

# Language Difficulties Faced by Nigerian Maritime Students in one Asian University

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**Abstract** - *This study primarily aimed to investigate the level of agreement of Foreign Students in relation to the Language, teachers, culture, and society as well, and evaluate their level of agreement towards the problems encountered during discussion, and to propose action to enhance/improve the service quality of LIMA. The study used the descriptive method and utilized questionnaire as its instrument. Results showed that foreign students strongly agreed with the LIMA language, communication, social interaction and academic life challenge. Results also showed that foreign students encountered some problems regarding the language and social interaction. An action plan was proposed to recognize the areas for further improvement, and address them accordingly, establishing a strong Agreed rate among the students — a baseline standard of performance and a possible standard of excellence. It is recommended that LIMA has to implement programs and regulations that will promote a more efficient means of offering language that will exercise the efficiency in communication, speaking and class discussions for future foreign students.*

**Keywords:** *LIMA, Language, foreign student, social interaction, Difficulties*

## INTRODUCTION

Students experience a wide range of emotions once they leave home to study abroad. It is important for parents to understand what their child is going through, to be patient and supportive while their child adjusts to the new culture. Foreign students, just like any visitors to a foreign country, must deal with cultural differences and making social adjustments. Adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another. It does not happen overnight (Sicat, 2011). The most common difficulty of foreign students coming to LIMA is the adjustment to the language, teachers, culture, and social adjustment.

Social interaction of the students within and outside the classroom involves teachers and peer where teaching and learning activities are being facilitated which need to be improved and addressed some factors that may somehow influence the learning process (Agena et al., 2015). Social adjustment according to Kelvin and Robert (2011) is a psychological process through which people manage

and cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Communicative competence is the ability to send messages that promote the attainment of goals while maintaining social acceptability (Laguador, 2014).

The last stage is when the adjustment is as complete as possible, anxiety is mostly gone, and the new customs are accepted and enjoyed. As a student gets used to the host country's ways, things that seemed like a "crisis" may now merely be seen as different ways of doing things. Most students gradually adjust their lifestyles to be balanced with a Country's own cultural norms.

How these foreign students adjust in their environment merit a study because in the Philippines, highly noticeable is the influx of foreign students in Colleges and Universities. The language challenges faced by international students gave the focus for this research. The research project therefore sought to investigate the perceptions of international students of their learning at Lyceum International Maritime Academy, whether they were having any difficulties

in making social and cultural adjustments to studying in the Philippines and Bamford (2008) emphasized on what process the university could introduce to help these students to cope with their new environment. Attitude is considered an important aspect of learning the process that controls the behavior to act positively or negatively towards the environment (Bacay, Dotong & Laguador, 2015).

It was important to try to ascertain and consider possible improvements from the perspective of the students, not just to consider the views and experience of the academics but also to know the language challenges.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aimed to determine the language difficulties faced by foreign students in LIMA. More specifically, it sought to determine how the problems affect their social interaction and studies and to propose a plan of an action to less the language difficulties faced by foreign students.

### **METHODS**

This study used the descriptive method of research. Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. The researchers used the descriptive method to measure the Level of agreement in Language Difficulties Encountered by Foreign Student of LIMA.

The sample of respondents in this study were taken from a total population of NIMASA scholars of one hundred thirty (130); twenty-seven from BSMT S1A, twenty-five from BSMarE SIA. The sample included sixty (60) students randomly selected from BSMT and BSMarE of NIMASA scholars. Thirteen students (13) were from BSMT SIIA NIMASA scholars while five (5) students were from BSMarE SIII A of NIMASA scholars.

The data needed in this study were gathered through a questionnaire made by the researchers. The first part of the questionnaire was the respondent's to determine the language difficulties faced by foreign students in LIMA. The second part of the questionnaire aimed to determine how the problem affects the students' social interaction and studies.

The questionnaires were personally distributed to one hundred thirty (130) NIMASA scholars in LIMA. The content of the questionnaires was explained first to the respondents before answering. Accomplished questionnaires were collected, and answered questionnaires were tallied and interpreted.

