



ENGLISH COMPETENCE OF EMPLOYEES REQUIRED IN INDUSTRIES

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Abstract

The focus of this exploratory and qualitative research was the need of the non-banking and state-owned industries, to the employees' English competence. There was a general research question: How important is the employees' English competence for the state-owned non-banking and financial industries? Survey research method was implemented to collect data as many as possible. It was found that almost all positions in aviation industries need the employees' English competence, followed by shipping, electricity, and plantation industries. Speaking skill can be concluded as the most needed English competence by the employees. The result of this research is in long term hopefully to be used as a reference in designing the English teaching materials, especially for the Medan State Polytechnic.

Keywords

English competence; state-owned industries

Introduction

The rapid technological development in information, communication, and transportation in three decades has made distance getting closer. This global phenomenon affects directly to the intensive and extensive communication between people in the world which is different with the mother tongue. Not only the personal communication but part of the communication is related to the working world. This situation was related to the use of language as lingua franca, the language used as a means of communication between people with different mother tongues [1-4]. English language plays a very important role as lingua franca among the many languages in international communication. The survey by Keirstead at al. [5] reported that more than 80% international organizations either business organizations or the not-for-profit ones use English as their communication tool. English language has been spoken by 1,75 million people. Most of the speakers of English come from people whose non-English mother tongue.



The importance of English in Indonesia can be seen clearly in educational and working contexts. Keirstead et al. [5] reports that more than 80% scientific journals written in English, as well as thousands of seminars and international conferences which also communicate in English. Multinational companies and the state-owned industries state English communication skill as one of the requirements for the candidates. Even, for example, official TOEIC (Test of English as International Communication) certificate is written as a requirement.

There were 84% respondents from Indonesian companies stated that English is significant. Indonesia is on 22nd of 38 countries surveyed. If there are 10 countries by which English as mother tongue (USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand) and countries where English is spoken as official language or de facto for the governments (Malaysia, India, Singapore, and Hongkong) were taken out from the list, then Indonesia is on the 12th. In that survey, there were 46 companies from Indonesia responded for the survey and it means at least 38 of 46 respondents from Indonesia stated that English is important for them.

Although the survey has included elements of kinds and sizes of companies in detail but the countries of origins have not been identified. Therefore, the result of the survey was understood in global, not based on the countries surveyed. The company profiles which represented Indonesia in that survey were not in detail identified: (i) whether the companies were corporate or state-owned, (ii) regional, national, or multinational, then (iii) the level and area of English needed.

Meanwhile, preparing and training English for the work force which is suitable with the minimum standard required by the industries is a very significant aspect [6, 7]. This is basically rational why this research was important and urgently to be conducted.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Need of English in Industries*

It is often heard that the competence of English-speaking ability is required nowadays in industries. From personal communication with the alumni of the Medan State Polytechnic working in some industries in Indonesia, it was found that the ability of speaking English is absolutely required. But the necessity was not clearly defined, very general, and did not clarify what sort of English language competence was needed and for what position. Briefly, people realize the importance of English competency but cannot justify what it is. Therefore, what kind and what level of English competence are needed and have not been studied.

Tartan et al. [8] conducted a research on the need of English of their alumni. They found that there were nine skills of English needed in the job world. They were able to: 1) deliver a presentation orally in English, 2) write and understand official documents of the company, 3) listen to a presentation properly, 4) read guidebook and manual, 5) communicate with clients and work relations, 6) able to lead a meeting and do a negotiation, 7) communicate with colleagues, 8) make correspondences, and 9) search and understand information from internet.

As mentioned before about the problem, the research did not connect with the kinds, industrial scales, and the sort of the jobs. Another indicator that could be observed directly about the need of English competence in industries was based on the job advertisements. Almost every advertisement, especially for diploma or bachelor degree requires the competence of English. It was shown in two ways. First, the requirement stated that the candidates had to be able to speak English passively or actively. This requirement did not mention clearly the parameter [9]. The second one stated the requirement of test scores of TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS. It was standard but often unrelated with the real need of English competence. The requirement could be exaggerated if the English competence needed was just simple and for routines.

