

An Investigation of Communication Skills Required by Employers from the Fresh Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication skills are shown to foster the relationship and collaboration in professional interactions. Particularly in job interviews, communication skills play an important role since it turns out to be of the major criteria of employability ever since the 20th century. This is apparent as many university graduates are unable to secure a job within 3-6 months after graduation due to poor communication skills. This paper aims to investigate the importance of communication skills for employment and by adopting theory of communication, it wishes to address in detail employer's expectations. Five fresh graduates from local and private universities and two human resource officers (HR)

from one organisation participated in this study. A semi-structured questionnaire was utilized as a tool to collect the data. The findings show that a majority of fresh graduates were weak in communication skills in relation to clarity, completeness, conciseness, and correctness. The inaccurate vocabulary (clarity), incomplete sentences (conciseness), unable to provide detailed answers (completeness), and error in grammar in the utterances and sentences (correctness) were found in the communication skills by these graduates. The study suggests the integration of 4Cs (clarity, conciseness, completeness and

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correctness) into the current communication skills course modules, facilitation of simulated interviews to assist undergraduates enhance their communication skills prior to attending any actual job interviews.

Keywords: Communication skills, employability skills, Malaysian graduates

INTRODUCTION

Graduates' proficiency in English language are keenly sought after by employers to help drive their organisations to compete successfully in the era of globalisation and competitiveness (Hamid et al., 2014). Realising this fact, employers of various industries actively search and screen for potential employees who are well equipped with communication skills and language proficiency so that they are able to perform better globally. Among the most sought-after skills that employers seek in potential employees is the skill of effective communication in English language. It is apparent that the proficiency to communicate effectively in the English language has been acknowledged as a key factor in getting employed since the 20th century and has a part in boosting a company's market share and performance.

In every organisation, communication serves two imperative roles. It is used by employees to disseminate the information needed and to create a sense of trust and commitment (Optum, 2015). In a workplace, the communication transpired refers to exchanging information, both verbal and non-verbal communication

and it plays an important role as it assists in the organisation work activities, avoiding missed deadlines which could affect the organisation production and growth. Good communication skills support employees to coordinate well in their tasks, within the team especially where the employees come from different parts of the society with varied cultures and background. Poor communication skills will hamper productivity and may even cause misunderstanding within the employees. According to Karim (2016) solving people problems such as trust issues and poor communication takes up more than half of a manager's working time, so they believe that effective communication will help to cut down on the amount of management time used on resolving employee conflicts. Effective workplace communication ensures that all the organizational objectives are achieved (Ergen, 2010). This is tremendously important to organisations because it increases productivity and efficiency, and misunderstanding can be avoided.

Another important aspect needed for having effective workplace communication is taking into consideration the different backgrounds of employees. "While diversity enriches the environment, it can also cause communication barriers" (Guo et al., 2009). Difficulties arise when a co-worker's cultural background leads him or her to think differently than another. It is for this reason that knowing about intercultural communication at work and learning how to treat others without offending them can bring several benefits to the company (Stacks

& Salwen, 2009). Having an effective communication model or framework for authorities of various fields and expertise as a basis is particularly crucial, and although it can be done from scratch through a specific need assessment study, we can actually look at existing general models which assist us in bringing awareness and enhancing our communication skills (Wilson, 2014).

In a job interview, communication skills play an important role, where it provides opportunity for the candidate to showcase their ideas, knowledge and skills. When the candidate able to display their language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills in a job interview, it is more likely that he or she will be employed or known to have employability skills. Employability skills play a significant role in whether a candidate gets hired by the desired company because the attributes are highly sought after by employers (Lowden et al., 2011). Most employers and fresh graduates agree that more emphasis should be given to the development of a student's skills and attributes, including communication, team-working, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and leadership, otherwise known as employability skills (Lowden et al., 2011).

