

Tracing English proficiency of alumni in supporting their career

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ABSTRACT

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This study was designed to investigate the English proficiency of Alumni in supporting their career. Sources of data from this study were 802 alumni of Universitas Muria Kudus graduated in 2018 and 115 alumni users who came from companies, government offices, and schools. They filled out a standardized questionnaire from Higher Education Ministry (DIKTI,2017) which was used as an instrument. The results of the analysis show that most alumni regard that English proficiency has much benefit for them to get a job or promoting their career in working place. From skills in English, Speaking becomes the most skill which needed in working place or confirmed by interviewers when alumni have interview test. Furthermore, this study found that alumni users put significant role for foreign language skill (English) of alumni. Users believe that English proficiency of alumni is in good level. However, some users in different working places conclude differently by assessing the alumni English proficiency into Fair category. This can be caused by the kind of working place also affects their English skill, the frequency in using it for working activities, the English atmosphere built by the working place can be an encouragement for alumni to improve their English proficiency.

Introduction

Mastering more than one language has now become a must for those who want to become a global community. If today we are only able to communicate using local language, it is time to increase the foreign language skills, especially English as one of the most widely spoken languages in the world today. With good English skills, career opportunities will be more and better. A research on the quality of the profile of graduates expected in the world of work conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, USA (2002) through a survey of 457 company leaders placing communication skills at the top of the rankings of other abilities such as integrity, cooperation skills, interpersonal skills, and ethics. Thomas, et. Al. (2016) states that communication skills include the ability to present something, the ability to solve problems in a team through a decision that is mediated between the team and superiors effectively, participate actively in discussions needed by workers in carrying out activities in their work environment for career support. This includes communication in foreign languages, especially English. Some things that benefit when alumni have English language skills include (1) opportunities to work in international

companies, (2) more job vacancies, (3) opportunities to develop in companies where they work, and (4) networking with colleagues. in the office.

Currently, the number of foreign companies entering Indonesia is also increasing. Of course, they need human resources who have good foreign language skills, or at least are able to use English properly. This is because foreign companies have ranks from overseas as well, so it is likely that they will not be able to communicate in Indonesian fluently. With the ability to speak English, the opportunity will be easier to get a job at multi-national companies. For this reason, Shinde (2016) argues that English language skills need to be trained since they are still in college so that when they graduate, students are ready with additional skills in the form of foreign languages, namely good English so that the selling profile of a high profile. In addition, the opportunity to develop in the company where you work will be greater. This happens because usually people who have foreign language skills, especially English, will get various attractive offers; promotion due to good language skills, or participating in company activities held abroad, and being appointed as one of the representatives representing the company because they are considered comfortable in communicating using foreign languages and this can improve the quality of the company in the eyes of the world.

Working in a multi-national company, it is possible to have colleagues who come from different parts of the world. In fact, not a few expatriates are now working in private companies in the country. Establishing good communication and relationships with them is one good way of networking. The opportunity for a better career afterwards opened up. This study formulates a question which deals with the issue of how is the English proficiency of Alumni in supporting their career or to get a job.

English as a Mean of Communication

As a mean in communication, English plays a crucial role in communication for the global citizens nowadays. In cities they are motivated through two ways: Instrumental and Integrative motivation. Ur (1998) argued that learning a language only for rewards is instrumental motivation. On the other hand Integrative motivation includes the urge to be part of the community which is so strong that drives to pick up the language with perfection. The importance of English as a communicative tool is less realized. English engages students not only pedagogically understanding the language but also applying the ability in communication before they get their career. Universities should be aware about importance of communicating in English in response to the increasing needs of job market. Since the world has gone global, the need to compete in it without sufficient skill in English is difficult. We are now witnessing the emergence of an advanced economy based on information and knowledge. Due to this, the most important skill for workers in the new environment is ability to communicate. This means to able to listen and to express ideas effectively in writing and in speech. In order to achieve desired success, professional needs to assess and respond to communication situations that occur constantly, English provides those aspects to support better skill in communication, especially foreign language. Students have been placed as fixed users of internet from their cellular phone or computer in which English being the medium in it. Unfortunately, this is not realized by the prospective job seekers (university students) which results to the low of graduates' availability in the working place. It happens because they have less English proficiency and skill of communication. Kermode (2017) in Su-Hie Ting, et.al., (2017: 315-327) said that the skill in transferring and accepting or understanding well a message or information by comprehending other's characteristics to eliminate the misperception is needed in working place. That is why a sufficient

communication skill should be possessed by the workers or prospective workers. It also contributes them to promote their career.

