

The english language and its impact on employability education essay

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In 2010, The New Economic Model (NEM) initiative was introduced by our Prime Minister to propel the country to a high-income nation by 2020 through a knowledge-economy. But among the critical success factors outlined in the report titled ' New Economic Model for Malaysia Part 1' (National Economic Advisory Council. 2010), is English proficiency of Malaysian student. Knowledge economy is the economy which is based on the knowledge-intensive activities and services that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advance. The key component of a knowledge economy is a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources (Walter, W. P., Kaisa, S. 2004). The private sectors are becoming more competitive and the globalization in business has encouraged the local companies to think beyond the nation. For this reason, the employees are forced to continue giving all their ideas and energy to what they are doing. The related skills for effective communication like presentation skills, interpersonal skills and convincing negotiation skills are essential for employees besides the technical and scientific skills. Consequently, English communication skill is very important and the ability to master English is very much required to remain employable. A research on the Academic Achievements and Employability of Graduates in Institutions of Higher Learning (Morshidi S, Rosni B, Lim HE, Mohamed NK. 2004) proved that English communication skills is imperative to students and have significant effects on employability. Consequently, it is very important for graduate to fully proficient in English to fulfill the needs of employment in the private sector. The researchers have also revealed that most of Malaysian students in local institutions of higher learning are found to have a

poor command of the English language. According to Taylor's University Lakeside Campus deputy vice-chancellor Pradeep Nair (The Stars Online, 2012), the problem of poor English proficiency among the student in Malaysia is stems from the fact that students were often oblivious to their weaknesses and were therefore unable to take steps to improve themselves. He pointed to recent survey results which showed that up to 64% of fresh graduates was rejected after their first job interviews due to poor English proficiency and communication skills. Accordingly, the aim of this assignment was to identify the factors leadings to poor command of the English language among students in Malaysian higher educational institutions. All the Information was collected through multiple reliable resources such as newspapers, journals and reliable online websites intended to find the top four reasons that lead to the issues. The results of this study revealed that 11 most common reasons for poor command of the English language among students in Malaysian higher educational institutions. All the reasons collected from multiple resources are categorized into four major categories. Finally, four recommendations were also included in this study to overcome the issue.

FACTORS LEADINGS TO POOR COMMAND OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

There are several research papers, academic writings and journals attempted to recognize and identify the possible factors that result in poor command of the English language among students in Malaysian. Table 1 below listed among the most important factors that contribute to the issues <https://assignbuster.com/the-english-language-and-its-impact-on-employability-education-essay/>

and it was categorized into four major groups. Though all the factors or reasons listed cannot be generalized to all students, but it does represent a majority of them. Table 1: Causes of limited English proficiency among Malaysian students

No

Reasons

1English is always being viewed as a difficult subject to learn. 2While using English for conversation, most of the students are afraid to be wrong and felt less confident in their grammar and always prejudiced about it. 3English is not perceived as an important medium for communication as they use Bahasa Malaysia both for academic and personal interactions. 4Students, especially those who are from a small town or rural area have inadequate or insufficient exposure and opportunity to use English outside the classrooms. 5Students express unwillingness and high anxiety to use English to communicate despite acknowledging that English is important for their future. 6Domestic environment and the community factor, where the student receives no encouragement and support to use English. 7Students are found to have limited vocabulary as English reading materials are not always available. Students depend on the English teachers as authorities. 8English is used only to answer teacher's questions and spoken during English class. 9Students tend to depend heavily on translation and dictionary use to find the meanings. 10Unwillingness and lack of motivation to use or learn English as they do not feel the important and immediate need to use the language. 11There is a mismatched between policy and practice in the Malaysian

English Language Teaching curriculum; the policy as envisaged in the school
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curriculum cannot be fully implemented in schools because of the over-riding concern for examination. Source: Ambigapathy, 2002; Fauziah, H. & Nita F. S., 2002; Mohd, S. A., 2008; Naginder, 2006; Hashimah, A. A., 2007; Razianna, A. R., 2005; Rosemala, I., 2008; Zaira, A. H., 2008; Normazida, C. M., Koo, Y. L., Hazita, A., (2012).

