



## Language Barriers in Communication Faced By Indonesian Students in Australia

Cherisa Angelika<sup>1</sup>, Putri Rindu Kinasih<sup>2\*</sup>, Veronika Ita Karina Tarigan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Universitas Bunda Mulia, Indonesia

Alamat: UBM Tower, Alam Sutera, Jl. Jalur Sutera Barat Kav.7-9 Tangerang, Banten 15143

Korespondensi penulis: [putri.kinasih93@gmail.com](mailto:putri.kinasih93@gmail.com)\*

**Abstract.** *Language plays a crucial role in communication as it occurs in every individual's or group's interaction. When visiting a country that speaks a foreign language, it is essential to effectively communicate in that language. This research studied international students who qualified to study abroad yet still experienced some language barriers while living in Australia. This study aims to find what are the types, effects, and their strategy to prevent the language barrier they experienced. A qualitative approach was applied in this research and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3 Indonesian students who study in Australia. The result shows that the types of language barriers faced by the participants were: technical jargon, badly expressed message, and unclarified assumptions. Then, confusion was the primary impact of the language barrier on each interviewee. Lastly, the strategies they used to prevent the language barrier were: speaking slowly and clearly, asking for clarification, frequently checking for understanding, and being patient. In addition, it is suggested that international students find out more about the culture through local television movies or series so that they become familiar with the local terms.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Effects, Language barrier, Strategy*

**Abstrak.** Bahasa memegang peranan penting dalam komunikasi karena bahasa berperan dalam interaksi setiap individu atau kelompok. Ketika seseorang mengunjungi negara yang menggunakan bahasa asing, penting untuk individu tersebut dapat berkomunikasi secara efektif dalam bahasa tersebut. Riset ini mempelajari mahasiswa internasional sejatinya telah memenuhi syarat untuk belajar di luar negeri, ternyata masih mengalami beberapa kendala bahasa saat kuliah di Australia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis kendala bahasa, dampaknya, dan strategi mereka untuk mencegah kendala bahasa yang mereka alami. Pendekatan kualitatif diterapkan dalam penelitian ini dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dilakukan dengan responden 3 mahasiswa Indonesia yang belajar di Australia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jenis kendala bahasa yang dihadapi oleh peserta adalah: jargon teknis, pesan yang disampaikan dengan buruk, dan asumsi yang tidak jelas. Kemudian, dampak utama kendala bahasa pada setiap narasumber adalah kebingungan. Terakhir, strategi yang mereka gunakan untuk mencegah kendala bahasa adalah: berbicara perlahan dan jelas, meminta klarifikasi, sering memeriksa pemahaman, serta bersikap sabar. Selain itu, disarankan bagi mahasiswa internasional untuk mencari tahu lebih banyak tentang budaya melalui artikel/berita lokal dan acara atau serial televisi lokal, sehingga mereka menjadi terbiasa dengan istilah lokal.

**Kata kunci:** Efek, Kendala bahasa, Komunikasi, Strategi

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A key component of communication in our daily lives is language. To express and share our opinions or information, we utilize both spoken and written language. Thus, when someone goes to a nation where the language is different, it is crucial to understand the local dialect. Intercultural communication refers to the negotiated interpersonal interactions between people (or groups) who have been socialized in different cultural and/or linguistic contexts and who have different identities (e.g., cultural, ethnic, social, linguistic, regional) as well as different levels of power or status (Jackson, 2024, p. 2). The issue is that if these individuals from

different backgrounds do not speak the language of the nation, it can be problematic, particularly for foreigners who live abroad and are unfamiliar with the official language of the nation they are visiting or staying in, like international students. Tannen as cited in Kinasih (2023) mentioned that people have different ways of talking. This means that when people from different parts of the country, as well as different social or ethnic groups, speak, their words are probably not going to be fully understood.