English on the other hand has encouraged Indonesian students to get wider opportunity in career both in domestic or abroad. The importance of English skill has increased, especially in job recruitment or supporting career since it is now needed to develop the companies. Learning English has become popular for business, commerce, and cultural reasons, especially for internet communications throughout the world (Pandey, et.al., 2014).

Tracer Study in Career Center of Higher Education

A measure of the success of a higher institution can be seen one of them by the quality of graduates received in work (Lie, et.al., 2009). In order to know where the graduates work, universities need to record and trace the alumni after graduating for two years. All things become easy in the era of advanced technology. By knowing the alumni data, especially the telephone number and e-mail address of students who have graduated, the data can be traced.

Learning bureau of Research and Higher Education Ministry encourages that every university should have a unit called Career Center. Career Center is a student career development forum where universities prepare and introduce industries for prospective graduates. The Career Center cannot be separated from the tracer study system which is a search program about the existence of college alumni. The Career Center is also a very important unit in universities. It records alumni needs and as a means of networking among them. Aquino (2015) further states that career center also serves as a place for recording of outcomes and evaluations of universities on the quality of graduates. By announcing a high percentage of graduates who work directly compared to the number of students who graduate can be used as a separate promotion for universities, so that more and more interested people want to study at the college.

There are four stages used in conducting Tracer Study. They are Preparation, Implementation, analysis stage, and Further Evaluation stage (Lalica, 2007). The Preparation Stage is the initial stage of the implementation of a tracer study which includes the process of collecting graduate contact data through graduation books and Academic Information Systems. The next is update the contact data if there is graduate data that changes from the previous data. Furthermore, the questionnaire was developed which refers to the Higher Education Ministry (DIKTI) tracer study questionnaire and within the University as well as on several social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The next stage is the Implementation Phase which consists of sending notifications or invitations to graduates either by telephone or SMS Broadcast. Based on previous experience, sending invitations using a letter was eliminated because it was less effective and efficient. After sending the notification, the next is filling out the questionnaire by the graduates.

During the process of filling out the questionnaire by the graduates, progress monitoring is carried out, namely monitoring graduates who have been sent invitations but have not filled out the questionnaire. From the results of progress monitoring, reminders will be sent either via telephone or SMS. This process will be carried out 3 (three) times. After the data on graduates who are the target respondents have been collected, the survey will be closed.

The next stage is the Analysis Stage which consists of data processing where data cleansing is carried out if duplicate data is found. Then a quantitative data analysis is carried out by referring to it in the form of numbers or tables or graphs in order to obtain an overview of the distribution of the tracer study indicators. Furthermore, conclusions are

made and compilation of the final report on the results of the tracer study and conducting a dissemination or workshop.

The final stage is the Follow-up Evaluation, the stage is to evaluate a series of alumni tracking activities from start to finish. Vong (2015) adds that this process involves university leaders as the basis for developing and perfecting learning programs such as improving competencies and the relevance of the curriculum to the world job market, improving the learning process, and the accreditation and certification processes, as well as improving the performance of institutional managers. So that gradually it can increase the satisfaction of graduate users which is expected to be able to increase the absorption of graduates and shorten the waiting time for graduates to get jobs.

