



## Learning from Interpersonal Communication Course

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### **Abstract**

The present study investigates Interpersonal Communication (IPC) Course in Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in summer school 2017. It seeks to explore how students gain information through experiential knowledge from IPC course whereas this course taught students about self-awareness based on constructivist theory and helped them use their experiences for creating their own knowledge. This IPC course also tried to teach them how to develop their own knowledge then transfers to their lives. Participants of the study were chosen from both Turkish and English IPC course with based on ethnographic approach and focus group was used for data collection in order to understanding deeply students' opinions, experiences, and awareness about IPC in their lives.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Communication (IPC), constructivism theory, education, experiential knowledge

### **Introduction**

Interpersonal Communication (IPC) course has been taught over the years in communication faculties. In EMU summer school 2017 IPC offered as a university elective course and students attended this course from different departments such as; engineering, business, psychology, and communication. The present paper seeks to explore how students use their experiences for creating their own knowledge then how to transfer that into their lives. IPC course helped students to understand IPC components which are explanation, why we communicate, and self-perception in communication, verbal and non-verbal communication also emotions and communication climate (Wood, 2015). For the present study Constructivist Theory of Learning is found convenient one because constructivism as a worldview or perspective sets that learning is a dynamic, productive process. Individuals effectively build or make their own subjective portrayals of target reality (Fosnot & Perry, 1996). In this study, how students gain information through IPC course then build their own knowledge then transfer to their daily lives will be investigated and students' self-awareness is evaluated through focus group interviews with nineteen students (eight from English IPC course and eleven from Turkish IPC course).

### **1. Literature Review**

#### **1.1 Constructivist Theory of Learning**

Constructivist theory of learning demonstrates a very clear infrastructure for how to use experiential knowledge in education. In this context, experiential education advocates learners learn from the experiences (DeLay, 1996, p.77). Constructivist theory helped learners to find out meaning of previous experiences and applied to their own worldview. According to Dewey (1938) the essential truth is an experience and also experience is the real activity of life. Experience leads by perception and knowledge. He also supported that assumptions should be tested based on experimental activity.

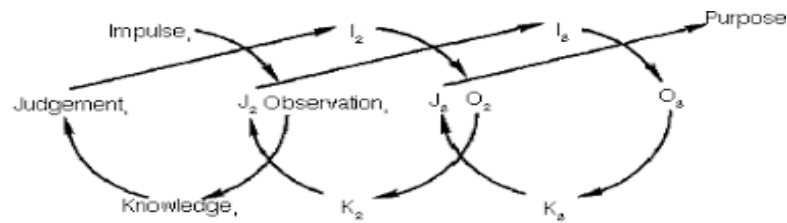


Figure1. John Dewey's concept of experiential learning according to Kolb (1984:23)

**Figure.1.** explained how learning altered the impulses, awareness, and ambitions. This figure preferred to show supporting learning process based on experiences. Dewey's reflection is considered as dialectic and an interactive process (Miettinen, 2000). From this perspective, according to J. R. Savery and Duffy (2001), the aim of constructivist theory is, made a connection between previous experiences and what we have learned from them due to learning is a dynamic and continuous process. Then, next step is transferred experiences to real life. In this process environment and individual knowledge are engaged. In addition, environment that we lived in unwittingly shaped and developed our individual knowledge. Socializing with the people who is chosen by ourselves to surround us helped to developed individual knowledge. Then IPC is merged as a process that we interchange our experiences gained through interactions from the environment. As indicated by constructivism, student's learning process is a dynamic procedure of building and recreating perceptions of experience. It asserts comprehension instead of recalling and replicating knowledge and it depends on teamwork (Tynjala, 1999, p.8).

## 1.2 Interpersonal Communication (IPC)

As Knapp and Daly (1992) claimed, interpersonal communication accepted in 1960 as an academic area of communication studies, interpersonal communication is an ongoing process between two or more people in such a period of time than individually interact each other even at on a diverse platforms. Wood (2015) stated that, when interact people with interpersonally, time and space are not important because mainly people need to be understood by the environment. Most of the scholars agreed that, interpersonal communication is a certain kind of synergy between people for instance; that synergy has occurred when two people attracted to each other, more attraction brought more deep conversation on interpersonal communication (McCroskey and McCain, 1974). Furthermore, individuals seek to build strong relationship with their individual circle then interpersonal communication and skills effected positively people's socializing process and developed their ties of social relationships with other people (Hargie, 2010). The most ideal approach for Interpersonal Communication is by considered closely what happens between individuals in any place and time which means concentrating specific type of relationship between people (Wood, 2015, p.13). In EMU, this IPC course is considered to make more aware of the students for their interpersonal relationships and teach how to communicate with others, be aware of the basis of IPC, expanded their verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and teaches the sense of listening others discreetly. These components of IPC provided an active learning in the class and give an opportunity to students for participating eagerly into the topics. Our IPC course aimed to teach students use experiences to create their own reality through experiential knowledge based on learning is accepted as an ongoing action (Kolb, 2014) Firstly, developed for learning in higher education the essential concentrate ought to be attributing students to action which is the best technique for upgrading their learning. Secondly, a constructivist theory of learning suggested that creating knowledge is an important part of learning (Kolb and Kolb, 2005, p.194). The essential model of affective learning is the boost component which enables students to be more successful in the close term and through life. Therefore, relevant learning means acting prompting strengthening for duty and obligation (Novak, 2010, p.23).



