

Unearthing Strategies to Augment Human Resources Competitiveness in the Business World: Focusing on the Language Aspect

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ABSTRACT

Living in the globalization era has made life competition becomes tighter. People coming from different regions or countries are now possible to compete if they have some good qualities in the business world. To be able to compete and survive in this globalization era, career seekers and professionals must be aware of several essential factors needing to possess. One of which is foreign language mastery.

Mastering foreign language, specifically English is inevitable in this globalization and competitive atmosphere (Fuad: 12: 2003). English, considered as one of the must-master foreign languages, plays an indispensable role in many business settings. Its mastery is one of the determining factors for one to enter, compete and survive in the working world. Misunderstanding due to lack of English mastery in the working world might take place. This may cause, minor or even major confusion or misapprehension. To the extreme stage, it may cause business loss.

Building on the aforementioned situations, this paper will successively discuss 1. Common problems encountered by Indonesian students learning English 2. Strategies to effective English learning, and 3. Proposed solution to the present practice of English teaching and learning.

Keywords: *English and strategies*

1. BACKGROUND

English is one of the international languages used worldwide. Mastering English becomes essential because it is used in trade and spoken by millions of people around the world. English is a tool to gain the latest news or current issues on business, politics, economics, even entertainment. Therefore, in this era of globalization, people cannot afford to be left out by not mastering English.

Indonesian government through its Ministry of Education has facilitated the enactment of English learning from Elementary level of education. The decree of ministry of Education and Culture (R.I./No.0487/4/1992, Chapter VIII) states that elementary school can add some extra lessons in its curriculum as long as they are not in contradiction with the objectives of national education. Although the teaching and learning of English commences in Elementary of education, the result is less satisfactory.

On the other hand, Bouzidi (10:2009) implies that in business industry managers prefer hiring applicants with English language competency. Departing on the demanded human resources quality above; English language competence, the writer proposes some strategies that should be employed in learning English.

2. COMMON PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY INDONESIAN STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH

There are some challenges faced by Indonesian students learning English. The first challenge relates to lack of use of the English language in real life situation. This lack of exposure to functional uses of English makes it difficult for students to see learning English as a useful and relevant activity (Mustafa, 2002).

The second challenge encountered is that English is different from Bahasa Indonesia in some ways. The differences in structure, patterns, and pronunciation may cause problems for learners. For instance, in Bahasa Indonesia there is no

change of verb form when using third person singular subject when talking about present or daily activities, but there is in English.

Another problem relates to the way English words are written as opposed to the way the words are pronounced (Mustafa, 2002). English words are spelled and pronounced differently from those of Indonesian. And the problem is that word pattern used in English is also different from that of Indonesian.

It is fact that not all students learn English has passion to learn English. However, they realize that English is vital not only to pursue their future career but also for their present educational success. Some universities has set regulation that before graduating students must have certain level of English competency proved by TOEFL or TOEIC certificate. Many students encounter difficulty to be able to achieve the university obligation.

3. STRATEGIES TO EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LEARNING:

3.1. Possessing motivation

Cambridge dictionary online defines motivation as enthusiasm for doing something. It means motivation is a drive that makes people willing to do something; in this case learning English. In learning English having motivation is essential in determining the success of learning. When motivation is within the learners, learners would be willing to make efforts in learning. This will positively influence the learner's attitude towards learning and may lead to positive learning outcome. There are two types of motivations, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The former is more powerful than extrinsic motivation. This is in line with Brown (59:2001):

“The most powerful rewards are those that are intrinsically motivated within the learner. Because the behavior stems from needs, wants, or desires within oneself, the behavior itself is self-rewarding; therefore no externally administer reward is necessary.”

Abraham Maslow (1970) also argued that intrinsic motivation is clearly superior to extrinsic. In accordance to his hierarchy needs, people ultimately motivated to achieve self-actualization.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is reward or drive that comes from outside surroundings. Brown (76:2001) states that extrinsically motivated behaviors are carried out in anticipation of reward from outside. The forms of extrinsic rewards are money, prizes, grades, and even certain types of positive feedback.