This phenomenon is called language barrier. A "language barrier" is a term commonly used to describe a barrier that results from linguistic communication differences between speakers of different languages or with varying levels of proficiency. Language barriers can hinder people's ability to share information, communicate, and comprehend, which is particularly crucial in the business, healthcare, and educational sectors, among other spheres of life. In today's multilingual society, the language barrier is a growing issue that hinders productive communication (Kulaeva & Khasueva, 2024, p. 1). And, the study indicates that students studying abroad experience language barriers.

It has been discovered that there is a significant difference between students who are less comfortable speaking English and those who are much more comfortable speaking it. Students with higher language barriers have more trouble adjusting to the host culture when it comes to English language proficiency. There is a strong correlation between the degree of acculturative stress experienced by international students and their ability to adapt to different cultures. The administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education can use an understanding of the acculturation experiences and satisfaction of international students as a guide to effectively meet their needs. In short, language proficiency is associated with intercultural competence (Mahmood & Burke, 2019).

Due to its importance, studies have been done to investigate the language barrier among students. First, Lutfiana et al. investigate whether or not Thai students have obstacles to studying English as a foreign language in Indonesia. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the language and cultural barriers that Thai undergraduate students encountered at Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Purwokerto, Central Java, their new study abroad location. The study found that language barriers had a major impact on Thai students' barriers to studying abroad. Their knowledge of English was inadequate. During the teaching and learning process, they encountered difficulties communicating with university teachers or lecturers. Their academic performance was impacted by these obstacles. However, Thai students found that culture had little bearing on their study-abroad experience. Nevertheless, they successfully assimilated into Indonesian culture (Lutfiana, Suwartono, & Akter, 2020).

Secondly, Hor and Jusoh studied the defense mechanism among Chinese international students to handle stress and anxiety due to language barriers in one of the Malaysian local universities. The study found that Chinese international students encounter language barriers in academic and social life, such as not understanding the lecturer's class, and having trouble making phone calls due to the difference in accents, the speedy speech, and the difference in pronunciation. China international students face difficulties in academics, they have to translate the educational content into their first language for better understanding. As for the defense mechanism, the Chinese international student applied denial as the refusal to face specific facts, and this is when the participants denied their English is not acceptable and claimed that the lecturer made a judgment just because he/she is from China. In addition, Chinese international students use projection to interpret others does not take the initiative to interact with them they become antisocial in the classroom, which may affect their emotions and academic performance (Hor & Jusoh, 2021).

Last, Ennin and Manariyo studied foreign students in Gujarat in Gujarat encounter concerning language and its effect on their academic activities. The study showed that the participants indicated that what affects them most is the mixture of other languages with the English language, which distracts their attention during lectures. Moreover, the lecturers do not care for the language needs of foreign students, and foreign students' hesitation to participate effectively in interactions in class. Furthermore, concerning the effect of communication barriers on the social life of foreign students, the participants indicated, from their responses, that they agree that they cannot access public places such as banks and shopping centers due to language differences. The participants also agree that 'public notices are always in other languages (Hindi or Gujarat), making it difficult to know what is happening in my community (Ennin & Manariyo, 2023).

Based on the three previous studies earlier, some points have not been discussed. The first issue is the classification of the types of language barriers that are encountered by Indonesian students who study overseas along with the strategies that they used in overcoming the obstacle. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the types of language barriers which are experienced by Indonesian students abroad, especially in Australia. The writers noticed that before enrolling in higher education in Australia, these students had managed to fulfill a certain qualification. However, there is still a probability of having problems regarding the language barrier.

Thus, this research aims to answer the research questions below.

1. What are the types of language barriers faced by Indonesian students who study in Australia?
2. What are the effects of the language barrier faced by Indonesian students who study in Australia?
3. What are the strategies used by Indonesian students to solve their language barrier?

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Language Barrier**

Language is a system of communication that enables humans to exchange verbal or symbolic utterances (Wales, 2024, p. 10). However, there is a situation when people's ability to share information is not working well, which we call language barriers. Language barriers can hinder people's ability to share information, communicate, and comprehend, which is particularly crucial in the business, healthcare, and educational sectors, among other spheres of life. In today's multilingual society, the language barrier is a growing issue that hinders productive communication (Kulaeva & Khasueva, 2024, p. 1).