Communication is an essential need for maintaining our daily life thus people communicate for several reasons which are create and sustain interpersonal relationships. Also, people who tend to use interpersonal communication skills more consciously that support to developed solid networks more (Hargie, 2010). From this perspective Kokkonen and Almonkari (2015) suggested that also social networks are sustained and kept with interpersonal connections, therefore interpersonal communication ought to be educated to university level students that should be base for students' further life. In communication faculties IPC taught to raise students' self-awareness for better understanding the environment that they live in. As it is known, Interpersonal communication is an important study of area in communication studies. Generally, interpersonal communication course is based onto teach components and theories of IPC. Also, how to communicate with people, strategies of communication, how to use IPC skills these are important elements for IPC. This study seeks to understand what students have learned from IPC course and how they can transfer IPC components to their real life. For the beneficial interpersonal communication learners need to understand interpersonal communication skills first then IPC skills most of the time target-oriented or purposeful when two of people talk each other at the same time reinforce each other to talk with gestures and body language then this behavior helped to achieve IPC goals (Frymier & Houser, 2000). Furthermore, IPC divided into two major types of communication one of them is verbal communication which is occurred between two or more people reinforced each other to talk or continue to activity verbally and second one is non-verbal communication which depends on gestures, facial expressions, and body language (Hargie, Saunders, and Dickson, 1994). According to Myers and Bryant (2002), positive relationship between instructor and student may encourage developing student's learning process more effectively, especially in college instructors attention to the students such as; asking questions, supporting them to participating topics, and making a discussions are shown that effected students' grades and also provided to learn topics rapidly thus positively impact students self-awareness on specific subjects.

### **1.3 IPC Course in EMU**

Central tenets of IPC can be explained in many ways, briefly scholars categorized as exchange verbal or non-verbal information between individuals. According to West and Turner (2010), the crucial point of the IPC is what people select from the message to impose their own ideas to create new ones. Maintain messages depend on culture and the environment which individuals belong to. In EMU, IPC course basically, consider for the effective learning and applying experiences to the real life. This course has been composed individual IPC skills and students previous experiences. The research analyzed composed in three fold. First, students drew their own portrayal on a piece of paper. In other words, encouraged students to confronted their-self through their own eyes. Second, consciously or unconsciously they have been used IPC skills and this course tried to improve students' awareness about how to use IPC skills deliberately. Third, one of the significant points of the course was given to students as a homework which was a writing diary from the very beginning of the course throughout the end of the course. Writing diaries supported students' maintenance of the learning materials and also the diaries provide the instructor significant feedbacks about students learning development according to Nuckles, Schwonke, Berthold, and Renkl (2004). Besides, this IPC course also gave an opportunity to students how to interpret close relationships with their friends, family, and other people. IPC constructs individual knowledge which allows close relationships going deeper and creating confidence whether figure out how to discuss information we built after understand people who is in our individual circle (Wood, 2015, p.24).

Based on above knowledge, the research author considered first culture, language, tradition, and environment before people communicate with each other. The present study is based on two focus groups interviews due to gather clear, objective, and deep



data from the students face to face this study is conducted with IPC summer school course students at EMU in 2017.

## **2. Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative research methodology. The Ethnographic approach found out suitable because of the ethnography deals with social interactions and environment within communities, groups, or teams. One of the goals of ethnography is showed people's interests, behaviors, and opinions (Harvey & Myers, 1995). Present study has been conducted in IPC course at Eastern Mediterranean University in summer school 2017. In summer school 2017 IPC course offered as a university elective course which can be selected by the summer school students who studied another department/faculty. Among nineteen students twelve of them attended from school of business, department of psychology, and school of engineering. However, among twelve different departments seven of them took English IPC course and five of them took Turkish IPC course. Then, rest of them participated from communication faculty (seven students). Students from different departments provided stronger results for the importance of IPC into university level students. For this study, selected semi-structured interview comprising of five questions was used to collect relevant information from nineteen students. Data have been collected through two focus group interviews both Turkish (eleven students) and English (eight students) IPC courses. Two focus group interviews have been conducted before participants' final exams. Data have been analyzed thematically. English IPC course focus group consisted of eight students and Turkish IPC course focus group consisted of eleven students. Focus group interviews have been shown discussions and opinions about how students gained information through IPC course and transferred to their real life. This research has been conducted in August 2017 and interviews conducted face-face by the researcher at EMU IPC course classrooms. The questions asked in the focus groups were related mainly to understand their opinions given below:

### **Research Questions:**

- 1) Before you took the course have you been aware of IPC? What have you learned on theory? What do you learn about life?
- 2) How do you feel about diaries you wrote about yourself? Is it hard to express yourself or not?
- 3) Does IPC course teach you self-awareness or not?
- 4) Do you use IPC components when you are interacting with people?
- 5) Have you been felt any differences in your family, friends, or romantic relationships after you took the course?

