AN ESP APPROACH IN TEACHING TRAINEES AT TVET ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Hardev Singh Sokhal Jaswant Singh
National Youth Skills Institute of Peretak (IKBN)
Email: dev86_hritik@yahoo.com

Abstract. The main concern of this research is to enhance and investigate the competence of TVET trainees in English oral communication through ESP approach. This study focuses on speaking skills. In order to enhance trainees' oral communication skills, the researcher will teach ESP for food and beverage TVET trainees in IKBN in a view of the need to have a good command of the English Language in the workplace. The study will be carried out in Level Three, Food and Beverage class which consists of 20 trainees, 1 technical F&B course trainer, 1 Head of Industry Relation Officer, and the researcher himself as an English Language teacher will participate in this study. Data will be analyzed and interpreted in simple tables of overall study. The researcher will gather data from a number of sources utilizing multiple methods. The sources of the data will be the trainees, trainers and industry relation. The methods for gathering data will be observations, interview and documentation. The purpose of the study is to prepare TVET trainees based on industry needs through English for Specific Purposes Course (ESP) in the National Youth Skills Institute of Peretak. The researcher sought to implement the ESP course for food and beverage trainees to check whether by undergoing this course, trainees will not be fearful, shy and afraid of communicating in English. The study focused on the trainees' participation in ESP course so as to have the trainees speak fluently based on the industry needs and without fear of making errors and also to minimize mistakes while conversing. The findings of this study will reveal whether the ESP course is effective for IKBN Food and Beverage trainees which will enhance trainees' oral communication skills based on industry needs.

Key words: TVET trainees, Oral Communication Skills, ESP approach

INTRODUCTION

Several occupations in Malaysia, English oral communication is very important. According to Thirumalai (2002), English is a global language which is important in the usage of business language. He also mentioned that *Food and Beverage* is one of the most important industries that prefer English to be as the main language at the workplace. In order to get a job, many trainees are unaware of the importance of English oral communication. As a result, to meet the industries' need, *English for Specific Purposes (ESP)* course can be designed to meet the needs of the trainees (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). ESP arose as a term in the 1960's as it became increasingly aware that *General English (GE)* courses frequently did not meet trainees or employers needs.

English, the language of worldwide communication and commercial exchange, is considered as one of the most useful subjects in "Technical Education and Vocational Training" (TVET) which will enhance the trainees' communication competence. Attempts have been made to devise the most efficient and effective ways of learning English. A successful of second language is not only based on the duration spent on learning, the number of certificate obtained, the amount of courses or exams undergone, but it's by mastering the language itself, which will be able to meet the industries needs.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF ESP

According to Bolton (2008), "English is now as an Asian language". He concerns about proficiency is important in ESP because the language used must effectively and efficiently receive and convey messages for work purposes. According to Dudley-Evans (1998), ESP should be seen as an approach to teaching, or describes as an attitude of mind. Based on Gatehouse (2001) revised definition, he has come up with three absolute and five variables characteristics. ESP absolute characteristics are as the following;

i)   Planned to meet the learners special needs;
ii)   Correlates in contents and topics to particular systems, occupations and activities;
iii)   Focuses on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse, and genres suitable to these activities.

However, the variables characteristics are as the following;

i)   ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
ii)   ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
iii)   ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation.
iv)   Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

ESP focuses attention on the needs of the trainees, needs that may be specified in terms of "the precise area of language required, skills needed, and the range of functions to which language is to be put," (Mackay and Mountford, 1978). Both of them said, "It is concerned with teaching English as a tool, not as an end in itself". Its significance lies in its attempt to achieve the required level of linguistic and communicative competence in the minimal amount of time (Harding, 2007).

According to Robinson (2008), the birth of Communicative Approach (CA) in the 1960s provided an opportunity for the emergence of ESP. She said that, the communication approach essentially concerns with the trainees purposes in the use of language in socio-cultural situations. This leads to the use of authentic materials in the ESP approach. Robinson mentioned General English (GE) has no link between communicative approach and ESP. In addition, Starfield (2013) said learning GE at TVET is not suitable. CA and ESP are seen to have much in common. The concept of needs analysis which was central in ESP was also seen as a central tool in CA. One main problem is the widespread opinion that there is no solid theoretical basis to support the teaching ESP.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a branch of applied linguistics that focuses on relating the teaching and learning process to learners' needs. Widdowson (1981), a linguist and an early pioneer of the approach, describes the general concept of ESP by stating that "if a group of learners' need for a language can be accurately specified, then this specification can be used to determine the content of a language program that will meet these needs." The difference between ESP and GE is not a matter of the "existence" of a need; it is rather to the "awareness" of a need. A child at a school might have a simple need to pass an exam. However, what influences the content of a language course is the awareness of a need (Starfield, 2013).

