

TOURISM STUDENTS' SOFT SKILLS TOWARD USING ENGLISH IN SMKN 1 PONTIANAK

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out students' soft skills level toward using English. The method to conduct this study was case study and the subjects of this research were seven males and seven females of eleventh grade students of Tourism Service Major in SMK Negeri 1 Pontianak. The result of this study showed that there were 2 students that the total score of the questionnaire were 83 and 85. These results were considered that the students were having Very Good soft skills in both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. These two students were categorized having more interpersonal skills as well as more social awareness and social skills. There were 12 students whose averages of total scores were 62 to 76 which considered were having Good soft skills. Five of them had more intrapersonal skills as well as self awareness and self skills, while seven of them had more interpersonal skills as well as social awareness and social skills. In conclusion, the students' average level of soft skills was considered as Good. By recognizing level of students' soft skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, we are able to decide the suitable activities to develop and maximize their soft skills in tourism service.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Tourism Service, Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Soft skills fulfill an important role in shaping an individual's personality. It is one of the most important things for every student to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or technical knowledge. Communication in English is also needed to be mastered. If the students are not able to combine their English with soft skills, it can cause their service performance not optimum. If they do not prepare themselves to improve their soft skills and also English, it also causes their future career in tourism field not optimum as well.

A soft skill is defined as intra- and inter-personal (socio-emotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success. Intrapersonal skills are the skills

that relate within one self (individual) and interpersonal skills are the skills that relate to an individual's ability with other people. They include skills such as communication especially in using English. In this case, for tourism service students. Soft skills are characterized as skills in order to emphasize the fact that they can be learned or developed. Mastering English in the class and also using English as one of the services needs can combine both intra- and interpersonal skills to achieve optimum tourism service for students' performance in the class and future career in tourism field itself. A previous research conducted by Majid, Liming, Tong, Raihana (2012) revealed that the importance of Soft Skills for Education and Career Success as it was mentioned

in the purpose of that study was to investigate students' perception of the importance of soft skills for education and employment. The result showed that generally business management students in Singapore were aware of the importance of soft skills for employment and career advancements. However, they felt that their soft skills were lower than the standard. It was also revealed that they considered communication skills was the least necessary, so they tended to ignore improving their communication skill.

Appropriate soft skills play an important role in a successful career as well as during social interactions in the society. These skills are also highly sought after by employers recruiting fresh graduates. Seetha (2014) had concluded several definitions about soft skills from some experts. According to Robles, (2012), soft skills encompass character traits, attitudes, and behaviors rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Soft skills are described as being intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that help ascertain one's strengths in leadership, facilitating, mediating and negotiating. In defining soft skills, Deepa & Seth, (2013) stated that these skills refer to personality traits, attributes, high levels of commitment to the job that would make the applicant stand out ahead of his peers.

Seetha input that soft skills also refer to attributes that individuals may possess such as team skills, communication skills, leadership skills, customer service skills and problem solving skills. Salleh, (2010) described soft skills as being interpersonal skills, technology skills and communication skills and that in the coming future the needs and importance for these skills in the market place will increase. James and James (2004) concurred that soft skills is a contemporary way to

describe a set of abilities or talents that an individual can bring to the workplace. Robotham & Jubb (1996), recognized that soft skills competencies are related to personal qualities that lay behind people's rational behavior. A research done by Andrews & Hugson, (2008) went on to explain that soft skills include professionalism, reliability, the ability to cope with uncertainty and work under pressure. Holtbrugge and Mohr (2010) added the skills of leadership, relationship, communication, team working and Information management as carrying the meaning of soft skills. Wellington (2005) characterizes soft skills based on his experiences in various management positions, which was primarily within human resources. Those of whom enjoyed career advancement enjoyed their success because they had both excellent technical and soft skills. In fact, soft skills are so crucial that they are ranked as the most important factor for potential job hires in many occupations and industries (Robles, 2012). Employing new graduates who possess interpersonal skills is pivotal for successful organizations to maintain a competitive advantage. In a study done by Minnesota State College, United States, there are three skills that business leaders seek from their employees; namely: technological skills, business soft skills and skills that are required for the emerging business practices such as green production (Sparks & Waits, 2011). Education, (2012) referred to soft skills as team working skills, presentation skills, decision making skills, understanding of career area and few others. This view is

supported by Leong & Kavanagh (2013) and Nathan & Taylor (2003) and added further by saying it also involves thinking beyond completing the given task.