### **2. 1 Analysis of Findings and Results**

The study's aim to figure out how students learned through experiential knowledge and gained information then transfer to their life. As it is known, IPC course one of the most effective communication courses that has been taught over the years and gave students a perspective about maintained their relationship with the environment.

To the first question which was about students' awareness before took the IPC course and what they have learned from the course about life and theory. English IPC course participants replied they have never thought IPC as a course in the University. But all eight participants have approved to learn many things about IPC. Especially, they agreed to IPC gave them a better understanding about people, culture, and life in general. Seven of Turkish IPC course participants have known IPC as a course before they took the course and four of them had no idea about IPC. All of eleven Turkish IPC course participants replied they have not thought this was a comprehensive and detailed course but they approved to learn useful details about IPC and life.



Second question which was about diaries they wrote about their-self. Four of the English IPC course participants replied that was easy to express their-self on a diary but other four of them found writing a diary was not easy. But all of the eleven participants agreed to say that writing diary gave them a nice experiment and motivated them to study eagerly. Seven of Turkish IPC course participants found writing diaries hard and they said that hesitated to express their-self on a diary even though four of them found writing diary was easy. All of the eleven participants of Turkish IPC course agreed to say that writing a diary felt them good and excited experience for them.

Third question which was about does IPC course teach self-awareness or not. Five participants of the English IPC course replied that yes, they agreed to say IPC makes them more aware about their environment also social and cultural relationships more developed with this course. Other three participants of English IPC course replied that they have already self-aware and this course was a review for them. Turkish IPC course participants (eleven) were approved that IPC taught self-awareness and also how to handle conflicts with other people, and express their-self clearly.

Fourth question which was about usage level of IPC components were taught by the instructor during the course. All the participants of English IPC course (eight) said that tried to use IPC components when they interact with people such as; make an eye contact, smile, and expressed feelings most popular answers among them. Also they mentioned to use IPC components and verbal / non-verbal communication for good friendship and health communicate. Three of Turkish IPC course participants replied as consciously or unconsciously used IPC components before they took the course but from now on they have been aware of how to use IPC components appropriately such as; for a good relationship for others pay more attention to verbal and non-verbal communication, body language, and gestures. However, eight of the Turkish IPC course participants agreed to say that using IPC components a lot when they communicate with people and also they mentioned that solve their troubles easily after learned IPC components.

Fifth question which was about felt any differences in family, friendships, or romantic relationships. Six of English IPC course participants replied as positively say yes and they said especially when communicating with their family they tried to keep calm and relax also romantic relationship point of view they agreed to say that they have learned listen carefully and understand the problems first. Two of the English IPC course participants replied that they have never felt any differences with their family, friendships, or romantic relationships. However, four of Turkish IPC course participants replied that they have never felt any differences after took the course with their close relationships. Seven of them replied that they have learned to ask again to make sure and also tried to prevent misunderstanding when they communicate with their families, friends, and romantic partners.

### **3. Conclusion**

This paper shed light on the impact of interpersonal communication course on the students' further life. Specifically, considered in the Northern Island of Cyprus as a multi-cultural country where communication between people is the most significant approach in order to generate healthy communication between each other, the role of IPC cannot be overemphasized. Whereas, Interpersonal communication (IPC) is related to a process of communication between individuals and occurred when shifted information continuously in such a period of time and place. Verbally or non-verbally every single second people need to speak or express their-self to other people which made IPC is an unavoidable process. In other words, when people have been aware of themselves at the same place immediately communication has been started (Sethi and Seth, 2009). Emerging technology, internet, and mass communication devices people need more educated by the scholars about IPC, IPC components, listen to others, express ideas,



and exchange information in traditional ways of communication and effective communication with other people.

According to the focus group interview results, IPC courses participants both English and Turkish as students of Eastern Mediterranean University mostly are satisfied for taking IPC. Considered nineteen students from different departments, they found IPC was very useful, didactic, and interesting thus students mentioned to learn a lot of helpful tips about how to communicate with people more discreetly. One of the significant points found out most of the students have not been aware of IPC as an important area of research in academia but they found very beneficial and applicable to daily life. Furthermore, students agreed that writing diaries was an interesting experience when they confronted their-self on the piece of paper it encouraged them to come classroom willingly. On the other hand, students have learned another important lesson from IPC which was expressed their-self to one another clearly and also listened to them attentively. IPC considered as an effective course based on the data that we collected students used IPC components in their family relationships, friendships, and romantic relationships. This paper hoped to generate idea about IPC course and effect of this course on students' daily life. For instants, students claimed to do more eye contact, smile, and listen eagerly. In addition, students tried prevent relationships from misunderstanding such as; they asked questions to make sure to get understanding people correctly. Eventually, IPC as a University level course but the difference is it practicable and useful for their lifetime. In this context, IPC should be teaching in other faculties to enlightened students more importance of IPC would be very beneficial and necessary throughout the life. Therefore, this research extends recent literature and show the impact of IPC on people daily experience.

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