



## LACKING MANNERS AMONG TERTIARY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA FOLLOWING THE MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER

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### Article Info:

#### Article history:

Received date: 15.03.2023

Revised date: 10.04.2023

Accepted date: 31.05.2023

Published date: 27.06.2023

#### To cite this document:

Nayan, S., Radzi, N. A. M., Chulan, M., & Abdul Rahman, A. (2023). Lacking Manners Among Tertiary Students In Malaysia Following The Movement Control Order. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 5 (17), 422-430.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMOE.517032

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### Abstract:

This conceptual paper is on lacking manners among tertiary students in Malaysia following the Movement Control Order (MCO). The MCO has had an undeniably profound effect on students, with many now having to switch to online learning and forgoing their usual routines and interactions with peers. Unfortunately, some students have been struggling to adjust to the new normal, and this has led to a lack of manners among the younger generation. The MCO has caused huge disruption to their lives, and this can lead to a lack of respect for authority figures and a general lack of courtesy. Some students have been observed using inappropriate language, speaking disrespectfully to teachers, and failing to show consideration for others. Parents and teachers need to address these issues as soon as possible and remind students of the importance of good manners. Parents should ensure that their children understand the importance of treating others with respect and showing consideration for those around them. Teachers should also ensure that their students understand the consequences of their actions and the importance of maintaining a positive attitude. Parents and teachers should also focus on the importance of communication and actively encourage students to talk about their feelings and concerns. Finally, it is important to remember that the MCO will eventually come to an end and that students will once again be able to attend school and interact with their peers. Until then, parents and teachers should continue to do their best to ensure that students maintain good manners and continue to uphold the values of respect and courtesy.

**Keywords:**

Lacking, Manners, MCO, Tertiary Students, Non-verbal Communication

**Introduction**

This conceptual paper shares views on tertiary students' manners during post-Covid. The adage "Manners maketh men" is generally known, but some people have chosen to disregard it. No matter where we are, it is crucial to act politely, especially while interacting with others. Cultural, social, historical, and regional factors all have an impact on politeness. Since our country is made up of various ethnic groups, each with its own culture and social conventions governing how people should interact with one another, it is crucial to be considerate of others. In addition, it is necessary to promote awareness of social distance or power inequalities when conversing with others. Students' knowledge of the benefits of using polite communication techniques will grow as a result of being encouraged to do so. This will also help them improve their cultural awareness and moral values, especially for tertiary students who are prone to be negatively or positively influenced by their surroundings in both the real world and online.

The use of language for socialising does not depend on the factors that influence communication acts and politeness standards that are implemented in communication acts. There are at least two factors, namely how to talk and to whom to speak, that need to be taken into account when judging language politeness. The essence of linguistic politeness is ethics in socialising in society through the use of language and excellent choice of polite words by noticing where, when, to whom, and what the objective is. The forms of a speech given by the speaker are motivated by specific intents and objectives which support the aforementioned opinion. In this context, the same intent can be expressed using a variety of speech patterns. On the other hand, different goals can be communicated using the same speech. It is courteous and shows that one is moral, educated, and cultured. It also shows that one is deserving of praise for being a nice person. The connection between teachers and students during the teaching and learning process undoubtedly lasts a long time, making linguistics etiquette an important subject to examine (Haryanto, Weda, & Nashruddin, 2018). The fulfilment of communication depends heavily on the factors that determine the act of communication as well as the rules of etiquette.

Leech's Theory of Politeness (1983) connected language politeness to the use of commonplace words and phrases that do not incense or offend the listener. An atmosphere of peaceful relations between the speaker and the speaking partner will result from such a circumstance. In their study, Nashruddin et al. (2020) discovered that all parents constantly tell their kids to talk properly to everyone, particularly to their peers, teachers, parents, and elders. The advice is meant to ensure that their speaking partners are not negatively impacted by their words. Even if someone uses lovely words, their speech will not be favourably received by the other person due to their improper speaking style. For instance, a teacher might have said, "Here is a present for you; please take it," to a pupil who had correctly responded to a question. Nonetheless, it was done with a hostile expression. This would create a negative image and might even make learning more difficult. By delivering the intended message following the speaker's expectations, polite speech focuses not only on language elements but also on how to speak. However, acts of politeness may no longer be effective at reducing conflict or promoting cooperative social interaction when they are ambiguous or misunderstood, particularly when a