Language barriers are also known as linguistic barriers. It must be understood that a minor linguistic variation can cause enormous miscommunications between individuals. These barriers occur because of language differences. As a result, since there are many languages in the world, a universal language is impossible to achieve. Even within the same language, differences in spelling, accent, and dialect may be the barrier to effective communication. As employers hire people from different geographical and cultural backgrounds, the workplace becomes more diverse, making effective communication necessary to negate any misunderstanding (Wales, 2024, p. 11).

### **Types of Language Barrier**

When people use language, communication barriers can occur. The main language-related barrier types are as follows:

#### **1. Badly expressed message**

Badly expressed message happens when messages are expressed badly due to the use of wrong words, lack of vocabulary, or omission of necessary words (Gupta, Gupta, & Gupta, 2022). As a result, the sender fails to convey the intended meaning. For example: A vague statement like "Handle the client" may confuse the receiver about whether it means managing the client's request or resolving complaints (Panjwani, 2024, p. 229).

## **2. Technical jargon**

Specialists make use of technical jargon (words) that a common man fails to understand. These carry special meanings as such they may fail to understand their real meaning (Gupta et al., 2022). For example, people working as engineers, production managers, and IT managers use technical jargon in their communication which is quite difficult for layman to understand (Rastogi, 2021, p. 248)

## **3. Symbols or words with different meanings**

A word may carry different meanings which may create confusion. For example, value, cost, etc (Gupta et al., 2022). These may carry different meanings to different people as the receivers have to perceive one such meaning for the words used by the sender. Often people get confused with these words and interpret them differently due to the difference in their educational and social background. Wrong perception leads to communication problems. For example, the word 'crane' has different meanings as shown in the following sentences: a) The bird sanctuary is full of cranes; b) The builder used a crane to lift heavy steel rods; c) The girl has to crane her neck to watch the movie (2021, p. 247).

## **4. Faulty translation**

Sometimes it may be necessary to translate the message drafted in one language to the other language which is understandable to workers. If the translator is not proficient in both languages, the faulty translation can be a barrier to communication (Gupta et al., 2022).

## **5. Wrong or unclarified assumptions**

Sometimes the message may be misunderstood due to wrong assumptions about a particular word. This may mean different things to different people. For example, a manager may promise the delivery of goods within a week. He may mean the delivery may be made on the last working day of the week whereas the customer may, understand that the delivery may be made even earlier (Gupta et al., 2022).

## **6. Body language and gestures**

The body movement and gestures of the communicator matter so much in conveying the oral messages. In case there is a mismatch between body movement and gesture of communication, a message may be wrongly understood and misunderstand the meaning (Gupta

et al., 2022). For example, if a manager is telling a joke but is showing signs of anger on his face then a worker may get confused (Rastogi, 2021, p. 248).

### **Effects of language barrier**

According to Aburaquob, language is the bridge to communication. However, language barriers can cause problems when they arise, and communication can be affected. The effects of a language barrier are: misunderstanding, misinterpretation of messages, distorted messages, misinformation, confusion, mistrust, uncertainty, frustration, weak and wrong feedback, aviation and marine accidents and disasters, deaths, tension, conflict, and violence among people. They can lead to factors that hinder effective communication (Abuarqoub, 2019, p. 75).

### **Strategies to overcome language barrier**

According to Berardo (2007), there are strategies to overcome language barriers, as follows:

#### **1. Speak slowly and clearly**

Both speakers should concentrate on enunciating their words clearly and speaking slowly. Even if they are under time pressure, they should not rush through their communication; this often takes more time, but it is preferable to misunderstandings and miscommunications, which require the speakers to spend more time cleaning up the confusion.

#### **2. Ask for clarification**

A person may respectfully request clarification if they are unsure whether they have fully understood what others have said. Don't assume that you understand what has been said.