Career in Disruption Era

An era in which the emergence of various new innovations in digital technology and in the scope of everyday human social life in the form of a shift in social order. Kasali (2017) highlights various new business models that not only threaten incumbents (old business people) but even destroy them. New business models grew up in a sharing economy style that involved not only one force as was typical of incumbents but brought together small businesses or actors in one network and on a win-win basis. Disruption here is seen as an innovation that provides benefits, not because a company has highly regulated procedures, but because of a deception or neglect of what is considered trivial. In this era, individuals actually have the opportunity to develop and succeed in creative and fast ways. On the other hand, individuals in this generation also have the opportunity to become a generation that is stagnant, unable to compete and fail. The effect of changes caused by millennial is nothing but a disruptive change that affects social fabric in society.

Osei (2015) highlights the development of digital technology opens new insights about success and success in managing a business to become opportunities for people in this generation. They started something new that was truly anti-mainstream, more creative and certainly straightforward. For example, success can be achieved only by using a smart phone or computer. Even more great, with technology and communication access that is getting easier and smoother, air-conditioned luxury offices and rooms are no longer the main choice for managing a business because people can work from home, even from the bed while monitoring or completing their work. The farmers played by millennial are not like the farmers before them, especially in managing agricultural products. With their sophisticated technology they simply trade through online shops and are then bought by consumers who are not only from their area, but even from abroad.

In the world of education, for example, there have been many colleges and even schools that provide special study programs for new things such as games. For example, 3D Modeling & Animation, Design Methodology, Game Engine Design & Development, and Multimedia System which can make students become disruptive students, students who are able to take advantage of changes and developments in digital technology creatively and innovatively. This means that career opportunities are now increasingly wide open as long as these graduates maximize their creativity, communication skills, and self-development continuously without leaving existing norms as a basis for behavior in interacting.

Research Method

The design of this research is qualitative research. As stated by Meriam (2009:5), researchers with this design are interested in the understanding how people illustrate their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their

experiences. To obtain a comprehensive result, the data source was taken from 802 graduates of Universitas Muria Kudus who responded back from total 1617 graduates in 2018 and 115 Human Capital (HC) of alumni users (companies, government offices, and schools) who responded back from total 405 users identified. And the data of this study is focused on how the importance of English proficiency for Alumni to support their career is. The data was taken by using standardized questionnaire of Tracer Study from Higher Education Ministry (2017). There are 18 items from the questionnaire for the alumni which cover things dealing with their occupation (interval time between graduated and getting the job, working places, the compatibility between major and job, salary, foreign language mastery, etc). While for alumni users, there are nine indicators of assessment for alumni, such as ethic, skill based on the major taken, foreign language (English) skill, IT skill, communication skill, team work, self-development, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence). The data of questioners was recapped and categorized based on the questions and the users. To obtain further result, the data then calculated into percentage and elaborate into comprehensive interpretation.

Result and Discussion

After sending the questionnaire to alumni and users, the researchers get an obvious result which shows the benefit of English for their career. Three of 18 items from the questionnaire about the role of English in alumni career were analyzed and it shows significant response that English has important function to get or support their career. It can be seen in figure 1.

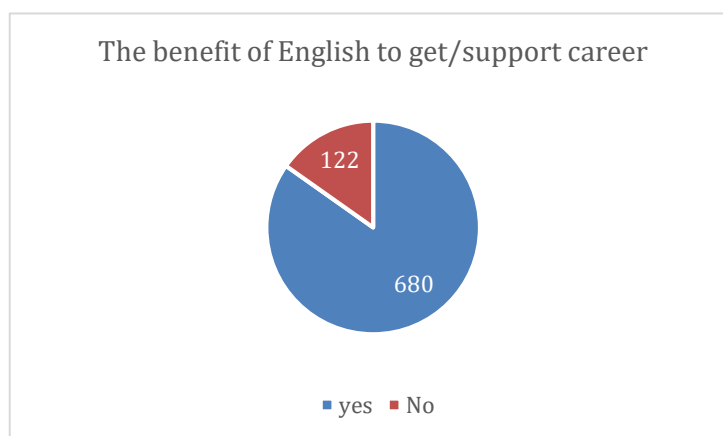


Figure 1 The benefit of English to get/support career

Most of alumni (680 respondents) consider that English has important role to get their career or to support career for those who have been working. And this finding was sharpened with further question about the level of English benefit for alumni career. The result is quite divers even the overall responses indicates that English is useful for their career. The following figure describes the variant answers about the question.