Yuliah et al. [9] found that only 7,8% companies required passive English from the applicants. It means that most of the companies required active English competence. This research has considered kinds of job, but has not taken the kinds and scale of the companies as well as the

level and positions of the job. There are three job vacancies required active English competence from the applicants. Firstly, administration and management positions required 56,82% active English; secondly, sales and marketing positions required 23,86%. Finally, educational position reached 13,64%. Besides not having included factors of kinds and scale of the company, the research has not yet detailed the need of competence of English in detail related with the job positions.

Talking about the need of English in industries, it has to be connected with the position of English in a country. There were at least three categories as also applied by Keirstead et al. [5]. They were (i) industries where English as mother tongue, (ii) industries where English as second language, and (iii) industries where English as foreign language. In the three categories, industries in Indonesia is categorized in the third category. The different context in category would result in different perception in term of the need of the industries for the employees' competence of English.

B. Learning Process of English in Indonesia

The need of English competence is increasing along with intensive and extensive globalization in all sectors of life. The need, at least, can be seen from the enthusiasm of the society in learning English. Since the last two decades, English has been studied by elementary school students. Even, people have sent their children earlier to know English to the kindergarten or play groups [10]. Formally, English lesson is a compulsory subject at junior high school and senior high school. Previously, primary school students have also been taught English, but it is not now as a compulsory subject. But quite a few private primary schools kept teaching English. Even, it becomes a good promotion for the schools[11]. English lesson remains continuing until higher education, at least at the first semester. A vocational school like Polytechnic, English is a compulsory subject for every study program.

Besides in formal education, enthusiasm can also be seen in non-formal educational institutions, such as English courses. Data from the Directorate of Course and Training Development, Department of Education and Culture shows that English course is the second most popular course after computer course.

However, there is no systematic relationship between English course runner either formal or informal and the industries. The use of standard proficiency test like TOEIC which was initially designed to meet the English language competence in industries has not been known in Indonesia. Some state-owned industries have implemented the use of TOEIC score. Therefore, there is no mapping of the need of English competence in industries which is systematically conducted.

C. Previous Research

There were at least three research types related with this topic[4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13]. The first type was global survey research [5]. The second type was survey research conducted particularly in countries with English as a mother tongue. The next type was survey research conducted countries with English as a second language like Malaysia and Hongkong [2, 4, 12-14]. The last type was survey research conducted especially in countries in which English as a foreign language [8, 9, 15]. The differences between this research and the previous related researches can be seen on the Table 1.

Tabel 1. Differences between this research and the previous ones.

No.	Category	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	This Research
1	Research Location	All over the world	English as mother tongue	English as second Language	English as Foreign Language	English as a foreign language
2.	Respondent	Industry employees	Industries Employees	On-the-job training	Mass Media	Employees of

				(OJT) students		industries from various level and positions
3.	Industries involved	Kinds and scales	Industries in-which non-native exist	Industries which accommodate OJT students	Any kinds and scale	State- owned industries
4	Competence of English	General (4 language skills)	General (4 language skills)	General language skills)	(4 General (4 language skills)	Related with kinds, level, parts, scale in industries

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This is an explorative and qualitative research. This research was conducted to get any information which were not clear yet. Besides, survey method was used to collect a lot of data. Since funding was limited, this research used written questionnaire as instrument to collect data. After process of reduction, classification, and commenting, a Forum Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to deepen the data.

A. Measurement and Observation Parameter

There were two components as parameter and observation in this research. Firstly, the need of English competence from the component related with the industry itself. There were four parameters in this case: (i) scale of company, (ii) kinds of industry, (iii) level/position of job, and (iv) kinds of job. Secondly, the need of English competence from the component related with the language itself they are the four language skills: (i) Listening, (ii) Speaking, (iii) Reading, and (iv) Writing. The two groups of parameter would result in a number of matrix as form of global impression and would be described qualitatively based on the data.