#### **3. Frequently check for understanding.**

The speaker must make sure that everyone has understood him/her. Also, this person must make sure he/she has understood what has been said. To assess comprehension, one can engage in reflective listening (e.g., "So what I hear you saying is..."), and assess others' comprehension by asking open-ended questions.

#### **4. Avoid idioms**

Because language is frequently contextual, it is culturally specific. For example, baseball phrases like "Straight off the Bat," "Ballpark figures," "Out in left field," "Touch base," and "Strike a deal" are widely used in the business conversation in the United States. So, the

speaker must be aware that if the phrase requires understanding of additional information, it may make your communication harder to understand.

### **5. Be careful of jargon**

Keep an eye out for the use of TLAs (three-letter acronyms) and other organizational terminology that might be confusing to others. For others to learn how to use the same language, if someone uses it in conversation, they must describe it.

### **6. Define the basics of business.**

Terms like "success," "doneness," "meetings," "punctuality," etc., can have different meanings for different people in international business contexts. If intercultural communication discusses business, the speakers must define what these mean early on in their communication. The speakers should make an effort to create a common language.

### **7. Be specific**

When having a conversation with people from different cultures, it is always best to clearly state your expectations and due dates. Instead of saying, "Please get back to me shortly," state, "Please email the completed report by Wednesday, February 2 at 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time."

### **8. Choose your medium of communication effectively.**

The speaker must choose his/her communication method carefully (email, instant messaging, video conference, phone, etc.). Use a different medium if the message is complicated or complex, or if there is conflict or tension that needs to be resolved.

### **9. Provide information via multiple channels.**

It is advised that when conducting business with people with diverse cultural backgrounds, one should follow up on phone conversations with emails summarizing the topics discussed. Additionally, if at all possible, give agendas, presentations, and other materials ahead of time so that people working in their non-native language can become acquainted with the content.

## **10. Be patient**

It takes longer to communicate across cultural boundaries. If not always, then at first a speaker cannot expect the conversation to flow as smoothly and quickly as when speaking with a member of the same culture.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research is highly contextual, being collected in a natural ‘real-life’ setting. In addition, qualitative research goes beyond discussing how and why things happen as it is used in circumstances where relatively little is known (Gray & Jensen, 2021). Thus, this study adopts a qualitative method, as this research aims to study new perspectives on language barriers experienced by Indonesian students in Australia. The participants in this study are three Indonesian students enrolled in Melbourne's university. All of the participants are first-year students who completed the IELTS exam with a minimum score of band 6.

Then, semi-structured interviews were used by the researcher. In conducting the interview, a list of questions is prepared as guidance. The questions of the interview are adapted from Jain & Krieger (2010) and modified by the researchers. The data in this research were taken from the transcript of the interviews of the three respondents.

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Finding**

#### **1. Types of Language Barrier**

Based on the interview, the participants experienced three out of six types of language barriers, which are technical jargon, badly expressed messages, and unclarified assumptions. Below are the findings of the three cases:

##### **a. Technical Jargon**

One misuse of language is called jargon. Jargon is developed and utilized within groups for use by that group. In other words, institutions create an entire language for use within their area of expertise (Smith, Tague-Busler, & Herbig, 2021, p. 46). These words carry special meanings as such they may fail to understand their real meaning (Gupta et al., 2022). The excerpt below shows how jargon is used in Australia.

Australians tend to have their own words like it's their characteristic. For example, the word *Barbie*. The *Barbie* we know is a doll, right? But Australians say *Barbie* as in barbecue. Well as a newcomer here, I didn't know that the barbie they meant is barbecue. (Participant 1, personal communication, November 24th, 2021).

From the excerpt above, we can see an example of a language barrier related to technical jargon. The common understanding of Barbie is a doll. However, from the excerpt above, we can see that people in Australia have an understanding of the word *Barbie*. The meaning of Barbie in Australia is barbecue. Participant 1 did not know the context of Australian *Barbie*. Thus, the word *Barbie* can be included as a language barrier in jargon.