Soft skills are character traits that enhance a person's interactions, job performance, and career prospects (Parsons, 2008). Soft skills are the general skills, qualities, knowledge, abilities and traits that a person should possess to succeed in one's studies and career. Such skills enable a person to function and contribute effectively in solving problems, communicating effectively, thinking critically and creatively, and acting as effective team members at work. On the other hand, The real soft skills definition is not about skills in the traditional sense. Soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Soft skills are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator.

The greatest feature of soft skills is that the application of these skills is not limited to one's profession. Soft skills are continually developed through practical application during one's approach toward everyday life and the workplace.

This study focuses to research about the students' soft skills in tourism service in SMK Negeri 1 Pontianak. Majoring tourism service is also showing how they will serve local and international tourist by using foreign language especially English. The writer really expected that this study is very useful to support government program to develop tourism by improving Pontianak vocational high school students in Tourism Service major. As the students who are majoring about how to serve tourist, they should be able to have soft skills especially communicating in several languages. In this case, mastering

English becomes as one of the most important International language.

Based on the explanation above the researcher is interested in describing the condition of students' soft skill in using English. The subject of this research is the students of SMK Negeri 1 Pontianak in Tourism Service Major. They consist of male and female of eleventh grade students. Teaching and learning process in the class will be the main factors that are influencing students' willingness to use English mostly in their tourism service class for some materials such as welcoming guests, restaurant service, promoting and etc. So, students' soft skills toward using English can support their career in tourism service.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to find out students' level toward students' soft skills toward using English. The appropriate method for this research is case study. It is the most flexible of all research designs, allowing the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events while investigating empirical events.

Case study is one of many ways in doing social science research, with experimentation, observation, surveys and information each suited to a certain type of research problem, degree of experimenter control over events and historical/contemporary perspective and focus. What is case study? By design, case study usually takes as their principal subject selected examples of a social entity within its normal context. At the simplest level, the case study provides descriptive accounts of one or more cases, yet can also be used in an intellectually rigorous manner to achieve experimental isolation of one or more selected social factors within a real-life context. Robert Yin tried to define a case study, as part of his defense of the method, as an attempt to examine: a contemporary phenomenon in its real life

context, especially when; the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

In this study, the samples were all of eleventh grade tourism service students in SMKN 1 Pontianak. The writer chose from this grade because they have a semester for student internships. To conduct this study, the researcher use samples of 7 male and 7 female students of Tourism Service in SMKN 1 Pontianak. The writer choose the samples based on numbers of gender in the class. All of them will involve in answering the questionnaires.

This research belongs to case study, one of the appropriate technique of data collecting for the present research is administering surveys in form of questionnaires. Questionnaires can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on a certain current phenomenon. Regarding to this technique, data are usually collected through the use of questionnaires that are distributed to the samples. It would be a school survey because of the samples are students in vocational high school.

This research used one closed form questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two categories. The questionnaires consist of 20 items, 10 items about the tourism service students' soft skills toward English Learning Process in the Class for Tourism Service How are the tourism service students' soft skills toward English Learning Process in the Class for Tourism Service and 10 items the tourism service students' soft skills toward communication skill in using English. As the answers, the students chose 1 for very poor, 2 for poor, 3 for medium, 4 for usually good and 5 for always good in every statements provided in the questionnaires.

Considering that this research was conducted in Tourism Service Class, it is necessary for the researcher to conduct an overall analysis towards tourism

students' in order to find out overall soft skills toward English learning process in the class. The result of this analysis displayed a bar chart followed by tourism students' level of soft skills toward English learning process in the class. The bar chart will classify the students' based on their answer from questionnaires.

In order to find out overall answers about the way students encourage their performance for future career, it is necessary to conduct an analysis on their soft skills in their English as communication skill, since it is represented by some options in the questionnaire. The result of this analysis displayed a bar chart followed by tourism students' level of soft skills toward each option that represented students' soft skills in their English as communication skill.

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Basically soft skills can be categorized into two categories, which are intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills includes self

awareness and self skills. Interpersonal skills including social awareness and social skills (Tannahill, 2008). To have the data analysis, the fourteen students were given sets of questionnaires. Those includes intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. The items of the test were described on the table below:

Table 1. The Tourism Service Students' Soft Skills toward English Learning Process in the Class

NO.	Intrapersonal Skills	Test Items	Total
1.	Self Awareness	No 1,2,3,4, and 5	5
2.	Self Skills	No 6,7,8,9,and 10	5
Total			10

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Table 2. The Tourism Service Students' Soft Skills toward Communication Skill in Using English

NO.	Interpersonal Skills	Test Items	Total
1.	Social Awareness	No 11,12,13,14, and 15	5
2.	Social Skills	No 16,17,18,19,and 20	5
Total			10

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Basically soft skills can be categorized into two categories, which are intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. Intrapersonal skills are included self-awareness and self-skills. Interpersonal skills are included social awareness and social skills. In the questionnaires that had been filled by the students, there were twenty items that also had been divided into ten questions for intrapersonal skills and ten for interpersonal skills.