Problem Statement

Moving to Industry 4.0, communication skills, adaptability skills, and critical thinking skills are some of the key attributes Malaysian graduates should enhanced on as they are required to work with advanced technologies e.g. cloud computing

(Peck, 2018). Among these attributes, communication skills with good proficiency in English is also found to play an important role in embracing industry 4.0 (Christina, 2018; Peck, 2018). With these in mind, it is expected that a fresh graduate should be competent in communication skills and be ready for workforce. However, the cause of the employability rate among fresh graduates has brought great attention to the media and the public. 'English skills vital for all' (Karim, 2016), 'Poor command, fewer career opportunities' (Rahman, 2015), 'Poor English eroding Malaysian graduates' self-belief' (Zahiid, 2015 'Poor English a major handicap' (Yuen, 2015) were some of the headlines that stood out either in hard-copy or electronic news. The headlines clearly indicate the importance of English language as a communication tool, especially in entering the workforce, the focal point of which in this case, is the job interview. According to Rebecca (2016), about 25% of graduates were unemployed because of poor proficiency in English, which was based on a sample of about 20,000 graduates. This number is huge since our universities produce 20,000 graduates annually, and about 5,000 of them were unemployed because of poor command of English (Malaysian Employers Federation, 2016). It seems that the level of proficiency has deteriorated far below expectations to the point that some graduates cannot distinguish between 'price' and 'prize' (MEF, 2016).

This poor communication skill is also due to the tendency of translating mother tongue into English before interacting

(Rahman, 2015), when that happens the sentence structure produced by these graduates seems to be dysfunctional to the employers and causes miscommunication, requiring the employers to ask the same questions multiple times, either by repeating or rephrasing the question. Some employers may just give up and move on to subsequent interview questions. From these interactions, employers may thus observe incompetence in communication skills among fresh graduates, eventually rejecting their employment applications.

Therefore, the findings of this study would actually assist future university graduates in the aspects on building their communication skills, confidence and appeal to employers.

Literature Review

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) (2015) implemented a web-based tracer study for tracing graduate's employability rate. The ministry was able to gather information on the statistics of graduates produced by local and public universities as well as gauging graduates' their employability rate. This particular tool has been helping the government to identify the gaps for employability. Through this survey, they are able to identify the attributes which are lacking or needed in order for the graduates to be employed. From the survey, they managed to narrow down the major contributor or attributes that are essential for successful employment; however, which are found to be lacking amongst the unemployed graduates. Those are language

competency, communication skills, critical and analytical thinking, presentation skills, general knowledge, IT skills, and problem-solving skills. Most of these attributes are considered as soft skills in employability skills.

A similar survey was conducted in UK where Harvey et al. (1997) reviewed these factors and concluded that graduates not gaining employment during the first six months was due to poor communication skills. The findings have also raised great concern for the relevant stakeholders. The graduates failed to realise the importance of communication skills for themselves as well as to others. In the findings, it was revealed that most common gaps were found in the area of expressing oneself. The graduates were not able to construct proper sentences, had weak command of grammar, and limited vocabulary. They found it very difficult to comprehend the questions asked by interviewers and provide complete answers fluently. If graduates display such weaknesses in their communication during their face to face meetings with potential employers, then the chances are very slim for them being employed. To an organization or for a successful business, communication skills are a prime requirement for enhancing smooth and productive operation. Almost all employers prefer their employees to be well equipped with relevant technical knowledge for job functions and also have adequate communication skills.

Both studies (MOHE, 2006 & Harvey et al., 1997) indeed have shown similarities in their findings that graduates displayed poor

communication skills in their interviews irrespective whether they are native speakers (UK) or non-native speakers in English (Malaysian). Therefore, the need to address this matter is necessary not only to bring awareness to the graduates but also to the academic institution and stakeholders.

Employers' Expectation. According to Harvey et al. (1997) most employers expected their employees to be more pre-emptive, having the ability to imply higher level skills and multi-layered communication to support their teamwork in achieving organization goals. This view was also further supported by Mason et al. (2006) in that the conception of employability very much depended on the development of communication. A report generated by Confederation of British Industry (CBI) (2007) found that, among eight skills, communication and literacy were required for employability. According to CBI, this shows the great importance for graduates to possess communication skills, which act as key factors for employability. They point out that employers prefer candidates who can demonstrate readiness to work and contribute bold entrepreneurial approaches.

