of setup.

"Flexible learning" in tertiary education institutions includes a combination of digital and non-digital technology, which according to CHED, does not necessitate being connected to the internet. According to CHED, "flexible learning ensures the continuity of inclusive and accessible education when the use of traditional modes of teaching is not feasible, as in the occurrence of national emergencies." Flexible Learning (FL) is a pedagogical method which allows flexibility of time, place, and audience, including but not solely focused on using technologies. (Cassidy et al., 2016) To Khan (2007), Flexible Learning is learner-centered that covers interactive learning environments, the internet, digital technologies, and instructional design principles. While according to Bridgland & Blanchard (2001), flexible learning is a rich and multi-layered concept encompassing distance learning, interactivity, collaboration, and engagement. It involves creating and delivering resources that increase engagement and enjoyment and that enliven and enrich the process of learning outcomes. Distance education is a contemporary approach embracing technological improvements by following the latest facilities and tools for the teaching-learning process. Besides effective communication with traditional framework, online programs became new options to catch flexibility.

There are three means of flexible learning: Online, offline, and blended learning. The online mode is electronic-based which uses available online classes for instructional delivery. Learning materials are digital, such as webcasts, podcasts, videos, audio, and other open educational resources (OERs). Offline is a mode that does not require internet connectivity. Learning is accomplished through printed modules, handouts, or digital structures such as video and audio contained in storage devices. Blended learning is a combination of online and offline. Online and digital technology will be used for the delivery of lessons, while other activities will be done offline using printed modules, videotapes, storage devices, and learning packets.

Communicating with students in an online environment requires more thought and planning than communicating with students in the traditional environment. Establishing an effective communication process depends on reducing obstacles in the process of communication. Therefore, awareness of communication barriers in distance education makes people do more practical roles. (Aytekin et al., 2003).

The researchers intend to conduct this study as it is very timely and relevant. Given the situation that everyone is facing right now, the researchers saw the need to further broaden the study of communication barriers. It will help all relevant sectors improve the implementation of a flexible learning setup. Furthermore, this will aid in a better understanding of communication barriers to arrive at more concrete solutions to have successful learning during a pandemic. In this study, the researchers will seek to identify and classify the different communication barriers that affect the flexible learning of the students. This study will also try to indicate the relationship between the profile of the respondents, specifically in terms of their grades in their major subjects, and the barriers that will be presented.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the communication barriers to flexible learning of students.

Specifically, it answered the following questions: What is the profile of the respondents in terms of; GPA (Grade Point Average) in first and second semesters of A.Y. 2020-2021, what are the communication barriers in flexible learning of AB English Language students in terms of: Cognitive Barriers; Emotional Barriers; Environmental Barriers; Technological Barriers, and what is the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their encountered communication barriers in flexible learning?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study made use of the quantitative correlational method of research to determine the relationship between two variables using the statistical data gathered. A correlational research design measures the relationship between two variables without the researcher controlling either of them (McCombs, 2019). The researchers sought the respondents' grade point average for two semesters, identified communication barriers experienced by the respondents and finally establish the relationship between these variables. In this design, the relationship between the variables is presented in the form of survey questionnaire and the data gathered is interpreted

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using a specific statistical treatment applicable to the study. This method was used intending to determine the relationship between the identified communication barriers and the profile of the respondents.

Sources of Data

The respondents of the study involved the 2nd year students who are currently enrolled under the AB English Language Program in Pangasinan State University, Bayambang Campus of the academic year 2020-2021. Data were collected from all of the 2nd year students of A.Y. 2020-2021 with a total population of 151 members. The researchers used purposive sampling as a method to determine the respondents as the whole population will be covered.

The researchers used an indirect method in collecting data from the respondents. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the respondents online through google forms. The respondents were reached through the help of their class mayors. The researchers coordinated with every class mayor by contacting them through Facebook messenger where the researchers sent the google form and the mayors were responsible of forwarding it to their respective class group chats so that everyone can access the form. The survey form was answered at the comfort of their homes. The respondents were given enough time that best suits them in answering the survey.

Distribution of Respondents

Section	Number of Respondents
1	53
2	49
3	52
Total	**154**

Data Gathering Instrument

This study used questionnaires in the form of online survey as the instrument for data collection. The survey is conducted through an online platform using the mode of google forms which is later sent to the respondents individually. The researchers asked for the grades of the respondents then correlated it to the given communication barriers. Each questionnaire included a space to write the respondent's grade point average (GPA) for the 1st and 2nd semester of A.Y. 2020-2021, and the list of communication barriers where the respondents answered based on a scale, depending on what applies to them.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Frequency counts and percentage were used in determining the profile of the respondents.