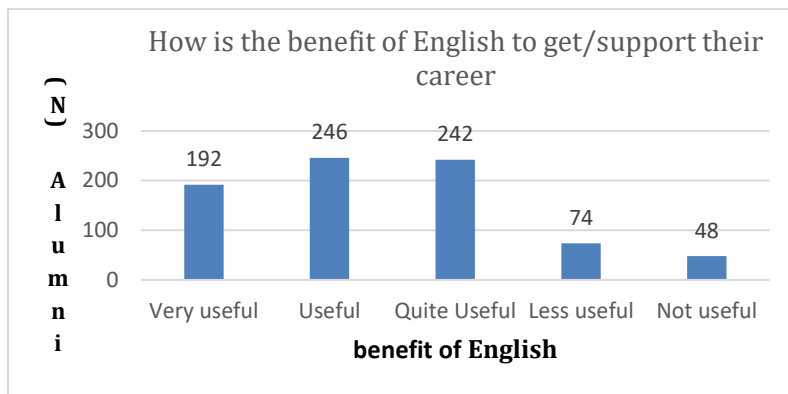


Figure 2 The level of English benefit to get/support alumni career

From 802 alumni who responded back the questionnaire, 680 respondents feel that English is useful in finding a job for them or in supporting their career. The number is spread into three different level; 192 alumni regard that English is significantly useful to get job or to support their career, 246 alumni believe that English is useful for their career, and the rest 242 respondents think that English has different lower level benefit for their career. However, alumni also have another world in their career which probably do not relate to English. 122 alumni give contrast response that English has less or even no benefit for their career. They probably prefer to concern in entrepreneurship which cover in real or field sector.

The researchers try to gain deeper answer from the alumni by raising another question about which skill of English most used to support career to the least one. The result indicates that communication skill is completely needed in working place and the proficiency of Speaking (526 respondents) in English becomes the most additional important skill to grab the job opportunity or promoting their career in working place than other skills like reading (118 respondents), listening (94 respondents), and writing (64 respondents). The figure below shows the response from the alumni dealing with English skill which is used most to the least.

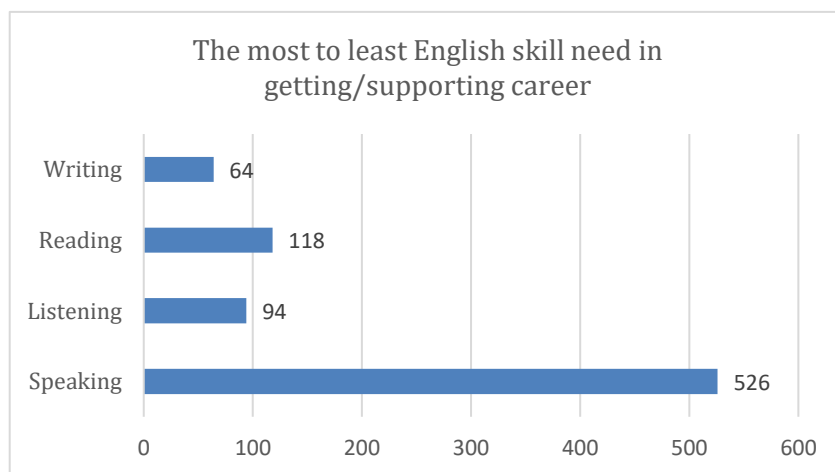


Figure 3 English skill used most to get or support career

To get a comprehensible result, the data related to foreign language (English) proficiency also obtained from alumni users which consist of companies, government offices, and schools. There are 115 alumni users who respond back the questionnaire from total 405 users identified. The result of alumni users' opinion about the use of foreign language

(English) is elaborated further in nine indicators of users' assessment. This is broken down into three categories based on alumni working places (government office, companies, and schools) Here is the figure of the assessment result.

