BUSINESS COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM INDUSTRIES: BEST PRACTICE IN IN-HOUSE TRAINING

by Kun Aniroh

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Abstract: Business communication in the global world is becoming badly needed and is unavoidable. This is a challenge for English instructors to prepare their students to become global ready graduates with their global diverse future careers that need business communication. English instructors are to teach not only communication skills required in a diverse community but also entrepreneurial skill values. An instance is shown that Singapore Airlines and Shangri-La hotel are highly commited in training their staffs by implementing corporate culture principles that make these two corporates have a high reputation in tourism industry.This paper discusses how their principles can be incorporated in students' business communication and how in-house training activities can make best use of education business practice.

Keywords: business communication,in–house training,global ready graduate

1. Introduction

People are quite familiar with *Intellegence, Emotional, and Spiritual Quotients* (*IQ, EQ, and SQ*). Another Quotient is *Communication* Quotient (*CQ)* that has an important role in the people's career path. Building communication quotient means learning how to develop a bridge between social, digital, cross generational, and cross cultural divides (Becker, 2013, p.1).With the advances of information technology today, communication is supposed to be easier. To some extent, this is quite true but to some points, communication barriers among different communities exist, be it in the level of business, institution or individual. The borderless world today facilitates individual communication among different communities. Friedman (2006) states "the globalization is entering the third phase since the year 2000 and continuing into forseeable future distinguished by individuals to take control of their economic destiny".

To take control of individuals' destiny nowdays can be performed in many ways and one of which is running own business or working for a national or multinational company business. Many individuals are now making businesses at home by making use of *IT* and the number is increasing day by day, the undertaking of which, of course, needs a certain type of business communication.This situation leads the individual who learns in the colleges and universities will be global ready graduate.

Learning to practice business communication from international, established, and reputable companies such as Singapore airlines and Shangri-La will be of a great help for students and English instructors. Singapore Airlines as pointed out by Chong (2007) is focusing on "internal communication". As has been illustrated in Asia Society Performance Outcomes and the Common Core State Standards: Areas of Greatest Alignment in ELA 2013, " communication is depicted as communication ideas in which the students can communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences". In a more detailed elaboration Becker (2013) points out that "… there are global matrices for the arts, English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies". This certainly reflects Bathia's and Bremner's statement (2012, p. 16) that say" …there is a gap to be bridged between the academy and the globalized business world in the coming together of Business English and Business Communication."

a. Business English (BE), Business Communication (BC), and Business English Linguafranca (BELF)
As one of the branches of ESP, BE is developing rapidly. This is due to the fact that business is growing fast in many countries. As pointed out by Bhatia and Bremner (2012, p.15) "BE became an independent area of study in the late eighty's and early ninety's due to the globalization of trade and commerce which made it necessary for business people to move out their home grounds and operate across territorial, linguistic, cultural as well as sociopolitical boundaries". As briefly mentioned in the earlier part, communication quotient is "how to develop communication" (Becker, 2013), and "this influences the change in the environment of the workplace". Thomas (2007.p. 288) states that "work is becoming hierarchical; work requires less and and fewer rules; the increase use of technology through email, world wide web, teleconferencing, and more work is transcending national boundaries; work is more integrated across stovepipes, work is increasingly characterized by its constant level of change". Consequently, "business communication in the workplace is developing into the form of virtual relationship, virtual communication, electronic communication,

intercultural communication, horizontal communication, strategic communication, and change communication".

Business English lingua franca(BELF) speakers focus on "their own's expertise more rather than fluency and linguistic accuracy in achieving successful communication". In addition in the global context " they have accomodation skills, ability to understand different Englishes and tolerance towards different communication styles" (Kankaanranta and Salminen, 2013). Some of the main differences in research on the BELF are that:

> "successful interactions are created through language use appropriate for the needs and requirements of the communication events. Culture is the diversity of globalized business community, and the writer or speaker aims to get the job done "(Charles, 2006,p. 266)

b. Corporate Values and Principles of Singapore Airlines and Shangri-La: Lesson Learned for Business Communication

Singapore Airlines is a world's reputable airlines which applies many strategies. The first is "kung-fu that combine the hard and the soft, speed and flexibility while penetrating attack at the right time at targeted points"(Heracleous, Wirtz, and Johnston, 2005).The next is "the importance of customer feedback which functions as knowledge management tools" (Heracleous, Wirtz, and Menkoff, 2007). The third is "recruiting and selecting the process, controlling the service quality and motivating staffs through rewards and recognition" (Heracleous, Wirtz, and Pangakar, 2008). The next one is two different strategies which are applied at the same time: "low-cost execellent service, decentralized and centralized innovation, standardization and personalization in serving customers" (Heracleous and Witz, 2014). Meanwhile, Chong (2007) points out "that internal communication and training functions as the first border in conquering the customers".

All the strategies have the impact on the curriculum designing as pointed by Waldeck; Durante and Helmuth (2012) "that traditional and contemporary communication skills such nonverbal, chronemic awareness, that have the relation with typical disciplinary division should be the interests of educators and trainers for the curriculum".

Shangri-La as the leading hotel company also has corporate values of "authenticity of non-westerners which is considered important in developing countries, and this influences the authenticity in the hospitality marketing" (Atwal and Williams, 2012). The authenticity is challenged when the Shangri-La is opened in Sydney, "the re-branding of the luxury hotel required a sensitive reading of cultural difference between that of the Chinese parent company and the Australian which faced workplace legislation, minimal staffing, and tenecity of cultural values but management was successful in integrating cultural differences"(Heffernan and Droulers, 2008).