The average weighted point was used to identify the communication barriers encountered by the respondents. Likert scale was utilized to measure how frequent did the respondents encounter the communication barriers in flexible learning. To establish the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their communication barriers in flexible learning, the researchers used the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient or Pearson r.

The responses were categorically arranged using point scales, statistical limits, or range values with corresponding descriptive equivalents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The salient findings of the study are as follows:

1. The findings of the study indicated the profile of the respondents according to their GPA. Out of 154 respondents for the first semester, 71 students obtained a GPA of 1.75-1.99 which is the highest, 41 students got 2.00-2.24, 17 students incurred a GPA ranging from 1.50-1.74, 14 students with a GPA of 2.25-2.49, then 6 students had a GPA 2.50-2.74, followed by 5 students with a GPA ranging from 2.75-3.00. For the second semester, the highest GPA that the respondents got is between 2.00-2.24 with total of 59 students out of 154, followed by 1.75-1.99 with 58, 2.25-2.49 with a frequency of 17, then 2.50-2.74 with a frequency of 10, and finally 2 got a GPA ranging from 2.75-3.00. This signifies that majority of the students have satisfactory or good grades for both semesters.

2. In terms of the communication barriers encountered by the respondents in flexible learning, the results were categorized based on the following: cognitive, emotional, environmental, and technological. For cognitive barriers, the average point of each item belongs under the statistical limit of 2.65-3.40 and 3.45-4.20, which means that they usually encounter these

barriers sometimes to frequently. For emotional barriers, the average point of each item of barrier that the respondents encountered falls between the statistical limit of 2.65-3.40 and 3.45-4.20. This means that they encounter these emotional barriers more frequently to sometimes. In terms of environmental barriers, the average point of each item falls under the statistical limits of 2.65-3.40 and 3.45-4.20. This means that the barriers in the environmental category are sometimes to frequently encountered by the respondents. Lastly for technological barriers, the average weighted point of each barrier falls under the statistical limit of 1.85-2.60. and 2.65-3.40. This implies that for technological barriers, the respondents usually encounter them sometimes to rarely.

3. In terms of the relationship between the profile (GPA) of the respondents and the communication barriers that they have encountered in flexible learning, findings have shown that the significance values of 0.115, 0.826, 0.372, 0.299 which are greater than .05 respectively, denotes that no significant relationship were found between the respondents' GPA and their encountered communication barriers. This means that while communication barriers are present in flexible learning, the respondents' grades are not directly affected. Their GPA still depends on different factors rather than it being affected solely by the communication barriers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The second year ABEL students have incurred satisfactory or good GPA for both semesters in A.Y. 2020-2021 where covered the flexible learning was carried out. There were not many differences in their grades whether they were affected by communication barriers in flexible learning, therefore, there can be several factors that affect their grades.

2. According to the results of the study, the second year ABEL students mostly encountered cognitive, emotional, environmental, and technological barriers in flexible learning, ranging from frequently to rarely. When it comes to cognitive barriers, they usually encountered these barriers sometimes to frequently. For emotional barriers, they encountered these barriers more frequently to sometimes. For environmental barriers, they encountered these barriers sometimes to frequently. Lastly, for technological barriers, they usually encountered these barriers sometimes to rarely. Most of the respondents experienced all the given communication barriers, whether it be cognitive, emotional, environmental, and technological. Emotional barriers in flexible learning were experienced by the respondents because of change in the learning environment and modality of learning and instruction. Relatively, cognitive barriers were experienced by the respondents because of shock in the shift of learning modality which caused difficulties in focusing, absorbing, and understanding on the lessons. Comparatively, environmental barriers were also encountered by the respondents as they are not in the place where they should be studying – in school – there are lots of distractions, inconveniences, and lack of resources for flexible learning. Finally, the least experienced is the technological barriers as majority of the respondents are technologically adept, have adequate access to internet, and they have gadgets to use for flexible learning.

3. There is no significant relationship between the respondents' GPA in their first and second semesters with the communication barriers that they have encountered. Therefore, the researchers conclude that the barriers do not directly affect their grades assuming that the respondents' tolerance in communication barriers are high, or because of some other factors.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher hereby recommends the following:

1. The campus and the university officials should work hand in hand in the implementation and conduct of flexible teaching and learning.

2. Teachers should continue to monitor the students' conditions and offer more possible interventions for communication barriers encountered by students to better facilitate flexible learning.

3.The students should work on improving their communication skills. Their increased awareness of the potential for improving their communication skills is the first step to better communication.

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