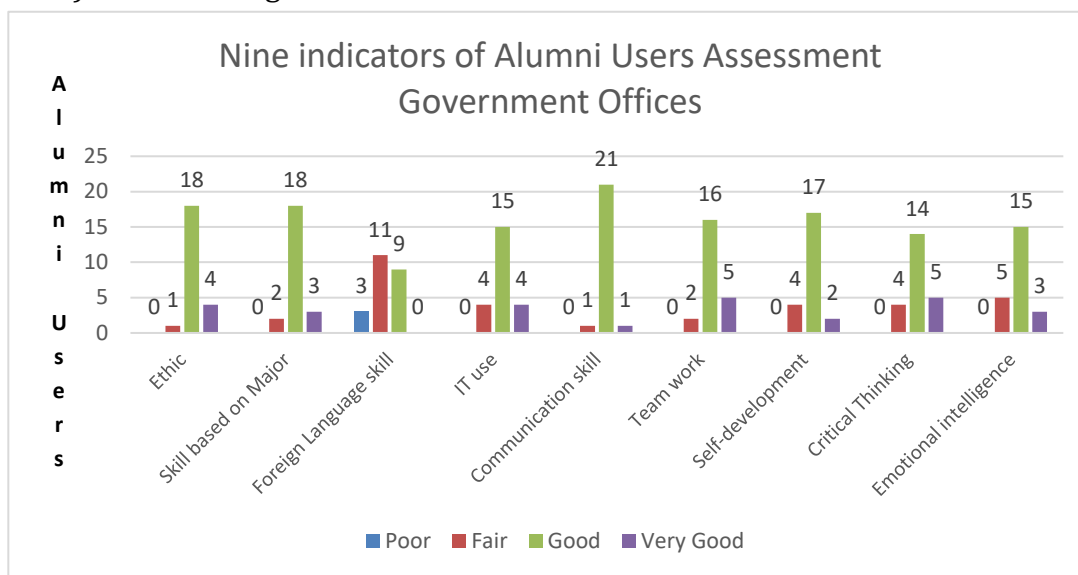


Figure 4 Nine indicators of alumni users' assessment in government office

From the graphic shows that the English skill of alumni is not significantly in Good range since those who are categorized Fair and Poor have more number. This probably government offices which deal with domestics or local affair do not emphasize more the use of English in the working place so alumni have less exposure about it. The low frequency in using English will make their skill decreased, especially in Speaking. Different result is showed in users' assessment in companies as it is seen in figure 5.