Archer and Davison (2008) also conducted a study regarding employer perspectives on graduate employability. They found that the employer's perspective was in contrast to how the universities were grooming and promoting their graduates. In actual fact, employers considered that soft skills such as communication skills and teamwork are more essential

than technical knowledge. These are the important skills which they want to see from graduates because these soft skills provide more weight for evaluation than technical knowledge which they may bring over from their learning institution. On the other hand, according to a case study conducted by Glass et al. (2008), only a small ratio of employers wishes to recruit individuals who are good at technical skills, hoping that they would bring new ideas and development to their organisations. In support of universities, Hugenberg and Hvizdos (1984) established some details in cultivating employability skills which could be deployed by educators to prepare their students for their interviews. Employability skills would enhance young graduates in getting prepared for employment. Furthermore, Rynes et al. (1991) pointed out that employers, especially in the service industry, preferred to evaluate their applicants according to their interpersonal skills, goal orientation, and physical attractiveness rather than their previous or background experience. This is because they are able to communicate and understand their customer's demands more easily.

Unemployment Rate in Malaysia

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), a central organisation where private sectors receive consultation and discussion on employee's rights, human resource practices, industrial information, advice, and training, provides feedback on graduates' employability, JobStreet is another organisation that conducts surveys

and provides feedback on employers' perception on graduates' employability. In a survey by JobStreet (2013), it was found that the highest percentages of graduates were not getting employed because of asking for unrealistic amounts for remuneration. In other words, graduates were demanding higher salaries that were far above the usual benchmarks. The statistic revealed for this was 68%. This was followed by poor command of English language (64%), being choosy about jobs (60%), poor communication skills (60%), and poor character, attitude, or personality (59%). The survey reported that poor command of English language was ranked number two and poor communication skills were ranked number three in causing many graduates to be unemployed.

English Language Assists Fresh Graduates. A good command of the English language is believed to assist graduates to have better communication as they are able to deal with various challenges (Zhang et al., 2012). This notion was derived based on the results from a study which showed graduates with a good level of language proficiency will have the flexibility to handle matters. However, being able to speak a language well is not fully sufficient, and graduates should know how to use the language carefully while interacting among co-workers or their subordinates. Graduates should not only be contented with learning to speak a language well but should remember that their main aim is to improve their communicative competence and abilities (Dornyei, 2005; Fallah, 2014).

In real scenarios, fresh graduates prepare a lot prior to their interviews. They review various subjects, current affairs, general knowledge, company background etc.; however, all the hard work becomes futile when they fail to communicate effectively. Good communication skills are of paramount importance in order to create a good impression which will lead to a successful employment. The performance of these communication skills by the fresh graduates sometimes determines the future of their lives. Effective communication is determined by clarity of speech in conveying views and ensures others understand thoughts being conveyed. By having these abilities, candidates are preferred over those who may have excellent results but could not express themselves clearly.

Conceptual Framework. This study adopts Truman (2011) theory of communication which consists of clarity, conciseness, completeness, correctness, consideration, courtesy and concreteness. Truman's theory was tested in a study of Krishnan (2014) on interaction in professional discourse in job interviews, where only four Cs were selected. A questionnaire was developed and had been tested in this study (See Appendix A).

For effective communication, it is pointed out that the 4Cs referred to in this study seem to have more impact for the graduates to consider. These 4Cs are Clarity, Conciseness, Completeness, and Correctness. These aspects of

communication are important because, during an interview, an interviewee needs to give clear answers and explanations on the related ideas or topics. Conciseness will ensure that only the essential message is delivered accurately and to the point. A complete answer will consist of all the enquired information from the interviewee, and there would not be many back-and-forth questions, thus avoiding any waste of effort and time by both parties. Using appropriate language, vocabulary, and grammar will demonstrate that the interviewee has a good command of language, which will create a good impression.

Therefore, the main notion of this research is to reveal factors that influence communication skills used during job interviews by using Truman's (2011) Communication Skills. The conceptual framework underpinning the present study was adopted to investigate which communication skills are required by employers from fresh graduates. Figure

1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants involved in this study were five fresh graduates (candidates) from local public and private universities. They obtained their degree qualifications in various disciplines, which included marketing, management, business administration, and chemistry. Consent was obtained from the participants and they were purposive samples selected by the organisation to participate in the study. There were also two Human Resources (HR) officers involved in the study from one organisation.