The following statistics were used in treating the responses of the one hundred and thirty (130)

NIMASA scholars in LIMA regarding language difficulties faced by foreign students in LIMA. Weighted Mean was used to determine the level of agreement of international students on language difficulties encountered in LIMA concerning the level of agreement between foreign students and the problems encountered with such language difficulties. The percentage was used in determining the proportional percentage of the respondents based on the population of the study. Ranking was used to ascertain the order of the items. The given scale was used to analyze the result of the study: 3.50 - 4.00: Highly Agree; 2.50 - 3.49: Agree; 1.50 - 2.49: Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49: Highly Disagree.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 presents the general level of students that agreed to the language difficulties provided by the foreign students in Lima as high with a composite mean of 3.14, and a range of weighted mean from 2.45 to 3.62. The responses on all the variables are verbally interpreted as "agree". With the language difficulty, International students may find themselves inferior to others especially to local students who are native speakers of the language as least ranked with a weighted mean of 2.45.

The respondent highly agreed that if a Tagalog-speaking Filipino student can finish a Tagalog assignment in an hour, an international student who does not speak Tagalog at home may have to consume three hours or more to finish the Tagalog assignment, as first ranked with a weighted mean of 3.62. This means that most of the students "highly agreed" that if a Tagalog-speaking Filipino student can finish Tagalog assignment in an hour, an international student who does not speak Tagalog at home may have to consume three hours or more to finish the Tagalog assignment. The respondents agree that adjustment to the language means an adjustment to the teachers, culture, and society as well, as second-ranked with a weighted mean of 3.41. This means that students agree that Adjustment to the language means an adjustment to the teachers, culture, and society as well. Ranking third is it takes time before the foreign student gets used to the accent of the English-speaking Filipino with a weighted mean of 3.32. The top three items since have be agreed mostly by those who filled the questionnaire can be interpreted to being difficult for the foreign student to adjust immediately. The suggestion, like giving the student time and helping them adjust by teaching and sharing experiences, could go a long way.

**Table 1. Language Difficulties Encountered by Foreign Student of LIMA**

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. It takes time before foreign student gets used to the accent of the English-speaking Filipino	3.32	A	3
2. Adjustment to the language also means an adjustment to the teachers, culture, and society as well.	3.41	A	2
3. International students may have troubles in classes when they first arrived.	3.29	A	4
4. If a Tagalog-speaking Filipino student can finish a Tagalog assignment in an hour, an international student who does not speak Tagalog at home may have to consume three hours or more to complete the Tagalog assignment.	3.62	SA	1
5. International students may find themselves inferior to others particularly to local students who are native speakers of the language	2.45	A	10
6. Foreign students may not be familiar with technical terminology or jargons for a specialist subject area.	2.77	A	9
7. Communication difficulties may affect the foreign students ability to participate in an interactive discussion in the classroom	3.21	A	6
8. Characteristics and social relations showed by the instructor in term of language difficulties in a classroom.	3.05	A	7.5
9. Many international students have inhibitions in speaking because they are painful aware of their problems in some or all of these areas fluency, Intonation, Pronunciation, Word and phrase stress.	3.05	A	7.5
10. There are clearly challenges for the students surrounding language, for example understanding the accents of other students or even the lecturer's pronunciation.	3.25	A	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>A</b>	

Many international students have inhibitions in speaking because they are painful aware of their problems in some or all of these areas fluency, intonation, pronunciation, word and phrase stress, ranked eighth with a weighted mean of 3.05. The ninth ranking is that foreign students may not be familiar with technical terminology or jargons for a specialist subject area with a weighted mean of 2.77, while international students may find themselves inferior to others particularly to local students who are

native speakers of the language ranked tenth with a mean of 2.45. On the other hand, the least three items which clearly indicates that the students did not agree and do not accept that local students are better than them. All the need is encouragement and acceptance. By taking into consideration the above recommendations, LIMA will put the interests of the students at the forefront and, therefore, will have more agree speaker who will contribute to the success of the language difficulties in LIMA.

**Table 2. Language Difficulties Encountered by Foreign Student of LIMA**

Effect Of Language Difficulties Faced By Foreign Student	WM	VI	Rank
1. It becomes a challenge when they are no longer keeping the grades they are used to achieving.	3.32	A	3
2. To encourage interaction in classroom discussions, foreign students need to speak more slowly than they naturally do.	3.47	A	2
3. Foreign students may lack knowledge of how to find and use the information to accomplish their purposes.	2.79	A	10
4. For some students who have only just achieved the language criteria, studying in English, particularly at master's level, can be very difficult and stressful	2.86	A	9
5. The expertise of the subject matter taught by the instructor in term of the classroom.	2.89	A	7
6. Students become frustrated, as lecturers may think that they lack knowledge of technical terminology	2.92	A	6
7. Clarity of oral/written discussion given by the instructors suffer.	2.95		5
8. Execution of English and using proper sentence become a hindrance.	2.88	A	8
9. It limits the social interaction of foreign students, thus find them difficult to mingle and befriend the locals.	3.14	A	4
10. You need to speak slowly before Filipino, or local students would understand you.	3.59	HA	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>A</b>	

Table 2 presents the overall responds on the effect of language difficulty faced by foreign students as “agree”, with a composite mean of 3.08, and a weighted mean ranging from 2.79 to 3.59. Most of the respondents highly agreed to the language difficulty faced by foreign students.