Hutchinson & Waters (1992) argue that if learners, sponsors, and teachers know why learners need English, that awareness will have an influence on what will be accepted as reasonable content in the language course and what potential can be exploited. They said ESP approach uses the needs analysis framework as the main tool to define learners' needs in a specific field because the awareness is more recognizable in a specific target situation

representing a "real-life-situation". The ESP approach represents a shift in focus from a Chomskyan influenced register analysis to needs analysis (Paltridge, 2013).

Hutchinson & Waters (1992) said previously language needs had been based on formal linguistics categories focused theoretically on creating a register to develop a special language for a certain group of learners. This method is called register analysis and is based on the principle that different groups of learners require different lexical and grammatical rules to learn English. For example English for engineers requires a special register that includes the most common grammatical and lexical features used in their field.

Hymes' (1972) also argue that formulation of communicative competence had a major impact on linguistic theory, leading theories to develop in a new direction. Hymes (1972) criticized Chomsky's restricted view concerning the notion of competence and performance. Chomsky had introduced the concept of competence (e.g. speakers' grammatical knowledge of their language) and performance (e.g. the actual production of language as an imperfect image of competence) to propose the existence of innate properties of language which he considered to be the central force guiding language acquisition.

Though Hymes adopts Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance, he points out that Chomsky's notion of competence is too restrictive and does not take into account underlying rules of performance such as Chomsky's concept of competence does not deal with the interpersonal aspect of language in relation to the social context. Thus, Hymes proposed that the definition of competence has to be revised to include four categories; knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (grammatical competence), knowledge of rules of speaking (knowing how to begin and end a conversation, knowing what topic to talk about in different types of speech events, and knowing which address forms may be used in different situations), knowing how to use different forms of speech act (request, apology and invitation), and knowing how to use language appropriately (Hymes 1972; Savignon, 1997). Hymes proposed the term "communicative competence" for this concept to account for the social dimension of language acquisition.

Therefore, communicative competence represents grammatical competence as well as sociolinguistic competence. This new direction in linguistic theory influenced the SLA field to adopt a communicative approach in language teaching (Brown, 1991). The shift in focus in second language acquisition theory from language structure to language use led advocates of the communicative approach to point out that register analysis leads learners to memorize certain vocabulary and grammatical forms and neglects the communicative use of language. This concern about the communicative properties of language use shifted the way that researchers viewed learners' needs. From this new standpoint, language teaching is viewed as a process of analyzing the communicative needs of learners in order to determine what the learners need to do with the language (Savignon, 1997).

As a result of this new trend, needs analysis emerged in the field of ESP as the main research methodology to provide a detailed analysis of language situations in language use. Instead of looking at linguistic structures and lexicons as the source to design ESP courses, as is the case in register analysis, needs analysis aims to design ESP courses based on detailed empirical analysis of language situations in actual language use. In needs analysis, the goal of language teaching is seen through the communicative competence that can best serve the needs of the learner. In this regard, needs analysis has an association with the notional-functional approach where activities are aimed at achieving two goals (Starfield. 2013).

First, the meanings and concepts the learner needs in order to communicate (e.g. time, quantity, duration, location) and the language needed to express them. These concepts and meanings are called notions. Second, the language needed to express different functions or speech acts (e.g. requesting, suggesting, promising, describing) in language situations (Richards, Platt, and Weber, 1985, p. 196). However, the profile of needs analysis serves a

targeted group of learners while the notional-functional approach serves a wider group of learners sharing overlapping categories of needs.

Munby (1978) supported that the selection of instructional materials in needs analysis is based on a systematic analysis of specific learners' needs for the target language by analyzing as the following; reasons for learning, place and time of anticipated target use, others with whom the user will interact, content areas (activities involved), skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, etc) level and proficiency required.

Based on Munby, it is the first step in viewing language learning through a broader concept of the learning process. When the curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learners' motivation and success are enhanced. Therefore, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is promoted (Weddle and Van Duzer, 1997). Needs analysis as a framework provides an empirical basis for course design that sets up a suitable environment to promote SLA. Needs analysis relates communicative competence development to the materials and activities used in the classroom. Hall (2001) indicates that the first step in designing instruction for the communicative approach to language teaching is to conduct a needs analysis.

Thus, Munby stated needs analysis aims at identifying the particular communicative activities that a particular group of learners is expected to participate in as users of the target language. Providing this kind of communicative activity will help to promote learners' communicative competence. Robinson (1991) indicates that by taking into account the target needs and the present needs of competence, a model of needs analysis is built on the concept of communicative competence. West (1994) argues and finally supported that a model of needs analysis would be a study of interlanguage, error analysis, and diagnostic testing. The point to make in this regard is that needs analysis can be looked at from an SLA prospective as a diagnostic tool of the interlanguage development of the target group of learners by linking their English language proficiency with the communicative function of language in the target situation.