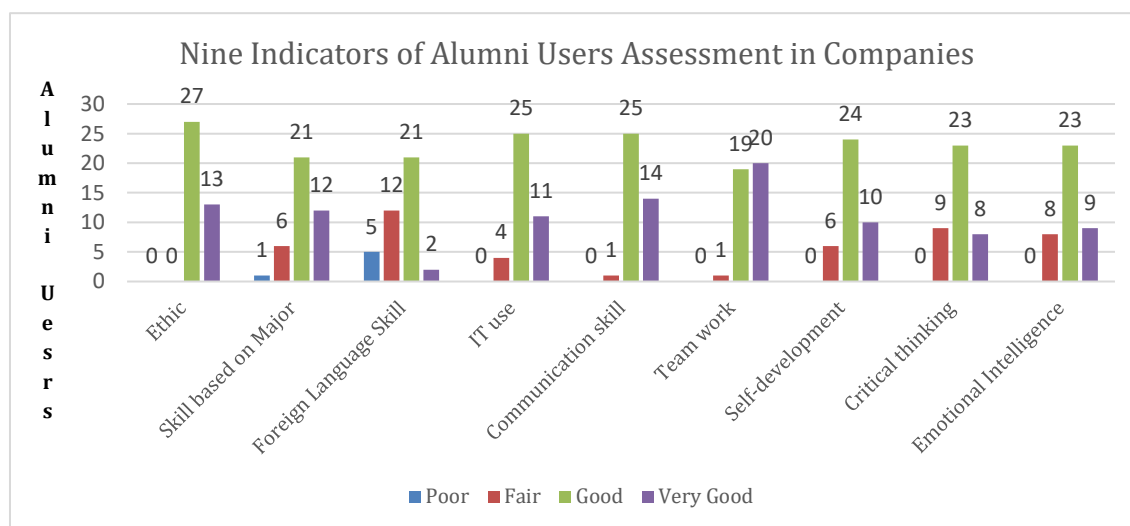


Figure 5 Nine indicators of alumni users' assessment in companies

Alumni who work in companies have more exposure in using English during their working activities. Besides, Human Capital officers also build global atmosphere to make the companies international standardized by exposing English to their employees, putting English notification in every part of the building, and sending chosen staffs to abroad for dealing mission. It is reflected in figure 5 that alumni users who give better English skill (23) are more than those who are less (17). Their English proficiency allows alumni to foster their

career promotion because they have wider chance to develop in completing the duty, expanding the network, and endorsing the company to the worldwide. Similar result also showed in other working place, it is school. The following graphic indicates the English proficiency of alumni who work at schools.

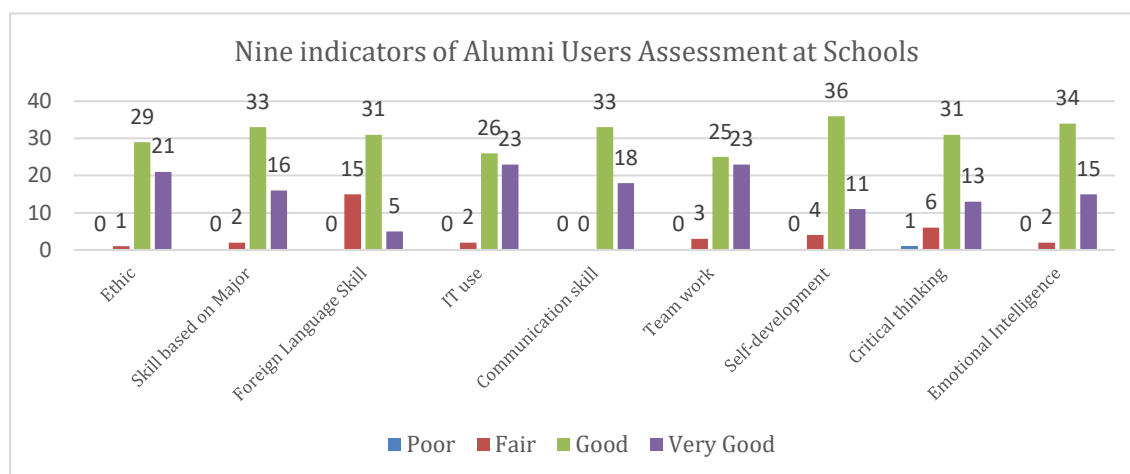


Figure 6 Nine indicators of alumni users' assessment at schools

Schools have different atmosphere from the previous working places (government offices and companies) in exposing English, especially during the teaching and learning activities. Nowadays, many schools are lead to go to international level so their graduates have high sense of competitiveness. It makes all resources at schools must upgrade their skill in communication, especially in English. This positive engagement make alumni who have had good English proficiency are motivated to improve more their skill to be better. It is showed from the figure that there are 36 alumni users who classify the English skill of alumni in Good and Very Good level. However, there are still 15 users who regard that the English skill of alumni needs to be improved to optimize their work activities.

Conclusion

The comprehensive elaboration above gives a very obvious sight that English proficiency will give positive contribution for alumni both to get a job or to promote their career. English becomes the important additional skill in career since users put communication skill in the priority skill to possess. The important of English skill is consciously admitted by users because it give more benefits such as expanding the networks, smoothing the international deal or transaction, upgrading the level into international level, and endorsing high quality of resources which reflect the quality of the companies/institutions. There should be further researches in the future about the specific type of English needed by prospective users from graduates since this study is only focused on the English proficiency in general.

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