Best Practice of Business Communication in In-House Training

As a tourism college, Diploma IV Tourism Program, Merdeka University Malang, has many education business practices.The curriculum document of Diploma IV Tourism Program 2015/2016 provides "60 % curriculum for practices and 40 % theory in which the implementation of teaching activities is a three-day practice and a two-day theory every week per semester". Of the subjects offered, there are in-house training consisting of food service, food product, pastry and bakery, front office, housekeeping, and MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition) at the hotel department. All the subjects are supported by English, hotel management, and other subjects. At the tours and travel department the in-house training consists of tour planning, guiding, ticketing, and MICE. The students have to do the projects once for the MICE and once for another creative project.

How the students practice business communication is by having 'business' of their own, working in groups and sponsored by campus and other sponsors that they have to contact by themselvesand are supervised by the lecturers. This is a kind of project-based and problem –based learning in real practice. Some business projects at hotel department that they have demonstrated are among other things 'color me run', 'romantic gala diner', 'food festival', 'cooking competition', and 'table manner'. At tours and travel department they have carried out 'Bali tour package','city tour package', 'guiding competition'," Kaliandra ecotourism' and other projects. At this department, students, teachers, and other customers can buy tour package and book domestic and international tickets through the teaching travel. All these business education practices are intended for the students to learn how to run a business while the students are studying. From these activities there are several studentpreneurs that are born and they are now having their own businesses in pastry and bakery, restaurants and even some others have their own travel agent businesses.

In marketing the products they create, the students use the social media, 'multi level friend and family marketing, presentations in other classes and faculties within Merdeka University Malang as their close markets. They arrange and promote the specification and competitiveness of the product to attract the customers. After th project is over, a reflective evaluation is conducted under the supervision of the lecturers teaching the class. The reflective evaluation is conducted comprehensively, starting from the evaluation of pre activities, during the activities and after the activities.

The in-house training is prepared for on–the–job training or internship in which the students will have the real practice in the workplace of hotel, restaurants, travel agents, airline, tourist attractions, and cruiselines. The internship can be accomplished in Indonesia or overseas for one year. The students have to self-finance for their visa, airline ticket, and sponsorship, and any additional language program needed, depending on the requirements from countries in which the on-the-job training will be conducted. The common language program is English or English plus Japanese, English plus Korean.

In Retrospect

This project means a lot for other the instructors as they can make use of the projects in their teaching-learning process based on their subject point of views. English for example can take the benefits. For instance, they have to do business matters in the form of writing letters to sponsor, making and creating invitations, writing menus, writing tour-package brochures or flyers, and many other activities. In speaking classes, English instructors can ask them to simulate how to approach, and to assure the companies or institution so that the students can get the sponsors. In dealing with 'business communication', the teaching of writing and speaking skills can represent not only the language of businesses but also the way how to 'speak' to sponsors, to customers and to the stakeholders and beyond.

Through such activities described previously, indirectly the students learn to be discipline (Waldeck; Durante, and Helmuth 2012), to have a solid teamwork, to do accurate time management, to be competent in hospitality, and to be skillful in non verbal communication. All this is what is meant by internal communication by Chong (2007), and personalization (Heracleous and Witz, 2014).The students realize that if they are not solid in carrying out the project, the project will fail and this means that time, energy, money that they have already spent is wasted unproductively. Similar to Chong (2007), a very famous chain hotel The Ritz-Carlton opened the vacancy and required the candidate for only the most passionate and skilled hospitality professionals (Career at Ritz-Carlton, 2016).

Concerning evaluative feedback upon the execution of the project, the students of hotel department learn it by distributing questionnaires to the guests to evaeluate the menu, taste, atmosphere of the restaurants, service appropriateness, and the service rate. The students of tours and travel learn the feedback by learning the comments from the guests about tansport, accomodation, menu , guide service and tour leader service (MICE syllabus, 2015). Questionnaire and guest comments function as evaluative feedback for the improvement, and what that "feedback functions as management tools" (Heracleous, Witzs and Johnston, 2005) to improve the business performance in the future.

On the authenticity of the project performance, the students are still considered in the level of'observing, imitating, and modifying'. Nevertheless, based on casual observations, their projects from year to year are getting better in quality and the students are accustomed to making innovative and creative business projects.This can be seen that the students do not make the same business projects from year to year.

Concluding Remark

"Communication in the digital technology and the development of the communication in the third level have changed the directions and reached person to person level" (Friedman, 2006). This implies that BELF that is currently developing rapidly and the dynamisation of reputable tourism industries are not only the concern of ESP instructors but also EGPs. This is due to the very fact that we are now in the era of AEC, APEC, and SDGs in which business communication is more needed than never before, and this will have a significant impact on strategies to teach English to our students that will be global ready graduates. The activities at campus which have the 'business atmosphere' can be used as a supporting tool to widen the teaching learning process of English. Thus, while empirical evidence demonstrates a rather overwhelming picture in the field, this situation can be harnessed as an efficient learning source for English instructors. A survey on ESP practitioners at the tertiary level in Malang showed that ESP practitioners were aware on their roles but felt still limited in the knowledge and the learning of industry and the related matters (Muhrofi-G, 2014). In addition, it is also discovered that the interest of ESP practitioners in writing ESP research and articles in TEFLIN from 2011 to 2014 was increasing but the percentage decreases (Muhrofi-G, 2015). In this year and the upcoming years there will be many more international students, teachers, businessmen and other professionals coming and

visiting our country and Indonesians will go to other neigbouring countries for many kinds of different reasons as a result of AEC. English instructors can contribute a lot in business communication and education business practice by taking benefits of campus activities.

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