Intrinsic motivation is considered more powerful. However, it is not the only determiner of success for a language learner. Having a strong willingness to learn may result in keenness to love all the activities related to learning the language. Therefore, it may bring about to better learning outcome.

3.2. Mastering the English Grammar

Brown defines grammar as a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence (362:2001). Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:1) describe grammar as “... include both syntax and that aspects of morphology (the the internal structure of words) that deals with inflection (accidence). Equipped with sufficient English grammar is indispensable for learners to be able actively converse or write in English. Grammar concerns some systems of rules. Grammar deals with word order in a sentence; locating words in their appropriate place in a sentence. Learners should be able to identify and place certain parts of speech in a sentence or utterance. For example, we cannot say: *She be will at the meeting point at ten o'clock around* because auxiliary (will) precedes the verb and preposition around is placed before the adverb of time at ten o'clock.

Comprehending the word formation or derivation; how words are formed and can change their class of words is also the heart of grammar. Knowing it is beneficial in enriching vocabulary. The word *necessary* (adjective), for example, can also be changed into an adverb *necessarily*, or to a noun *necessity* or a verb *necessitate*.

3.3. Knowing English Expressions and Idioms

English is used in different kinds of settings, namely in a meeting, classroom, hospital, commerce, airport, etc. In the abovementioned settings, people need to convey different kinds of ideas, such as, expressing agreement or disagreement, inviting, persuading, express willingness, and many others. Knowing and being able to use appropriate expressions in appropriate situations make natural and eloquent conversation. Following are some examples:

A: I don't like sea food

B: Me, too.

The utterance *me, too* is inappropriately used in this context. *Me, too* is used to express agreement on positive statement.

A: board manager's decision to apply flexi time in our office is favorable to some employees

B: I couldn't agree more.

The use of negative-comparative is appropriately used in the above dialog. However, this might lead to puzzlement for students not aware of this expression. The negative-comparative combination creates superlative meaning. So, speaker B totally agrees with speaker A.

Phrasal verbs; verbs constructed from a combination of two or more words creating new meaning. When translated word by word they will result in a totally different meaning. For instance, the verb *look* added with preposition *for* create a new meaning: *seek, try to find, or search for*.

Idiomatic expressions like: "*I got butterfly in my stomach*", "*don't skate on thin ice*", "*Just give me a buzz*" might be troublesome or confusing for students having very little knowledge on idiomatic expressions to understand. Therefore, students should be aware of and be able to use the expressions mentioned above.

3.4. Get exposed to English

Mustafa (2002) proposes a strategy to effective learning of English: getting good quality of exposure. The exposures are good pronunciation; and sufficient frequency and volume of contact with the target language. This can be done by participating in an institution, body, or club where English is used as a means of communication (productive skills). Another is by exposing to the target language products, like movies, songs, books, novels, magazines, and newspapers. Intensive and sufficient English exposure may escort to better learning outcome.

3.5. Practice, Practice and Practice

The last but not least strategy is practice. Learning English without practicing it will be in vain. Only practicing the receptive skills; reading and writing will not give significant positive result. The experience of making mistakes, revising the mistakes, and being able to make correct English utterances and writing is the core of learning the language. This is in line with Brown's learning principle "risk taking" that is "...learners to take calculated risks in attempting to use language—both productively and receptively".

4. PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT PRACTICE OF ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING

Some proposed solution to facilitate students learning English in university level are as following:

1. Motivate students to learn English; having high motivation to learn, students would be willing to go through the extra miles.
2. Integrating the four skills; both the receptive and productive skill can be evenly facilitated

3. Give students more portion of practice as opposed to teaching theories; the learning is not rote learning. Therefore, the learning activity can be more interesting and may result in better learning outcome.

5. CONCLUSION

To make the teaching and learning of English more effective and successful, both parties; teacher and students should be aware of the important strategies. Incorporating the aforementioned strategies is expected to result in better English learning outcome.

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