Data Collection

The data was collected through job interviews and content analysis was used to analyse the data by using Truman (2011)'s framework and semi-structured interview questionnaires administered by the HR

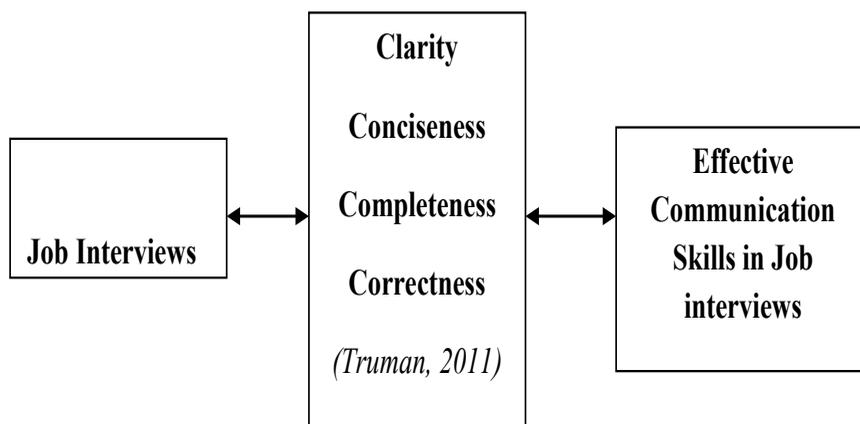


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

officers. A semi-structured interview was used to probe further information by the HR officers to identify the successful and unsuccessful interviews (Pathak & Charatdao, 2012). The job interviews were recorded in the organisation by the two HR officers. This was because the organisation did not allow the researcher to observe, record, or to have further discussions with their interviewees due to their data protection and privacy rule.

The recorded data was transcribed using an adaptation of Jefferson (2004) transcriptions conventions to obtain information from the interaction in the job interviews. The transcriptions were also verified by two postgraduate students to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. The organisation provided standard interview questions which they had been using for past interview sessions. The data was analysed based on selected interview questions based on the suitability of the interviewees (See Appendix B) by the HR officers to determine the differences in the answering of questions to ensure effective communication skills as defined by Truman (2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper utilized Truman's (2011) theory of communication skills to analyse the transcribed data obtained from the interview process. According to Truman's framework, there are 7Cs to demonstrate effective communication: Completeness, Conciseness, Consideration, Clarity, Concreteness, Courtesy, and Correctness.

For this study, only 4Cs were applied to analyse the data: Completeness, Clarity, Conciseness, and Correctness, which are more appropriate for spoken communication.

Five job interview interactions were recorded, transcribed, and labelled. The interview was for the position of Customer Care or Customer Service. Therefore, the questions asked were suitable for customer service, handling customers, and time management. Based on the results, it was found that the graduates who underwent the interviews displayed poor communication skills in relation to the 4Cs of effective communication. For example, when the interviewer asked a question, the answer provided by the interviewee utilised vague vocabulary, and an unclear direct answer was uttered. This relates to 'Clarity' in Truman's (2011) framework. Examples of this are provided in the excerpts shown below.

Clarity in Effective Communication

The findings reveal that the candidate answered in an ambiguous manner which can be seen in Excerpt 1. It was not a straightforward answer to the question, and it was a mere statement. The question "Why is service essential?" is about why customer service is important for a business. For this question, the interviewer was expecting the candidate to express the importance of service for the industry and how a happy and satisfied customer would generate repeated business and be a regular customer.

Excerpt 1:

Interviewer **Why is service essential?**

Candidate 1 ***Customer satisfaction as customers is always right.***

Excerpt 2:

Interviewer *Tell me what you know about this company and what have you learned in customer service?*

Candidate 2 *This is a customer service company...I mean the recruitment and advertisement...my simple answer is...**Customer is always right.***

Excerpt 3:

Interviewer *Why do you like to work here?*

Candidate 3 ***I would say my desire and I am qualified for the position...***

The same style of answer was seen in Excerpts 2 and 3 where no clarity was found in the answers provided by the candidates. In Excerpt 2, the question asked was “What have you learned in customer service?” This question refers to the experience the candidate previously underwent in the customer service industry. It requires an in-depth answer to convince the interviewer that he or she has made some review on the company’s background and his scope of work as to how their past knowledge or experience can be a benefit to the organization. In Excerpt 3, the interviewer asked “Why do you like to work here?” as in reasons of choosing the company. Instead of expressing his desire or interest to work

in the company due to his qualification, it would be more appropriate to explain the benefits he might gain or look for which eventually would benefit both parties.