B. Analysis Model

Interactive data analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014:10) was applied for collecting and analyzing the data. This model was developed from the previous model by Miles and Huberman (1994:12). It can be described briefly that the model applies stages of interactive research. As soon as data collection commenced, the data display and data condensation were also presented. Data condensation was the completeness of term reduction applied previously. At once, conclusion was given. The conclusion made continuously presented input to see (i) data return which means enabling new data collection for completeness, (ii) the result of data impression, (iii) the result of data condensation. Data condensation result interacted with data impression result. Therefore, interactive analysis model would produce integrative research findings which related each other and logic developed by the component stages starting from data collection until conclusion making.

C. Collecting and Data Analysis

There are at least two methods for collecting data: (i) observation method and (ii) question method. Observation method could be conducted by (i) recording technique and (ii) seeing technique. Both were implemented either through participating or non-participating. Meanwhile, the source was observed focusing on (i) man, (ii) event, or (iii) document which was traceable. The

limited of time and funding had caused the research not to do observation method as the main method in collecting data. Instead, questionnaire technique and interview were applied. Method and technique which were not stated as the main method or technique did not mean that they were not used at all. They were used as triangular form as well as deep analysis of verification.

III. Research Findings

This research involved 40 respondents from employees working in the state-owned and regional owned industries. There were 36 male, 4 females. Based on the length of employment, 16 employees were below 5 years, 7 employees were between 5-10 years, 6 employees were between 11-20 years, and 11 employees were over 2 years.

A. *The most needed kinds of English competence*

The perception of kinds of competence needed can be considered from four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening skill was believed by 32,5% respondents to be the most needed skill, 52,5% stated it was needed, 12,5% said needed but not very often, and 2,5% responded not very needed; Speaking skill was believed by 40% respondents as the most needed skill in industries, 47,5% stated as needed, 7,5% stated as was seldom needed, and 5% stated as very rare needed; while Reading skill was believed by 30% respondents as the most needed, 47,5% stated it was needed, 17,5% stated as seldom needed, and 5% stated as very rare needed; Writing skill was believed by 22,5% respondents as the most needed skill, 45% stated as it was needed, 25% stated it was seldom needed, and 7,5% stated as it was very rare needed. It can be concluded that Speaking is the most needed English competence in industries.

B. *Kind of industry which required its employees' competence of English.*

There were 82,5% respondents claimed that their job required English competence. Furthermore, it was found kind of industries that needed and not needed employees' English competence. The industry that significantly needs competence of English from the employees is aviation industry because it is closely related with how the job is conducted. Besides, it is also found that plantation industry does not need English for the job involved.

C. *Kind of jobs (including in which level and job section) requiring competence of English*

Besides kinds of industry, it was also found kinds of job which extremely needed competence of English. In general, employees need more English competence than the superiors. Kinds of job most strongly requiring competence of English are as follow:

- 1) Aviation industries: almost all positions require English competence.
- 2) Shipping/seaports industries: almost all positions require English competence: crews, head of engine room, harbor pilots, radio operator, and HRD staff.
- 3) Electricity Power industries: a few positions require English competence (staff of accounting, finance analyst, risk management, HRD analyst), they admitted that English language competence has really helped them in doing their jobs.
- 4) Plantation industries: jobs in plantation industries are hardly need English competence, but the staff of budget plan, procurement, general affairs, and computer technician admitted that their English competence support them in doing their jobs.

IV. Conclusion

It can be concluded that:

- 1) Speaking competence is the most needed by the employees in Medan city.
- 2) Aviation and shipping industries are industries which extremely require English competence since the industries deal with international businesses.
- 3) In general, the employees need more English competence than their superiors.
- 4) Most of the applicants for the jobs in the industries are selected by their English competence

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