Aligned with the finding above, a language barrier related to jargon happens to Participant 2 as well. He also experienced a similar case about jargon as written in the excerpt below:

My mentor invited me to go around with a car. After a while, my mentor said that he wanted to stop by to fill the gas. As I know, we commonly call it a gas station, right? Or petrol. But at that time, my mentor didn't say anything between those two. He was saying "servo". (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant 2 is confused by the word "servo". In this context, the mentor is an Australian and he used the word that is commonly used by the Australian. The jargon that is included as the language barrier is "servo". The word "servo" stands for "service station" and it has the same meaning as a gas station. The word "servo" is not used in Indonesia. Consequently, when Participant 2 was having a conversation, she/he experienced a language barrier because the word 'servo' had never been used by her. In addition, other jargon mentioned by Participant 2 as follows:

There are many other jargons, like drongo, dunny durry, mozzies, and so on. (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, we can see the other examples of jargon from Participant 2. He mentioned some jargon that probably can lead to confusion which are drongo, dunny durry, and mozzie. As for the first one, *drongo* refers to a fool or an idiot. *Drongo* was originally the name of a spangled bird and was bestowed on a racehorse in the 1920s. Though placed in the Victorian Derby, the horse never won a race (Pierce, 2017). Soon after the horse's retirement, it seems that racegoers started to apply the term to horses that were having similarly unlucky careers. Soon after the term became more negative, and was applied also to people who were not so much 'unlucky' as 'hopeless cases', 'no-hopers', and thereafter 'fools'. In the 1940s it was applied to recruits in the Royal Australian Air Force. It has become part of general Australian slang (Australian National University, 2017).

The second one is *dunny*, which has the meaning of a toilet. Originally, a dunny meant an outside toilet. The pan-type dunny was emptied by the dunny man, who came about with his dunny cart regularly in cities and towns. Dunny is now adaptable to any toilet. The word is

derived from the British vernacular *dunnekin*, which means "earth closet" or "outdoor privy" (Australian National University, 2017). And, as for the third, *durry* refers to a cigarette in Australian slang, particularly a roll-your-own cigarette. This definition was originally included in Sid Baker's 1941 Dictionary of Australian Slang. Sid clarified there that "durry" refers more to the cigarette butt than it does to cigarettes. Last, *mozzie* is an Australian word for mosquito (Richards, 2013).

In addition, Participant 3 also encountered the same issue regarding jargon. It can be seen from the excerpt below:

There are many things that confuse me, one of them is John Dory. At that time my friend once said "hot John Dory's coming". I thought he ordered some food because John Dory is the name of a fish here. Turns out John Dory is a kind of gossip. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

From the excerpt of the transcript above, it can be seen that Participant 3 experienced jargon as a language barrier as well. The jargon in this case is *John Dory*. From what Participant 3 said, she thought that her friend referred to the original meaning of John Dory, which is a kind of fish. Surprisingly, from the conversation, she learned that *John Dory* was interpreted as some kind of gossip. As with the word "tea" in the US, a John Dory represents gossip in Australia (Salao, n.d.). John Dory means gossip as it rhymes with story (Rowe, 2018).

### **b. Badly Expressed Message**

From the interview, the researcher found one case of a badly expressed message. For instance, Participant 2 said in the interview excerpt below:

I think that happened to me too, but I kind of forget exactly. If I'm not mistaken, I forgot between inexpensive and unexpensive. It should be inexpensive, which means it's not expensive. But I actually reversed it, at that time I said the unexpensive one. (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, the example of a language barrier related to badly expressed messages that can be seen is the wrong choice of a word. Generally, the adjective commonly used to define something that is not expensive is 'cheap' or 'inexpensive'. Badly expressed message happens when messages are expressed badly due to the use of wrong words (Gupta et al., 2022). In this case, Participant 2 mistakenly pronounced unexpensive.

