

# Culture of Silence: A Case Study of Barriers to Two-Way Communication

Dr. Dhyan Singh  
Asst. Professor  
Govt. Degree College Dharamshala (Himachal Pradesh)

## Abstract

Feedback is substantial in communication process. Consequently, due to absence of two-way communication in classroom, teaching and learning are not productive and prolific in most of Indian institutions. Secondly, talk or interaction is a significant medium of students' assessment and by listening to what they have to say teachers support their learning. Several studies conclude that classroom discussions are often dominated by a small number of students while others remain silent and quiet. The study was precisely conducted to find out the factors or barriers contributing to students' reluctance to communicate in the classrooms. The case study method was employed and total 35-student was interviewed. The study concludes that dialogue or communication between teachers and students is a vital part of the education process and those students who do not speak in the classrooms are disadvantaged. The study found that psychological, emotional, practical, social attitude and previous school education barriers was the salient that responsible to students communication behavior in the classrooms. These barriers must be removed to ensure the participation of quiet students to make active role in education.

**Keywords:** Communication, Barriers, classroom, students, teachers etc.

## INTRODUCTION

It is well established fact that feedback or two-way communication is substantial element in communication process. Without two way communication conversation or discussion is not meaningful and consequential. For that reason, our classrooms are seemed boring and unexciting due to the deficiency of appropriate feedback of students. It is well known that through talk teachers significantly assess the prospective approach and potential of a student and by listening to what he says teachers support his learning. Therefore, due to lack of two-way communication in classroom, teaching and learning are not so much productive and prolific. Several studies conducted on Indian higher education system state that most of the students do not interact with teachers and class discussions are often dominated by a small number of students while others remain silent and quiet.

Several studies have confirmed that when interaction occurs in the classroom, both student and the teacher are benefitted. Two-way communication makes learning more easy, assist students to achieve their goals and also strengthens the bond between students and teacher. Consistent evidence suggests that to improve students' academic achievement and social skill development, we need to focus on the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions.

The study carried out by Jones, Vernon F., and Louise Jones (1981) reveal that only a few students in a classroom grasp and learn promptly, but at the same time other students have to repeat the same things with using different techniques. And then, teaching becomes difficult and hard, particularly if there is no two-way communication. Communication between the teacher and the student serves as a connection between the two, which provides a better atmosphere for teaching and learning. Of course a teacher is not enough able to understand every problem of every students in the classroom, but by two-way communication he or she could obtain adequate information. They also indicate that student's academic achievement, attitude and behavior are mostly influenced by the quality of communication happen between teacher and students. The more the teacher communicates with their students, the more expected they will be capable to facilitate students' learning at a high level and achieve quickly.

Linda Haggarty & Keith Postlethwaite (2002) identified that some students felt problems in communicating with their teachers. But some students who were labeled quiet by their teachers communicated more than they thought. The researchers also observed that negative non-verbal communication by the teachers had a prevailing influence on the students who prompt it. Their results emphasized on improving the communication process between teachers and students about better learning in the class.

Da Luz, Fredson Soares dos Reis (2015) emphasized on the caring and supportive relationship between teachers and students. Teachers can engage actively the students in the learning instead of being them passive learners. Researchers further concluded that a good environment in the classroom is important factor because a social-emotional temperament establishes with students provide opportunities to see themselves as capable, worthy and confident members and make them feel part of the learning process.

Weheba, Dina Mostafa and Abd El Kader, Maher (2006) examine that teaching is an exciting adventure in which both the teacher and the students participate. Communication in the teaching process help students

attach concepts to their own lives, as students will apply what they learn in class to the world around them. While Dorothy Spiller (2009) report that feedback or two-way communication is an important ingredient of the learning cycle, but both students and teachers most of the time express their disappointment and frustration in feedback process. Generally students take interest in marks rather than concerned with feedback comments. When discussion around appraisal and feedback is extended and the students ensure their active participations in the whole process, then feedback is possibly to be most valuable to students learning.

J Hattie and Timperely (2007) explain that whether feedback is positive or negative but it influences the learning and achievement process effectively. Further, they also argued that evidence shows that feedback can be used in several ways to enhance the effectiveness in classrooms. Feedback has the potential to have a significant effect on student learning achievement

### **Hypotheses**

On the basis of several studies and literature, the following three hypotheses can be formulated:

1. The students do not interact adequately and satisfactorily with their teachers while discussing a subject matter in the classroom.
2. Only a group of students who have studied in private schools and speak English communicate frequently with their teachers.
3. One way communication in classrooms influences quality of education and discourage teachers.

### **Objectives of the study**

There were four prime research questions:

1. To what level, teachers and students communicate and interact with one another?
2. To find out the factors which contribute to silence in classrooms among college students?
3. The students who communicate mostly what is their educational and social backgrounds?
4. How do teachers and students distinguish this interaction?