pandemic occurs. During Covid 19, it is more likely to go wrong to display respect and concern for others through courteous speech or actions, as these were demonstrated online. Bonotti and Zech (2021) have identified four issues that the pandemic poses to people's capacity to act politely. First, people now find it challenging to recognise politeness standards and act appropriately in situations that were once less contentious and problematic. Second, politeness' signalling ability has also been compromised: during the pandemic, it is more likely that attempts to show others respect and concern by using polite language or behaviour would fail. Third, this could lead to brand-new issues with social cooperation. After the pandemic, the endemic phase followed, where classes were conducted again face to face. Since students had classes online previously during the pandemic, it is observed that these students experience social withdrawal, where they avoid people and activities that they usually enjoy. Besides, some might be somewhat careless and disrespectful when speaking with seniors as they tend to have unstable personalities, which makes them more impulsive and challenging to govern in their daily activities, especially socialising.

### **Background**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the whole world in 2020, almost all universities were urged to switch to online courses where educators and students experience online learning at large. A study by Means and Neisler (2020) stated 1,008 undergraduates who began their Spring 2020 courses in person were randomly selected and found that 51% of respondents were very satisfied with their course before the pandemic, and only 19% were very satisfied after the transition to online courses. Similarly, findings of a study by Read (2020) indicate that 78% of students in North American higher education did not feel online experiences engaging, and 75% of them preferred face-to-face interactions with instructors and peers. However, according to Raes et al. (2019), the majority of students have attended the class due to the flexibility of a blended or hybrid- learning environment, though some took leave either because they were sick or needed to perform home tasks.

This global change has had a great impact, particularly on the education sector. There is a decline in morals among students in this new generation. This is because the environment in which they are living today sometimes does not support the formation of their morals, and they are prone to foreign cultures being influenced. The prevailing issue which has been identified by researchers was besides adjusting themselves to the new normal environment, the advancement of technology has caused a decline in students' manners towards educators because educators only transfer knowledge to the students and they do not play role models and guide them for their future (Widiyanto, 2018). Due to this reason, it is believed that teaching should emphasise ethics and manners more because they are the most expected outcome of education (Pipin, 2022).

We often come across events that require good etiquette and manners in our daily activities. Etiquette is a set of social norms and guidelines that promotes respectful interactions between people. However, good manners are actions that reveal one's mentality. In social interactions, manners and etiquette are important. Both ideas centre on how people behave, and they are frequently used interchangeably (The Sun Daily, 2015). How we conduct ourselves is the reflection of our manners. "Whenever two people come together, and their behaviour affects one another, you have etiquette. Etiquette is not some rigid code of manners; it is simply how people's lives touch one another," Emily's Post Etiquette (2017) as cited in Bipin Bihari Dash (2020).

From the Islamic perspective, ethics is also understood as something that has become a habit in human life. This means what has been taught by both parents since childhood with the right actions will lead to the formation of good morals. In addition, observation through good examples also contributes to this. The person with good behaviour will be labelled as a good person, and whoever shows bad behaviour will be labelled as someone whose moral is bad (Marpuah et al., 2022).

From the definitions given, it can be concluded that manners and etiquette are related to each other and can be mutually used. Good manners can be shown anywhere we are, either at home, in class, on public transport or when we travel locally or abroad. Some people, especially youngsters, claim that in today's environment having good manners is not in style. However, the secret to successful education and life is by having excellent manners.

### **Problem Statement**

Higher education students still lacking in manners is the concern of this paper. As supported by Rafi (2022), university students are still having poor manners while learning. Based on the literature, there were few studies which investigated students' incivility during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, a study by Abraham et al. (2022) reported over half of 283 educators surveyed experienced student incivility, where women were being more likely than men to report student incivility. They further found that students who experienced the transition to online science courses during the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique environment for student incivility to take place in undergraduate courses. As Abraham et al. (2022) defined manners as student incivility whose behaviours are perceived to be disrespectful or disruptive to the overall learning environment in a course. As a result, it can negatively affect the learning environment and instructors. On the other hand, Fajar Islamy et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study which aims to track and formulate the instructors' strategies for building students' ethical manners during the online learning process. Furthermore, their findings revealed that during the implementation of online learning, there was a decline in the polite character of students. Among the obstacles were whether students were listening or not to the instructor's lecture when their cameras were turned off, and some students sometimes did not follow lectures interactively although they had joined in a Zoom link.