Two students generally have very good abilities in soft skills. Other twelve

students could be counted having generally good abilities in soft skills. Those categorized skills were concluded after the writer counted all the students' results by filling up the five categorized responses.

having more interpersonal skills or on the other hand they have more social awareness and social skills.

On the other hand, the writer found that there were dominant skills. They could be seen that five of the students responded that they have intrapersonal skills. Meanwhile nine others inclined to interpersonal skills. So, it could be concluded that most of the students are

interested in social awareness and social skills.

Meanwhile, twelve students who have good soft skills were also considered from both of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Based on the data that have been collected by the writer, those students were categorized five of them are having more intrapersonal skills or on the other hand they have more self awareness and self skills. Seven of them are having more interpersonal skills on the other hand they have more social awareness and social skills as well.

The two students who have very good soft skills were also considered from both of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Based on the data that have been collected by the writer, those students were categorized. On the other hand, the writer found that there were dominant skills. They could be seen that five of the students responded that they have intrapersonal skills. Meanwhile nine others inclined to interpersonal skills. So, it could be concluded that most of the students are interested in social awareness and social skills.

Discussion

The questionnaire revealed that students who have self awareness were seven of fourteen students. It means that they have motivation and encouragement to learn English. On the other hand, there were also seven of fourteen students who have more self skills rather than self awareness. It showed that they were more ready and active in English class activities. In fact, the students need to collaborate both self awareness and self skills to have intrapersonal skills especially in learning English. Self awareness can determine their self preparation then it will support their performance through their self skills.

In interpersonal skills including social awareness and social skills showed different perception. The questionnaire

revealed that students who have social awareness were eleven of fourteen students. It showed that they are mentally ready and confident to prepare them self for serving people in their major especially in English. On the other hand, there were also three of fourteen students who have social skills. It means that they are ready to interact with people in tourism service using English.

Based on total results of the questionnaire, fourteen students also showed the dominant skills between intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. There were nine who have more interpersonal skills and five students who have intrapersonal skills. They gave the perception that most of them are ready to do tourism service directly to people using English. Meanwhile, the rest of good in self preparation and performance toward learning English in the class.

Both of intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills are very important for the vocational high school students. Especially for.

tourism service major, they are going to use the skills in their daily routine. As Tannahill, G. K., (2008) noted, basically soft skills can be categorized into two categories, which are intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. In such a way, the attributes of soft skills includes self value, motivation, behavior, custom, character and attitude. This attributes of soft skills are possessed by graduates in different amount of value which are influenced by thought, speaking, action and attitude. But this can be changed through training in habitual of something new. So, soft skills can be improved and developed through the activities that involves all the aspects in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the discussion about Tourism Service Students' Soft Skills

toward English, the writer found several facts about students' soft skills. Soft skills based on the theory were divided into two categories. They were intrapersonal skills and interpersonal skills. intrapersonal skills were also divided into two part , they were self awareness and self skills. In line with intrapersonal, interpersonal skills were also have two categories, they were social awareness and social skills. From fourteen students as participants, the writer found various results toward questionnaire including dominant skills toward types of soft skills. The writer had concluded the findings.

Suggestions

Soft Skills become more important for vocational high school students, since soft skills play an important role in the development of students' overall personality to support their future career in working field. Thus, the writer would like to present some suggestions to improve the students' soft skills. There will be three factors that can support the improvement. They are students, teachers and school. These factors are the essentials of education elements.

First of all, the students have to be eager to learn English as a way to improve intrapersonal skills and motivated to practice more in using English in communication as a way to improve interpersonal skills. Secondly, the teachers as a class facilitator have to conduct teaching technique which is able to attract students' attention to learn English, so they will not feel bored while learning. The last, the vocational schools that have tourism service major needs to emphasize the improvement of facilities to support teaching and learning activities. The writer hopes the result of this study will be useful for the readers, as it can give more information about the students' soft skills toward using English. This study can also be one of the useful references for the next research.

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