### **Research designing**

This study was conducted at Govt. College Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. Participants included 36 students from science and arts disciplines. There were three sessions of Forum Focus Group Discussion conducted in three zones and discussed for at least 45 minutes each. To obtain qualitative information on silence in class and why students do not use two-way communication in classroom, they were asked open-ended questions. Whereas, 20 teachers from different disciplines were chosen to discuss about their interaction with students in the classrooms.

### **Results and interpretations**

It is found that a large number of the students do not communicate with teachers when teachers ask questions in classroom and on any other significant occasion. Therefore, our first hypothesis is true. Almost 92% students accept that they do not interact in the class with teachers although in which 33% students sometimes know the answers. On the other hand teachers also revealed that only less than ten percent students dominant the class in discussion.

### **Social environmental and educational barriers**

80% students acknowledged that they were not trained and educated to indulge in two way-communications in their previous classes. Unfortunately, only a few students had been exposed to these types of effective interactions in the early classes or grades. Therefore, now they feel it is peculiar and eccentric to respond in the classroom. Interviews and talks with quiet students state that they feel anxious about being asked to speak in class. This anxiety frequently prevent them participating in conversation. Sometimes this feeling is aroused among the students due to the detachment with teacher and lack of confidence.

### **Psychological aspects of silence**

Most of the students accepted that even though they knew the answer but replied it slowly and when teachers asked to repeat it again loudly they forgot the content. This happens because of their low self esteem and confidence. Without exercising and practice it cannot be built. That is a feeble aspect of our subordinate education standard in the schools. Secondly, 94% sample revealed that they frequently wanted to talk with teachers on various issues but could not find the appropriate words. This is a lot occurs due to the fewer knowledge of spoken language. The educations we are obtaining are not mostly used in everyday life style. If students reply wrong answer in the class then their classmates will make fun of him. Mostly, this thought keeps them away from participation.

Majority of students (93%) also acknowledged that they passively listened to the instructors and jotted

down notes. This habit has been evolved since their primary education. This traditional pedagogy practice has been used since decades. But by emphasizing the learners to change their attitude and behavior can play an active role in constructing knowledge.

### **Interaction as a life line of learning: Teachers' opinion**

Most of the teachers (91%) accept that there is a significant correlation between two-way communication and academic performance of the students. Silence inside classrooms is a big problem and it reduces socialization and skill temperament. It is not easy to bring them out to talk about their view points and attitude. Some of the teachers have poor opinion about the education imparting in the schools. They thought students were still in memorizing stage their understanding and reflection mode were switched off. McCroskey & Wheelless, (1976) observed that between 50 and 90 percent of all interpersonal communication occurs primarily because of the participants' motivation to seek affinity with one another. Most of the teachers were not satisfied with the quality education imparting on the secondary and high school levels.

That is why; the factors influencing interaction in the classroom should be eliminated. Affective factors in improving communication among professors and students are essential for improving the educational process (Khosravi, 2011). Effective teaching depends on successful communication. When teachers and students interact with one another, an explicit communication occurred that is good for learning and teaching environment (Miller, 1988).

David Andrade (2015) assessed that Communication is supreme in education and learning. Whether it is used by teacher to student, student to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher to parent, teacher to admin or admin to parent, or vice versa, communication is needed to make sure our students are successful. But on the other hand, Nurzali Ismail and Khairu'l Najmi Idris (2009) found no correlation between effective classroom communication and students' performance. Two-way communication in the classroom was just essential in assuring that effective teaching and learning could take place. Sometimes students feel inferior and remain passive in the classroom. And sometimes students seem more intent on writing down what teacher says than on listening and understanding. Most students, seemingly unconcerned with content, laboriously and uncritically write down whatever teachers say.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Indeed, if appropriately, effective two-way communication is established between teachers and students the chances of success will be equally high. Importance of two-way communication should be widely recognized to make students confident, well behavioral, self-esteemed and psychological strong. Providing sufficient opportunities of speaking or answering to the students in the class would increase their confidence level. The result oriented productivity in classroom comes from an effective interaction and cooperation between the student and teacher. Good relationships between the two are imperative for motivation and academic achievement of the students (Spilt, Koomen and Thijs, 2011). This will also make reciprocal relationship between duos.

Mary P. Clynes and Sara E.C. Raftery (2008) define that the importance of feedback has already been acknowledged though this element is inconsistently absent in students' communication process. Whereas, feedback increases self-esteem and confidence in students, also motivate them to achieve their goals. They identify that inadequate supervision, training and education, unfavorable learning environment and insufficient time spent with students are some of the barriers to the two-way communication. Nakane, I (2007) in his study discovered that the students who belonged to the minority ethnic group were silent in the classrooms in comparison with their majority peers. Some students' silence in the classrooms is consequence of conflicts based on cultural and caste differences. This silence or silencing of the minority students in the classroom can be seen as a sign of discrimination and control and also the tension which exists in negotiating power relationships between the teacher and students.

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