

# INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY INTO TBLT TO IMPROVE LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING ESP

Mazlin Mohamed Mokhtar

*Fakulti Bahasa dan Komunikasi, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*

*Corresponding email: mazlin@fbk.upsi.edu.my*

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – To investigate whether incorporating technology into TBLT would help to further improve their attitude. If TBLT can help to build their interest towards learning English, TBLT combined with technology would give even better result in instilling positive attitude in learning English which will then enable these students to improve their English

**Methodology** - Questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes of the learners towards the English language and the task-based language teaching method that they have been exposed to. Three (3) questionnaires were used in this needs analysis because it is to cater to three (3) different groups of respondents (students, ESP lecturers and department lecturers)

**Findings** - Lecturers agreed that English language course is necessary for the students of Hotel and Catering Management course at their institution. Surprisingly, they felt that the Listening and Speaking skills are the most important skills for their students. Technology is seen as an effective tool in teaching and learning. Thus, these lecturers also found that the use of technology as something good. 36.7 percent of the students believed that the current module has not given them enough motivation to use English especially for spoken English.

**Significance** - This analysis hopes to be able to explore how attitude and performance can be affected by task conditions. The fact that new technology is going to be employed in the module, it may definitely contribute to the existing knowledge about TBLT; specifically to the cognitive perspectives of it.

**Keywords:** TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching), ICT, ESP

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In January 2003, Malaysia took a bold step in re-adopting the English language as a medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science in order to ensure that Malaysians are able to keep abreast with scientific and technological development that is mostly recorded in the English language (Ministry of Education, 2002 cited in Pandian & Ramiah, 2003).

Content-based language learning is a method that integrates English as a second language with subject matter instruction. The technique focuses not only on the language learning, but also in using the language meaningfully in learning Mathematics, Science or other academic subjects (Reilly, 1988).

Thus, the English Language syllabus at one of the higher institutions (northern region) aims at consolidating and enhancing competence in using English language amongst the students to enable them to perform effectively at workplace, and in work related as well as social situations. In order to meet this aim, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is being employed in the curriculum under the term English for Technical Purposes and English for Business Purposes. The curricula for both the English for Technical

Purposes and English for Business Purposes would integrate the teaching of skills, language functions and grammar.

Therefore, it is hoped that, employing ESP and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as an innovation would be able to improve students' attitude towards learning English. Besides that, this study will also investigate whether incorporating technology into TBLT would help to further improve their attitude. If TBLT can help to build their interest towards learning English, TBLT combined with technology would give even better result in instilling positive attitude in learning English which will then enable these students to improve their English.

## **2. NEEDS ANALYSIS IN ESP SETTING**

According to Basturkmen (1998), needs analysis has been identified as the identification of difficulties and standard situations by observation of participants functioning in a target situation in conjunction with interviews and questionnaires. It is considered as the corner stone of ESP and leads to a much focused course added Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998).

Thus, the main sources for needs analysis listed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) are the learners, people working or studying in the field, ex-students and documents relevant to the field, clients, employers, colleagues and ESP research in the field. They also suggested that the use of questionnaires, analysis of authentic spoken and written texts, discussions, structured interviews, observations and assessments as the main data collection methods for needs analysis. According to Benesch (1996) as cited by Ferris (1998), needs analysis consist of the collection and analysis of one or more of the following types of data: questionnaires in which students provide information about their background and goals, surveys in which instructors are asked about their course requirements, course syllabi and assignments, and observation of students or instructors in naturalistic settings.

## **3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Technology in classroom is nothing new in education. The utilization and integration of Instructional Computer Technology (ICT) tools in English lessons has proven to be effective in assisting students in acquiring English language competency as well as enhance the quality of their learning experience (Zaiton & Samuel, 2006). This is because integrating ICT tools in teaching can lead to increase students learning competencies and increase opportunity for communication (Jorge, C. M. H., Jorge, M. d. C. A., Gutiérrez, E. R., García, E G., & Diaz, M. B. (2003).

## **4. DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS**

Eight (8) ESP lecturers, seven (7) Hospitality lecturers and thirty (30) Hotel and Catering Management students had been chosen to complete the questionnaire. Questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes of the learners towards the English language and the task-based language teaching method that they have been exposed to.

## **5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

There are three (3) different respondents responding to the questionnaire, they are the ESP lecturers, the Hotel and Catering Management lecturers and the Hotel and Catering Management students. Their profiles are discussed in further details in this section.