The findings also reveal one of the candidates was able to show clarity in his/her answer. A good example of clarity in communication skills is found in Excerpt 4, below, which shows the candidate, answered the question with clarity and precision. The question “Why would you like to apply here?” seeks reasons for wanting to work in the company. Candidate 4 provided a concrete answer by starting with the word “Because” as the interviewer asked for “Why,” and the candidate also incorporated the company’s background, which showed that he had done some background research prior to the interview. The answer also showed that the candidate had confidence in the company due to its history and perhaps could gain experience and knowledge if was appointed there. By having some knowledge of the organization and making it the main reason of interest indicates ‘clarity’ in candidate’s answer.

Excerpt 4:

Interviewer *Why would you like to apply here?*

Candidate 4 *Because I think it is one of the largest company in Malaysia and worldwide and it is also a multinational company.*

Conciseness of Effective Communication

Next, ‘concisenesses of effective

communication. ‘Conciseness’ in this study refers to complete sentences uttered that are comprehensible to the listener, in this case to the interviewer. The findings revealed most candidates in the interview failed to provide or utter complete sentences, and this could have resulted from low confidence levels while facing the interviewer or in some cases, anxiety or nervousness that led a tendency of poor enunciation where the essential points were unheard. In this study, the candidates preferred to provide short answers, as in limited utterances. Perhaps at that moment, their main aim was to answer the question immediately without having further thoughts on elaborating their answer. The awareness of their utterance caused inconciseness in their communication skills as shown in Excerpts 5 and 6, below.

Excerpt 5:

Interviewer **Wow! That’s so interesting, what type of boutique is it?**

Candidate **hmmm...cloth**
5 **boutique...**

Excerpt 6:

Interviewer **What do you do during your free time?**

Candidate 5 **ahhh...this is hmm...go outside...**

The above excerpts show candidate’s inability to produce complete sentences in the answers. Two different questions were asked and both answers were given with two-word utterances. Especially in excerpt 6, the interviewer asked ‘What do you do

during your free time?’, the answer given was ‘go outside’, a two-word utterance that obviously incomplete, without having any expression of his/her activities in free time. This indicates the lack of conciseness in the communication. Such kinds of answer may cause interviewers to refrain from further inquiry on the related topic as the candidate does not project his ideas interestingly. An example of conciseness in communication is shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 7:

Interviewer **What are your strengths?**

Candidate **Well, I have a very good**
4 **interpersonal skill and**
I can win people’s heart
easily.

Interviewer **What is your biggest weakness?**

The above excerpt clearly shows conciseness is found in the candidate’s answer. The candidate managed to give a complete sentence in response to the question asked that was comprehensible for the interviewer, which led to a natural flow for the interview in further inquiry on the interviewee’s answer. Given that, the candidate then had the chance to highlight his traits in more depth.

Completeness of Effective Communication

The following results presented are for the ‘Completeness’ of effective communication. ‘Completeness’ in this study refers to adequate details provided in the interaction. In other words, the interviewer need not

rephrase the question in order to get more details from the candidate. In this study, however, candidates were shown to have a lack of completeness in communication. The findings revealed the interviewers made attempts to rephrase questions in order to get more details from the candidates. Example excerpts showing lack of completeness are presented below.

Excerpt 8:

Interviewer What is your **long-term objective**?

Candidate 5 My long-term objective is I can get my own house.

Interviewer That's personal... your **long-term career objective**?

Candidate 5 I can put myself in a good company and contribute good productivity for the company

Interviewer 10 years from now, what is **your career objective**?

Candidate 5 10 years, if I stay here... maybe...I will...

Excerpt 9:

Interviewer What would you like to do **during your free time**?

Candidate 1 Ermmm, sometimes I would take a short nap or maybe...

Interviewer Can you please tell me **what is your hobby**?

Candidate 1 Sure...ahhh...actually I got a lot of hobbies, like swimming, playing video games, listen music and watch movie at cinema...

Interviewer Ok. I see...