### **c. Unclarified Assumptions**

As stated by Abuarqoub (2019) assumptions will occur if the message of the information is unclear, and the information will become ambiguous. For example, like the excerpt below:

Yes, I was also confused when he said servo. I thought 'servo' was the name of a restaurant. (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

The excerpt above presents an example of a language barrier regarding unclarified assumptions. The assumption arose when Participant 2's Australian mentor said that he wanted to fill up at 'servo'. However, at that time, Participant 2 did not know that 'servo' was a gas station. So, he assumed that 'servo' is the name of an eatery. Instead of going to a restaurant, they went to a gas station. Because Participant 2 did not ask for clarification, it turned out to be an unclarified assumption. Back then, Participant 2 did not know that 'servo' is how the Australian referred to a service or gas station, he only can assume that they were going somewhere to eat.

### **d. Effect of language barriers**

Based on the interview, the participants only experienced one out of those effects. Abuarqoub (2019) stated that misunderstanding and confusion can arise when a sender uses jargon and unfamiliar words of terminology. All of the participants experienced confusion as the effect of the language barrier during their status as a student in Australia. For example, as Participant 1 said in the excerpt below:

Yes, it made me confused. It can also lead to misunderstanding, right? Isn't it funny how things like this can lead to misunderstanding? (Participant 1, personal communication, November 24th, 2021).

The context of the excerpt above is, that the researcher was asking how Participant 1 felt after facing some language barrier. She said that she experienced confusion because of the language barrier. Participant 1 also mentioned that misunderstanding might happen as well. For example, losing some information because of the confusion. As it has been mentioned above, Abuarqoub (2019) believed that the usage of jargon and unfamiliar words of terminology can lead to misunderstanding and confusion. In this case, participant 1 experienced confusion when she heard the jargon *Barbie* for the first time in Australia. Previously, she only knew that Barbie referred to the doll. Thus, she became confused when her/his friend used the word *Barbie* in the context of casual hangouts with male friends.

Moreover, confusion was also experienced by Participant 2. He described the confusion he faced in his education environment. It can be seen in the excerpt below:

There is one professor, who is Australian. He talks very fast, especially when he explains something. Also at that time, I wasn't too familiar with the Australian accent, so sometimes when he explained something I was like "huh? huh?" I was so confused. (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant 2 was struggling to understand the Australian accent. In this context, his professor is Australian and Participant 2 was not that familiar with the Australian accent at that time. So, when his professor is explaining something, sometimes he does not catch a thing and it makes him confused. Aligned with the findings in this part, Park highlighted that L2 students must deal with a variety of accents from linguistically diverse English speakers in everyday communication scenarios due to the growing cultural and linguistic diversity present in Australian institutions. L2 students' comprehension may be hindered if the interlocutor's accent sounds strange or is thought to be strong (Park, 2022).

Lastly, Participant 3 faced the same effect as well. It can be seen from the excerpt below:

I encourage them to use English for discussions, although their accent makes me confused too, because it's a bit difficult to understand. Maybe it is because of their thick accent. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

It can be seen from the excerpt above, that Participant 3 also experienced some confusion because of accent. In this context, Participant 3 was having some discussion with her friends in the class. She grouped with a pair of international students from country A, and with others. During the discussion, both of them were using their original language. So Participant 3 encouraged them to use English for the discussion. However, Participant 3 was a little bit confused because of their accent.

It can be seen from the interview, that the effect of the language barrier that all of the participants experienced is only confusion. The occurrence of serious effects of language barriers such as mistrust, violence, accidents, and other critical effects like accidents, violence, and so on, did not happen to the participants. The problems that happened were not serious as well since most of the participants understood how to handle their language barrier.