### ***ESP and Hotel and Catering Management Lecturers***

From the responses we have obtained from the questionnaires of both the ESP and Hotel and Catering Management lecturers, we can conclude that both of the parties agreed that English language course is

necessary for the students of Hotel and Catering Management course at their institution. Surprisingly, they felt that the Listening and Speaking skills are the most important skills for their students. As presented in Table 24, 100 percent of the Hotel and Catering Management lecturers felt that Speaking is the most important skills while another 85.7 percent of the respondents agreed that Listening is another important skill for their students.

It is also found that the ESP lecturers felt that the current English language syllabus needs to be restructured. A reason given by Respondent ESP2 was:

*“...our syllabus should be restructured as it does not really help the students to grasp the language or in other words to value the importance of language in their field of work...”*

This statement is further supported by the respondents' views on the current English language syllabus as shown in Table 22. Only 50 percent of the respondents believed that the current English language course:

- a) prepares students to speak in English,
- b) helps students to meet their future workplace language needs, and
- c) motivates students to learn the language

This finding is critical to the Hotel and Catering Management lecturers because they strongly agreed that the students will encounter the use of English language in the workplace. As shown in Table 25, the students will need to use the language when they are around the hotel: entertaining guests' queries, making and answering telephone calls, and booking hotel reservations. A total of 85.7 percent of the respondents agreed that the students will need to use English language when they are at the hotel.

It is clear that Speaking skill is regarded as the most important aspect in language learning among the ESP and Hotel and Catering Management lecturers. Thus, they both agreed that by adopting more conversational activities, the students will become more confident to speak the language. A number of remarks were given by the respondents:

*“I always use role-play activities in my classroom because I think that role-play is one of the practical ways to train the students to talk and use the language and also to build up their self-confident.”*

(Respondent ESP7)

We can deduce that these lecturers are keen to practice the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in their classroom teaching and learning. For example, the lecturers at times would carry out their lessons outside classroom setting. They would carry out lesson at a setting which nearly resembles the future working place of their students which is an inn at their institution. As for the Hotel and Catering Management lecturers, their classes are mostly carried out in the real setting such as the kitchen (especially for cooking lessons).

### ***Hotel and Catering Management Students***

Based on the result from the Hotel and Catering Management students, most of the students, 76.7 percent are interested in learning English although many did not get good result in the SPM English paper. Therefore, it is important that appropriate and interesting activities should be carried out in order to enhance their interests and at the same time to help these students improve their English.

Looking at the result, more emphasis should be given on speaking skills too as it can be seen that the students prefer to use English mostly in written assignments like writing memos. Although the students mentioned that they usually use English for their presentations, this is because it is a must for them to use English when doing presentations during an English subject. Not many of the students (about 40 percent only) were speaking English with their family members and friends at home. They seemed not being exposed much to the English language as they were more comfortable speaking it with their lecturers and friends at the polytechnic

36.7 percent of the students believed that the current module has not given them enough motivation to use English especially for spoken English.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This analysis will also be able to give some insight on how effective TBLT is when it is conducted in a more real-life setting, outside of the classroom. Therefore, by employing ESP and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as an innovation, it is hoped that it would be able to improve students' attitude towards the learning of English.

### **Bibliography**

Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. Mahwah, N.J., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Brindley (1989). The role of needs analysis in adult ESL program design. In R.K. Johnson. (Ed) *The Second Language Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, R. (2000). Task-based research and language pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research* 4(3), 193-220.

Ferris, D. (1998). Students' Views of Academic Aural/Oral Skills: A Comparative Needs Analysis. *TESOL Quarterly* 32(2), 289-318.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987). *English for specific purposes*. New York: CUP.

Jorge, C. M. H., Jorge, M. d. C. A., Gutiérrez, E. R., García, E G., and Diaz, M. B. (2003). Use of the ICTs and the Perception of E-learning among University Students: a Differential Perspective according to Gender and Degree Year Group. *Interactive Educational Multimedia*, 7, 13-28. Retrieved from <http://www.ub.es/multimedia/iem>.

Pandian, A. & Ramiah, R. (2003). Mathematics and Science in English: Teacher Voices. Paper presented at ELTC ETeMS Conference: Managing Curricular Change, Kuala Lumpur, [published conference proceeding]

Pica, T. (2005). Classroom learning, teaching and research: A task-based perspective. *The Modern Language Journal* 89(3), 339-352.

Reilly, T. (1988). ESL through Content Area Instruction. *Eric Digest*. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED296572.pdf>.

Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP Today: A Practitioner's Guide*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall

Skehan, P. (1996). A framework for the implementation of task-based instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 17(1), 38-62.

Webster, L. and D. Murphy (2008). Making sense of research: What's good, what's not and how to tell the difference Enhancing Learning through Technology. *Research on Emerging Technologies and Pedagogies*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd.

Willis, D. and J. Willis (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press