The respondents highly agreed that you need to speak slowly before Filipino, or local students would understand you. As first ranked with a weighted mean of 3.59, this means that most of the students "highly agreed" that foreign students need to speak slowly before Filipino, or local students would understand you. Ranking in second, responders agree to encourage interaction in classroom discussions, foreign students need to speak more slowly than they naturally do with a weighted mean of 3.47. The students agree that it becomes a challenge when they are no longer keeping the grades they are used to achieving (3.32). It limits the social interaction of foreign students, thus find them difficult to mingle and befriend the locals. The top three items since have been agreed mostly by those who filled the questionnaire can be interpreted to being difficult for the foreign student to adjust immediately. The suggestion, like giving the student time and helping them adjust by teaching and sharing experiences, could go a long way. Execution of English and using proper sentence become a hindrance, as eighth-ranked with a weighted means of 2.88, for some students who have only just achieved the language criteria, studying in English, particularly at master's level, can be very difficult and stressful. As ninth ranked with a weighted means of 2.86, while foreign students may lack knowledge on how to find and use the information to accomplish their purposes. As tenth ranked with a weighted means of 2.79, though both are still verbally interpreted as highly agree. On the other hand, the least three items which clearly indicates that the students did not agree and do not accept that local students are better than them. All the need is encouragement and acceptance.

One purpose of measuring foreign student language difficulties is to assess the quality of the existing language of the school and to identify directions for improvement. The result shows that the respondents agreed most with one language difficulties which is the “attitude of LIMA towards the students' concerns and transactions”.

According to Barsan et al., (2011), a maritime institution can keep a competitive advantage for medium and long term, by focusing on human resources strategies that can reach the following specific actions: the human resources attitude over client, opening and keeping new communication channels, improving communicational climate, both formal and informal, developing professional abilities and interpersonal communication skills (cooperation, improving motivation and dealing with emotions in organizational behavior, and teamwork) of the human resource.

This further suggests that attitude is a core determinant of foreign student satisfaction. Attitude and foreign student satisfaction are operationally alike as they both represent a summary derived from evaluating product attributes. Agreed students are likely to favor a product, just as the students who support a product tend to be agreed with it.

The same result necessitates that LIMA personnel pay attention to improving their availability and approachability to meet or even exceed foreign student expectations.

Foreign students' expectations have a major impact on the success of LIMA. Failing to meet them is more likely to produce adverse effects that will decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of LIMA.

The result of the study revealed the areas for further improvement and the needs and wanted the foreign students in LIMA should prioritize in enhancing the quality of service towards meeting the goal of educational competency of LIMA.

**Table 3**

**Proposed strategies to lessen Language Difficulties Encountered**

<b>Key Result Area</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Persons involved</b>
Use of English language	The “Just English Please” should be reviewed and make the necessary adjustment both in and out of classrooms.	School officials
Improvement in language skill	Motivate students to participate in the social and academic life of their department and the University.	Students
Cultural and social interaction	Cultural and social interaction should be encouraged between natives and foreign students.	Students

## CONCLUSIONS

The foreign students agreed with the language difficulties faced by foreign students in LIMA. The level of agreement of foreign students in terms of speaking, class discussions and communication was found highly agreeable. The language problem has affected the confidence of international students and their study efficiency. In addition, it is hard for international students to blend into the suitable teaching lifestyle of the school. Competent learners are expected to possess the ability to express their ideas through written and oral communication proficiently in English Language (Laguador, Dotong & De Castro, 2014). Therefore, Filipino students may have to adapt the way foreign students communicate with them in a language that would also enhance their English communication skills. It is a part of the mission of LPU to provide the students with an equal growth and opportunity more than what the other universities and colleges can offer to their students (Orence & Laguador, 2013). Proposed strategies were formulated to lessen the language difficulties encountered by the foreign student in LIMA.

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