Reason 1 - Lack of confidence when using English

The most common problem that faced by most students of higher learning in Malaysia is a lack of confidence. Although they spent eleven years studying English at primary and secondary school, some of them can't even pronounce an English sentence correctly. The English subject taught in school has always been viewed as a difficult subject to learn, especially to those students from small town and rural areas. Most of them are not confident enough to communicate in English and always refuse to use the language in public. These are because they always feel afraid and shy to be wrong and prejudiced about it. A study by Yashima (2002) on Willingness to Communicate in a Second Language define students' confidence in language use is reflected in whether they are willing to communicate. This meant that the lower the frequency of use of certain language, the lower level of confidence they have. In the study by Shamsudin and Nesi (2006) revealed that students are often declining to use English is because they are embarrassed about their lack of fluency. Though Malaysians are generally friendly, tolerant and understanding, but when it comes to communicating in English among them, they are shy and afraid to make a mistake. They are afraid when others will laugh at them, as a result they will try to avoid speaking English in front of others.

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Reason 2 - Negative Attitude towards the English Language.

The second reason is the negative attitudes towards the English language. 'Attitude' has been defined as the inclination to act or to be in a state of 'readiness' to act (Gagne, 1985). Typically, the Malaysian students learned English with the objective to pass the examination. These scenarios also happen in another country in which English is not their native or official language. Tucker and Lambert (1973), in their studies mentioned that university students generally find it very difficult to keep up their interest in English language learning, as English is not seen as important to their immediate needs other than to pass their examination. In Malaysia, students from Malay ethnic mostly came from small towns or rural areas, and they are usually grown up in a situation where English is an unimportant language in their daily life. They are not exposed to the language and have limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms. Consequently, those students always express unwillingness and high anxiety to use English, even though knowing that English is important for their future.

Reason 3 - Teaching And Learning Methodology In Primary And Secondary School

There are a lot of discussions in television and newspaper pertaining to the English curriculum and its implementation in our national school system. There are also research papers and academic writings that study the same issues and most of them are agreed that our national schools' English curriculum is below the satisfactory level. The overall picture of this issue is discouraged and is indicative of the need to change the ways in which English language is taught to Malaysian students. In learning a second

language or a foreign language, research has found that it is extremely important for students to receive maximum support in terms of supportive and conducive learning environment as well as adequate and meaningful language experience. (Normazida, C. M., Koo, Y. L., Hazita, A., 2012). This is because the enjoyable experience increasing the level of students' self-confidence, consecutively, affected their motivation in a positive way. Whereas, what is happening now, most students especially who are from a small town or rural area always feel that English subject is one of the difficult subjects and always putting the subject as second priority to score ' A'. These are because the approach used by the teacher is not attractive enough for a student. English should not be taught using other language than English. Ambigapathy and Nambiar highlighted in their studies two important issues regarding English language learning in Malaysia. First, Bahasa Malaysia has a strong influence over the learning of English. Interference of the mother tongue language system in some ways contributes to wrong use of English grammatical rules, morphology and syntax. Students tend to refer to their first language system when writing in English. They are often used direct translation and depend on dictionary meanings to comprehend English text (Ambigapathy, 2002; Nambiar, 2007). Another drawback of the current education system is that it has generally produced students who are unable to operate autonomously (Koo, 2008), students presuming that teachers will teach them all the lessons they need to know. This characteristic indeed discourages and inhibits independent language learning. The strong tendency to depend on teachers for their own learning is further worsened with the prevalent discourse of examination

throughout their school experience (Ambigapathy, 2002). The high importance placed on scoring good grades in the examination further establishes the need to memorize and regurgitate even in the discourse of assessment in higher learning institutions (Lee, K. S., Hazita, A. & Koo, Y. L., 2010; Koo, Y. L., 2008).

Reason 4 - Lack of Support and Awareness of the Importance of English

A student from a small town and rural areas always been viewed as lack of support and less aware of the importance of the English language. Their domestic environment, the community and the education background of family members have very much contributed to the lack of awareness of the importance of English. Due to the nature of the community they are living with, where speaking English is viewed as too 'westernized', students are least motivated to learn English as they do not see the immediate need to use the language. Thus the English subject learnt in school is not treated as a core subject like Bahasa Malaysia. Students from the rural areas and small town are also found to have limited vocabulary. This is because English reading materials are not always available. Novels and books sold in the bookshop are also in Bahasa Melayu.