The interviewer in Excerpts 8 and 9 shown to rephrase the question in order to elicit answers from the candidate. For example, in Excerpt 8, the interviewer makes several attempts at rephrasing the question, adding the word 'career' to prompt the candidate for more details. The initial question "What is your long-term objective?" was not answered satisfactorily for the interviewer. 'Career' was added in the following question to seek more detail from the candidate. Yet, the answer provided was unsatisfactory and not in detail. Finally, the interviewer emphasized by asking, "10 years from now, what is your career objective?" This was the third attempt, and the candidate managed to provide the answer with 'completeness'. In the above case, first of all, the candidate was required to always provide an answer in favour of the interviewer of the organization, and then could narrow that down to personal benefit. As shown in Excerpt 8, the objective of purchasing a house could be a personal objective, which would be a by-product of career achievement. However, in this scenario, the interviewer wanted to know the candidate's objective, which should be in alignment with the organization's goals.

Similarly, in Excerpt 9 two attempts were made by the interviewer to seek for more details. The first attempt was with the question “What would you like to do during your free time?” In this attempt, the answer was inadequate, which led to another attempt “Can you please tell me what your hobby is?” Although both questions proved to have similar meanings, the question was rephrased and the word “hobby” seemed to give the candidate the opportunity to answer in detail. To achieve ‘completeness’, few attempts of questioning were shown to be made by the interviewer. In this situation, the interviewer may reach the evaluation that the candidate could not grasp the essence of the communication easily, hence much time and energy would be wasted in making the candidate understand a topic. There was also ‘completeness’ found in the findings as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 10:

*Interviewer Do you believe you are **over qualified** for this position?*

Candidate 4 Not at all. My experience and qualifications make me do my job only better. And in my opinion, my skills help to sell the products. I’m able to attract better freelance talents. My qualifications are better for your company too since you will get better return for your investment.

Interviewer Last question for you...

A much elaborated and detailed answer

was found in the Excerpt 10 that clearly demonstrated ‘completeness’ of effective communication. With only one attempt, the candidate had managed to answer not only the question also to explain that his/her qualification and experience would be an added asset to the company. Besides the candidate further elaborated his/her skills would expediate future tasks which would benefit the company. Such answer was easily understood which led to the flow of the interview. Thus, excerpt is considered to be a good example of ‘completeness’ of effective communication.

Correctness of Effective Communication

According to Truman (2011), ‘correctness’ for effective communication refers to no grammatical errors found in the utterances. The sentence structure produced would have a positive effect on the hearer, as in the use of appropriate language, accurate facts and figures, and good timing. For this study, four of the candidates were shown to have a lack of ‘correctness’ in their utterances during the interviews, while one candidate proved to have correctness in communication.

The following two excerpts clearly demonstrate there were grammatical errors in the candidates’ utterances. In Excerpt 11, the interviewer said, “Based on your resume, we found that you are over qualified for applying for this position. What do you say?” This particular statement actually wanted the candidate to express his or her interest in the job regardless of the qualification. The candidate managed to give his views

but not in a complete sentence. “Utilise my working experience and qualification for your company’s growth” does not yield a positive impact or provide a convincing factor. The answer seems to be a point that might be found in a bulleted list in a resume.

Excerpt 11:

Interviewer Based on your resume, we found that you are over qualified for applying for this position. What do you say?

Candidate 2 Well, this is a **critique question. Utilize my working experience and qualification for your company’s growth.**

Excerpt 12:

Interviewer Do you know how to create a good conversation?

Candidate 3 *errr...I know but...you want me to do it now? I can but it takes a long time. I do not touch with it for quite sometimes. ...I certainly believe...if you give me the opportunity ...but...hmmm...I am not good at contents.*

Similarly, in Excerpt 12, errors were found. The interviewer utilized the auxiliary verb ‘do’ to begin the question “Do you know how to create a good conversation?” and expects a simple and confident answer. However, the answer received kind of perplexing. The candidate began with “I know but you want me to do it now?”,

expresses uncertainty and anxiousness. Followed by “I can but it takes a long time” surely sound confusing to the interviewer also indicates the inappropriate of language. The greater impact of utterance came from the statement “I do not touch it for quite some time” which had grammatical error. The statement simply meant “I have lost touch with it”. Perhaps the candidate was trying to express that he/she was used to create good conversation and somehow have lost touch with it. Such utterance indeed showed the lack of correctness which gave a negative expression to the interviewer on candidate’s communication skills. Apart from the lack of correctness, there are also examples of correctness that can be found in Excerpt 13 and 14.

Excerpt 13:

Interviewer The last question for you, if your customer buys a total RM35.00, and he or she gave you 3 Rm10.00 notes and 2 Rm5.00 notes, how much you should give back or...