Having manners reflects the good and bad behaviour of a student. However, students of higher institutions nowadays still have the problem of poor manners in this post covid era.

### **Literature Review**

In a larger sense, politeness encompasses more than just verbal behaviour; it also includes nonverbal cues, including behaviour, facial expressions, and tone of voice. According to Lakoff's Theory of Politeness (1973), courtesy is a strategy for minimising alterations during a conversation. This suggests that being polite entails being fine, kind, patient, and calm, which Geyer (2008) presented as the definition of politeness.

The goal of learning a language is to be able to communicate; hence, for language learners to communicate accurately in their chosen language, they must be familiar with the communicative competence hypothesis put forth by Celce-Murcia in 2007. Enhancing student participation in the classroom can help them enhance their language skills (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2021). The interactions that take place in the classroom activity when teachers and students

transfer their ideas in communication might demonstrate efficacy. Yet, it might be difficult to acquire the same comprehension between speakers since speaking language learners, like EFL students, sometimes lack the necessary tools, which leads to psychological issues like the anxiety of making mistakes and fear of criticism (Al-Jamal & AlJamal, 2013; Al Hosni, 2014; Shen & Chiu, 2019; Zhang, 2009). As a result, they lack confidence when speaking English and frequently have trouble getting their points through clearly (Sayuri, 2016; Zhang, 2009).

Also, there are communication style differences between teachers and pupils. Thus, a communication strategy is required to foster fruitful interactions between teachers and students in the classroom (Tan et al., 2016). To effectively communicate, speakers must not only convey their information's content but also ensure that the recipients are not harmed. It implies that both educators and learners need to be aware of how their communications convey their messages (Nashruddin et al. (2021)). Nonetheless, the quickly expanding social media landscape may have an impact on how students communicate with their teachers in terms of language use. The kids may communicate with their teachers using the language they use in the online environment. Also, as it is one of the character traits that need to be included in the classroom activity, teachers tend to foster a welcoming environment for learning and teaching on the job. As a result, some pupils may believe that teachers have spoiled them.

### **Verbal Communication**

Communication can be done verbally or in written form. It also involves sending the message to the target audience, and that audience understands the message being sent. Weny et al. (2021) state that communicating with words is known as verbal communication, and communication with symbols is known as non-verbal. The way people interact today is different from how they did in the past; new terms are being created and coined every day because of the usage of technology. During the pandemic, most communication was done through social media, even for academic purposes. Due to this, a lack of parental guidance and monitoring was done by parents since everybody was busy with their online tasks. Thus, several offensive words have been produced as individuals begin to adapt to modern society. These harsh phrases are known as “profanity” or offensive language (Mirza, 2021). Mirza further states that even in modern times, many individuals still hold the opinion that young people lack manners, although the degree of offensiveness depends on the listener. Profanity is viewed as a bad influence at the university level since, in our culture, it is disrespectful or detrimental to all races in Malaysia, not just Malay.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

Some manners need to be addressed so that students can be better individuals in the future. Using criteria including instructor immediacy (Witt et al., 2004), content relevance (Frymier & Shulman, 1995), and teacher credibility, instructional communication research continues to place a strong emphasis on nonverbal communication in the classroom and how it affects students' behavioural, cognitive, and affective learning as well as how they perceive their teachers' instruction (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Eye contact, movement around the classroom, active listening strategies, posture or body position, are just a few examples of nonverbal instructional behaviours that are directly measured by many of the scales used to assess these outcomes (Smythe & Hess, 2005). Ten communicative items are typically included in summaries of nonverbal communication: kinesics (body motion, including gesture), facial expression and eye contact, proxemics (space and interpersonal distance), olfactics (smell), haptics (touch), artefacts, physical appearance, paralanguage (tone, pitch,

dialect, punctuation, and other adjacent linguistic cues), and silence (Wood, 2018). For this study, these were defined as follows:

### **Body Language**

Nonverbal communication, like body language, plays an important role in our everyday communication. Most of our communication is done through nonverbal communication. The head, face, different body parts, or the body as a whole are the methods of expression for nonverbal communication. The most fundamental kind of nonverbal communication is body language, which is expressed through gestures, mimicry, and bodily movements (Gizem, 2020). In general, without realising it, our body language often communicates more to our listeners than our verbal communication does. Therefore, no matter how engaging a speech is, the audience is less likely to pay attention if the speaker is displaying unfavourable body language.