SUGGESTIONS.

Below are four recommendations or suggestions to overcome the issue of poor command of the English language among students in Malaysian higher educational institutions. The suggestions might not be applied to the students of higher educational institutions but it is more about the

suggestion to the root of the cause. The suggestion may be suitable to be <https://assignbuster.com/the-english-language-and-its-impact-on-employability-education-essay/>

applied to primary and secondary school students since we are considering that the problems that happen in tertiary education level is due to the failure in foundation level.

Suggestion 1 – To Have English Summer Camp to Promote Multicultural Interact and Confidence Development.

Lack of confidence while communicating in English among most of the of Malaysia higher learning institutions' students is by motivation. Motivation, as concluded by Gardner (2001), is when an individual has a drive and desire for some goal and have an effort to achieve it, persistent and enjoys the activity, attentive to the tasks and utilizes strategies. Clément, Noels and Deneault in their journal titled ' Interethnic Contact, Identity, And Psychological Adjustment' revealed that students are more motivated and have a positive attitude towards the native speakers of the language they study. These intercultural contacts have been proved to increase self-confidence when communicating in English (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001). The positive and pleasant intercultural contacts will lead students to interact more frequently in English inside and outside the classroom.

Because the experience was enjoyable, the increased self-confidence of the students, in turn, affected their motivation in a positive way. (Wen-chi, V. W., Ling Ling, Y., & Marek, M. , 2011)Consequently, the recommendation to have an English Summer Camp is hopefully will help student to experience interaction with student from other areas and cultural background. And the English Summer Camp should follow a guideline as follows: The student should be grouped and each group should consist of student from different

cultural background and place of origin. English is the only language that should be allowed. Activities must be informal, easy and enjoyable.

Suggestion 2 – To Have Native English Speaker as English Teachers in National School and University.

As per mentioned in item 3. 1, the studies by Clément, Noels and Deneault, revealed that intercultural contacts proved to increase self-confidence when communicating in English (Clément, Noels, & Deneault, 2001). Therefore, successful interaction with native speakers can relieve student's hesitancy to express themselves and increase their confidence in using the language. Consequently, the recommendation is to have English teachers in national school and pre-University from an English native speaker.

Suggestion 3 – To Improve Proficiency Standards of Local English Teachers In Malaysian Government Schools.

While discussing on the English proficiency of student in the Malaysian higher learning institution, There are also concerns about the proficiency and competency of the English teachers and lecturers. Since Malaysia wishes to provide every student in primary, secondary and tertiary education with a high level of English education, large numbers of teachers with proper trainings and qualification need to be produced. A kind of evaluation and assessment need to be applied to current teachers to ensure that their skills and competency are meeting the standard. With all the high standard and expectation, those teachers deserve higher pay and should be awarded a special salary grade. By doing this, teaching profession will be able to attract people with a high level of competence in English.

Suggestion 4 – Incentive to Private Sector Who Are Doing Community Service On English Education.

Last year, Malaysian direct to home satellite tv service provider, Astro, had launched an English learning tv program, ' Oh! My English'. This program is fully supported by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, and was created with aims to help Malaysians to improve their spoken English through the tv. This new initiative should be followed by other private companies in the country in helping government to improve Malaysian English proficiency. The government has suggested to give some type of incentive such as tax exemption to the company so that more companies will do the same as what Astro did.

CONCLUSION

As Malaysia embarking towards K-economy, the job market in general is becoming so competitive that graduates need to do more than just presenting their background and qualifications. Besides presenting the factual credentials, graduates need to display or communicate their employability skills and English is the way forward. The provision of quality education and if accompanied by the necessary and complete infrastructure combined with having good teachers, lecturers and trainers, will ensure us a continuous supply of the right human capital. So, providing quality education should be made a priority in our country to produce the best human capital.

ATTACHMENT