## **Strategies for overcoming language barriers**

According to Berardo (2007) there are 10 strategies to overcome language barrier. Based on the interview, the participants suggested four out of 10 strategies. The four strategies are:

### **a) Speak Slowly and Clearly**

Berardo (2007) recommends speaking slowly and clearly. Slowing down and focusing on the articulation of the speech can reduce the confusion. For example, as Participant 2 said below:

In my opinion, when I am faced with a situation where my friend does not understand what I'm saying, I repeat what I say, speak slowly, and make my speech clearer. (Participant 2, personal communication, December 10th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, we can see the strategy that Participant 2 used to make the communication run better. When the speaking partner did not understand what he was saying, Participant 2 repeated his speech, making his speech slower and clearer to make his friend understand what he was saying. Berardo (2007) stated that rushing through communication will only make the communication unclear and it will end up taking more time to explain back what has been said. So, it is suggested that clear articulation and speaking slower can reduce miscommunication. As Participant 2 suggested, to make his speaking partner understand him more, he spoke slower and made his articulation more clear.

Lastly, Participant 3 also happened to use this strategy to reduce the language barrier. Like from the excerpt below:

There was a time when I was discussing with other international students, and some of them did not really understand the discussion. Maybe because they were still not used to different accents. So they asked us to repeat and speak slower. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

From the excerpt of the transcript above, it can be seen that Participant 3 is using speak slower method to prevent the language barrier. When the other international students did not catch what they were discussing because the other international students were not used to hearing different accents, they asked to repeat and speak slower. As has been mentioned by Berardo (2007), if there is some vagueness in communication, asking for repetition to clarify is necessary. In this case, when Participant 3 was discussing with other students, some students did not understand the conversation due to the incompetence of understanding different accents. Therefore, the students asked them to repeat so they could understand and distribute more in the discussion.

### **b) Asking Clarification**

Clarifying is needed to prevent language barriers because clarifying can avoid assumptions for both the speaker and the interlocutor if ambiguous speech occurs. If both the speaker and the interlocutor are confused, it is necessary to seek an explanation to avoid communication issues. Like what Participant 1 said in the interview:

I asked him again. At that time, I was chit-chatting with my friends. He invited me to hang out at his friend's house. He asked like "Do you want to go to this guy's house, we'll have some Barbie later". I was confused, "Barbie? What does it mean? Playing with Barbie dolls?" I thought to myself. Instead of confusing myself, I asked him again. "What do you mean Barbie?" then he said "Barbecue", "ohh barbecue", more or less like that. I have never heard of Barbie as barbecue before maybe it is used in movies? Students can watch more series I guess because I never heard of it before in the listening test. (Participant 1, personal communication, November 24th, 2021).

From the excerpt of the interview above, it can be seen that Participant 1 is asking for clarification to hinder from language barrier. Participant 1 was confused by her friend for saying *Barbie*. She thought that Barbie was the doll, but instead of confusing herself, she asked again so her friend could clarify what *Barbie* was. She added that she had never before heard the term Barbie for barbecue in any listening test or practice. She recommends that foreign students learn the slang by watching more local television shows or films.

Then, Participant 3 suggested the same strategy for hindering the language barrier as well. It can be seen from the excerpt below:

I encourage them to use English for discussions, although their accent makes me confused too, because it's a bit difficult to understand. Maybe it is because of their thick accent. So we repeatedly asked them to clarify. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant 3 was confused because she did not understand her speaking partner due to their accent. So, she frequently asked them to repeat and clarify what they were saying to avoid language problems.

### **c) Frequently Check for Understanding**

Regularly checking for understanding benefits both the speaker and the interlocutors in understanding the communication better. It is said that open-ended questions are preferable rather than yes or no questions. For example:

How do I make sure they understand or not? For me, I ask them directly or ask their opinion. If they talk about the same topic or the topic is connected, it means they already understand. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

The excerpt above shows a good example of a strategy to overcome the language barrier. Participant 3 used open-ended questions like asking their opinion on the topic they were talking about. If the answer of the speaking partner is related to the topic, it can be concluded that she/he already understands. As mentioned by Berardo (2007), checking for understanding regularly can help to understand each other more. It is suggested to use open-ended questions rather than yes-or-no questions. In this case, to make sure that her speaking partner already understood what was being talked about, she asked for an opinion rather than questioning her speaking partner with “Do you already understand?” or “Is that clear?” questions.

