

Lecturer communication in a multicultural higher education context

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The New Zealand international education sector has seen significant growth over the last decade. Associated with this change, New Zealand tertiary educators need to be increasingly aware of language and learning needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Certainly, language is seen as an underlying factor influencing student socio-cultural and educational adjustment. The aim of this exploratory study was to examine the ways in which lecturers communicate in the classroom to consider factors affecting student comprehension of lecture content. The communication styles of four lecturers were analysed and the findings revealed that while lecturers spoke at an average rate of speech, their utterances tended to be quite lengthy, with minimal pauses to allow students to process complex information. Additionally, nonverbal behaviours including eye contact varied with lecturers not always addressing all class members. Supporting the current literature, it seems that lecturing staff are unaware of their communication behaviours and as such make little modification in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. Therefore, there is a need for greater education to inform teachers of how they may improve their communication to enhance classroom interaction and success for NESB students.