Some learners have problems using nonverbal communication in the classroom during the post covid 19 situations. For instance, when teaching takes place, there are learners who secretly or openly use their mobile phones to do things not related to studies, ignore the lecturer in front teaching and when being asked any questions they would, just shrug their shoulders without even trying to think of the answers to the question being asked. There were even students who, when asked to form groups, would just ignore the lecturer's instruction and wait for the lecturer himself put them together in groups. The Covid 19 pandemic has greatly affected people's physical and mental health. "Temporary lockdowns and distance learning have disproportionately affected young learners, including university students" (Gewalt et al., 2022). During lockdowns, classes were conducted online, and this has affected learners' soft skills. Many spend a lot of time in their rooms for online classes, and this has caused health problems and socialising problems. There were no face-to-face interactions between learners and teachers. Thus, these learners do not acquire soft skills like negotiation skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills and good communication skills.

When classes are conducted face-to-face post-MCO period, these learners face some difficulties as they are not used to applying these skills in their learning during MCO. Shy students should be helped to increase their confidence so as not to let them be judged by their outspoken peers. Their peers sometimes stare at them or smile or laugh when these shy students try to share their ideas or participate in discussions. When they are not helped, they will shy away as their peers' body language disrupts their learning.

### **Eye contact**

The outbreak of Covid 19 has created a great impact on students' use of nonverbal, particularly their eye contact. Maintaining non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, has been a critical challenge for students involved in online courses. It was reported when students (respondents) attended an online platform, they were expected to turn on their cameras, but many students were unlikely to do so (Fajar Islamy et al., 2022). As Peimani and Kamalipour (2021) revealed, one of the significant findings of their study was that students agreed that eye contact had a positive effect on their virtual learning experience if this was consistent with their rights to see others, including their peers and instructors.

In general, according to McIntyre et al. (2017), while an instructor is teaching, he or she gazes towards the students to enhance the students' experiences of having a close interpersonal relationship with him or her. Furthermore, instructors also believe that eye contact with

students concerns good teacher-student interaction (Haataja et al., 2019). However, today students hardly had eye contact with the instructors since most of the learning takes place virtually, using online meeting platforms such as Google Meet, Webex, Zoom and others.

### **Tone and Pitch**

Normally, when the instructors' messages are vague, most students will believe the nonverbal message rather than their spoken words. Instructors' and students' nonverbal cues like tone and pitch should be paid attention to as well. Salman (2022) states that tone refers to differences in pitch over a single word. For instance, a student replies to the lecturer's question with "no" but using different tones. If he utters with a low tone, this will indicate real respect. On the contrary, if he utters a high and sharp tone, it shows impoliteness or maybe arrogance.

### **Conclusion**

Youngsters and teenagers do not come into the world with an innate respect for others. They must be instructed on the value of respect and the significance of being kind to others. They will find it difficult to behave well if they do not learn to respect others. When they forget to act politely, correct them. To ensure having youngsters and teenagers with good manners, parents, teachers, and society in general need to work hand in hand. It is a bit challenging nowadays to mould them to have good manners or values with the change of their surrounding since they are affected by technology. It is no doubt that technology is crucial nowadays, but they need to be guided and monitored to ensure proper usage of technology that benefits them academically and emotionally. Families, schools, religious bodies and communities must make conscious efforts to assist them in developing fundamental moral qualities like respect, responsibility, truthfulness, fairness, integrity, kindness, self-control, and thinking in today's fast-paced, technologically advanced culture. Therefore, teachers in schools can employ awareness-raising activities to strengthen their students' understanding of linguistic politeness and provide them with the chance to deduce that speaking graciously is a quality of educated, moral, and cultured people. Besides that, parents too are important people in the character building of a person. Everything begins at home. The most crucial point is that character education must be implemented in many ways to be successful.

### **Acknowledgement**

The researchers express their highest appreciation and thanks to the Head of the Academy of Language Studies (APB), Universiti Teknologi MARA Perlis Branch, lecturers and students. The cooperation and support given have made the research and writing of this article a success.

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