Candidate 4 hmmm...RM5.00, sir.

Interviewer Wow, it is fast! Within 3 seconds you can answer it.

Candidate 4 I think my mathematic is okay compared to my other subjects in secondary school.

In Excerpt 13, the answer provided by the candidate was fast, factual, and with a correct figure, thus giving a positive

impact to the interviewer. This was evident when the interviewer responded to the candidate's answer by saying, "Wow, it is fast! within 3 seconds you can answer it.", a form of praise. This was followed by the utterance of "I think my mathematic is okay compared to my other subjects in secondary school" clearly shows the use of appropriate language and good grammatical structure that matches the definition of correctness by Truman (2011).

In Excerpt 14, candidate 4 uttered "I always manage my stress by listening to soft music...It's a great way to reduce stress in my life..." to answer to the question "May I know how do you handle your stress?" The answer indeed has shown the characteristics of correctness of effective communication. There were no grammatical errors in the sentence structure, and the answer was given with appropriate language and was well timed.

Excerpt 14:

Interviewer May I know how do you handle your stress?

Candidate I always manage my stress by listening to soft music. it's a great way to reduce stress in my life...

Interviewer Well, how do you spend your time when you are free...

In sum, the findings presented above were the excerpts from the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees. Based on Truman's (2011) theory of effective communication, the

interviewees in the present study, the fresh graduates, were found to be incompetent in communication skills in relation to the 4Cs—Clarity, Completeness, Conciseness, and Correctness. These categories (4Cs) proved to have an impact on the interviewer whether it was a positive or negative impact. If the candidate possesses all the 4Cs of effective communication, a positive impact may be given to the interviewer. Moreover, if the candidate does not possess the 4Cs of effective communication, a negative impact may result. Thus, this study aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the critical areas of communication skills in a job interview setting.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the areas of effective communication in job interviews. The transcribed data in this study has helped to distinguish the areas of positive and negative impact given to interviewers during interviews. The findings also highlighted the awareness of the importance of communication skills and framing a curriculum based on the 4Cs for effective communication. As this is a preliminary study, a further investigation would be worthwhile, examining interviews with job candidates and the interviewers. For this study, permission to interview the candidates and interviewers was not granted, which was a limitation of this study. The number of the candidates interviewed was only 5, which was a minimal number which could not represent the graduates' population, thus another limitation of the study. Although

the findings presented in the results section indicates the relevance of the 4Cs of Truman's theory (Clarity, Conciseness, Completeness, and Correctness) in a job interview could enhance and help graduates to build their communication skills. The findings could not be corroborated or supported with other studies. This is because there were no studies so far conducted recently.

In conclusion, the interviewer expects a candidate to use appropriate language, to construct complete sentences, to be precise in providing details, and to be aware of their grammar while communicating. Roderick (1985) stressed that fresh graduates should pay attention to the importance of creating first impressions. They should be on time and well prepared for the interview, which includes dressing professionally, greeting, and shaking hand with the interviewer, while maintaining good eye contact and portraying a high confidence level. Conversely, negative behaviour such as a low confidence level, excessive talkativeness, failure to provide a comprehensive reply, or being nervous in mannerisms prompt interviewers to rate job candidates unfavourably (Vaughn & Darsey, 1987).

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APPENDIX A

Communication Skills.

Completeness	The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly.
Conciseness	Conciseness means wordiness, i.e., communicating what you want to convey with the least possible words without forgoing communication and it is a necessity for effective communication.
Clarity	Clarity implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once.
Correctness	Correctness in communication implies being particular and clearer rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence.

Source: *Truman (2011)*

APPENDIX B

Standard Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What were your responsibilities?
3. What did you like or dislike about your previous job?
4. What were your starting and final levels of compensation?
5. What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?
6. What is your greatest strength?
7. What is your greatest weakness?
8. How do you handle stress and pressure?
9. Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it.
10. What was the biggest accomplishment / failure in this position?
11. How do you evaluate success?
12. Why are you leaving or have left your job?
13. Why do you want this job?
14. Why should we hire you?
15. What are your goals for the future?
16. What are your salary requirements?
17. Tell me about yourself.
18. Who was your best boss and who was the worst?
19. What are you passionate about?
20. Questions about your supervisors and co-workers.
21. Questions about your career goals.