#### **d) Be Patient**

Patience is needed for making contact with people from various cultures. Because communicating with people from different cultures is more difficult and unpredictable than interacting with those from the same culture. Like what Participant 3 said in the excerpt below:

Is patience needed to prevent language problems? It is necessary. Because to avoid misunderstandings, we have to make sure they (the interlocutor) understand the conversation. And vice versa. If I don't understand a conversation, I have to make sure the other person that I'm talking to, my speaking partner is also patient. (Participant 3, personal communication, December 12th, 2021)

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Participant 3 mentioned that patience is needed for successful communication. The proof of her patience is, that she always repeats her words if her speaking partner does not understand what she is saying. She also said that the speaking partner also has to be patient. Patience is necessary because it can avoid misunderstanding. As has been stated above by Berardo (2007), it is more challenging to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, so a speaker cannot expect the conversation to go as smoothly.

## 5. DISCUSSION

To answer the first research question, the three participants experienced three types of language barriers; which are technical jargon, badly expressed message, and unclarified assumptions. Out of the three language barriers, the participants encountered the use of jargon by Australians the most.

The examples of technical jargon experienced by the participants are: *Barbie* (barbecue), *servo* (gas station), *drongo* (a fool or an idiot), *dunny* (toilet), *durry* (cigarette butt), *mozzie* (mosquito), and *John Dory* (kind of gossip). This finding is aligned with the study which stated that despite their high levels of confidence in their overall English language proficiency, students are also likely to face academic language challenges (Shi, 2023). Each participant in this study possesses the necessary qualifications to be a student and pursue education in Australia. With a minimum band 6 IELTS score, they are eligible to enroll in TAFE (vocational school), indicating that they are not English language learners and are eligible to take the certification. However, they still experienced a language barrier. In other words, students need to have pragmatic competence, which allows them to use language not only fluently but also appropriately in context (Kinasih, 2024). In this case, learning Australian slang is an additional but essential skill for communicating with locals and settling into life in regional Australia (Carter & Davies, 2019).

Secondly, according to Abuarqoub (2019) language barriers can have some effects. Uncertainty, confusion, mistrust, misinformation, misinterpretation, and mistranslation of messages are the consequences. He even added that there are some very negative effects of a language barrier, like accidents. Fortunately, according to the participants' interviews, they did not suffer any significant consequences from the language barrier. Confusion was the only consequence of the language barrier that they encountered. This finding is aligned with the study from Kulaeva & Khasueva (2024) which stated that due to the inability to effectively express one's thoughts and feelings in another language, a language barrier can result in cross-cultural miscommunications and disputes.

Lastly, to answer the third research question, the participants used three out of then Berardo's strategies (2007) namely, speak slowly and clearly, and ask for clarification. In intercultural communication, being proactive is one strategy to get past the language barrier. For instance, foreign workers or students should seek clarification on certain unfamiliar terms (Yan, 2019). Furthermore, it should be noted that the participants recommended that the students become more acquainted with Australian culture. When considering studying in Australia, students can begin by watching Australian television shows and programs that

use regional dialects or jargon because research indicates that these media can provide authentic language used in everyday situations (Kinasih & Olivia, 2022).

## 6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of qualitative research with interviews conducted with Indonesians studying in Australia, several conclusions can be drawn. The conclusions are presented as follows. Firstly, the participants only face three sorts of language barriers: technical jargon, badly expressed messages, and unclarified assumptions. The effect of the language barrier on all of the participants during the interview was mainly confusion. The occurrence of confusion mostly happened because the students were not familiar with the local terminology or the abbreviation that was only used in Australia. The strategy used by the participants of the interview is to speak slowly and, ask for clarification, check for understanding frequently, and be patient. Finally, one interviewee made the recommendation to watch television shows that depict Australian culture.

The researchers are well aware of this study's limitations. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers look into language barriers in other English-speaking countries. Second, since only three Indonesian students participated in this study, more participants could be added in future research. The kind of language barrier and its effects might vary with additional participants.

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