When defining the goals of SLA, Ellis (1997) indicates that one of the goals of SLA is to improve language teaching. The area of language use in SLA provides the theoretical basis for the ESP process (Nunan, 1988). In conclusion, the impact in enhancing the communicative competence among trainees, the need analysis must focus from the language system to language use. This shift in focus paved the way for needs analysis to emerge as a main source for providing empirical data to design activities for F&B trainees based on their language use. Based on the argument between West, Hutchinson & Waters, and Hymes which also relates to the problem of the study have supported by Munby, Hall, Starfield, Bolton, Robinson and Gatehouse. They said the target needs of the trainees should be focus on.

ESP IN MALAYSIA TVET

Many trainees who come from Malaysian schools and institutes are more familiar with a teacher dependent approach (Yong, 2010) which relies on the teacher doing most of the work. According to St. John (1998), he argued that it should be noted that the teacher dependence of ESP is not environmental but purely ontological in nature, because it derives from the general conceptualization of specific purpose language instruction as a complex process, which starts with preparation for planning and designing a course to be taught and ends with evaluation of the course taught, involving the teacher as the principal actor in all its stages. Vhanabatte (2011) also argues that TVET trainees need to be able to speak English in order to grasp the basic language skill through ESP course.

English is not the main language for most Malaysians. Perhaps, most of the Malaysians are more comfortable with their own mother tongue. Therefore the process of learning a second language such as English is the cause of much anxiety. Among all the second language (L2) skills acquisition, it was shown that 88% felt anxious about learning all the L2 skills, where speaking was rated as the highest level in oral communication skills among all language exhibited by first year College trainees in Malaysia (Hamzah, 2007). Kayi (2006) argued that speaking skills are important for language learning process to occur. In addition, Garner (1985) argued that learning a language provides one of the biggest anxieties and thus becomes a definitive benchmark in language acquisition.

According to Zubaidah (2005), she argues that TVET trainees with low English proficiency also can learn ESP in order to enhance their oral communication skills. Ali and Kadir (2005) also argue that lack of confidence, fear and shy to communicate in English will lead poor scores in English subjects. Thus, she suggested by learning ESP can meet workplace needs. In addition, the teacher must also be creative in designing the syllabus which can meet the industry needs. As in most nations the English Language program in Malaysian schools are still necessarily general in nature where English is included as a subject in the national education curriculum. It was in the vocational and technical schools as well as in the polytechnics and universities too. (Ali, Kadir, & Zubaidah 2005).

METHODOLOGY

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is to enhance trainees' oral communication skills through ESP course in a view of the need to have a good command of the English Language in the workplace. Since this study is focused on the two objectives which are to find out and investigate the competence of TVET trainees in English oral communication skills through ESP approach. However, due to constraints in terms of time, distance and accessibility, this study will only obtained feedback from the Head of Industry Relations and F&B trainer who are academically involved with these F&B trainees.

A research design is utilized to structure the research in order to indicate all the major elements of the research which have been designed to work together. It is the blueprint collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The researcher is using an action research design in this study. Action research is a reflective and systematic process conducted to discover a plan for innovation or intervention or for problem-solving situations. In other word, action research generally uses to find out their own classroom practices to better understand and improve such practices; it is a process that helps to get a true picture of teaching.

In this study the data will be collected in order to answer the research questions concerning the current status of subjects in the study. Therefore, the researcher will employ qualitative approach in this study. The researcher chooses this study to be conducted in IKBN Peretak because the researcher himself is teaching in this institute and he knows better the strength and weaknesses of the trainees. Moreover the researcher chooses researcher's institute as a sample to guide other IKBN's under the supervision of Ministry of Youth and Sports. The qualitative methodology is the most appropriate approach for this research study to enhance and investigate the competence of TVET trainees in English oral communication skills through ESP approach. It is important to have a clear idea of which methodology is going to be used when making an initial decision to undertake research. This step will help the researcher to design the research in a specific way so that the requisite data can be gathered and analysed in order to meet its purpose (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Leedy and Ormrod (2013) support that research "methodology directs the whole research endeavour which controls the study, dictates how the data are acquired, arranges them in logical

relationships, sets up an approach for refining and synthesising them, suggests a manner in which the meaning that lie below the surface of the data become manifest, and finally yields one or more conclusion that lead to an expansion of knowledge".

This qualitative research design will allow the researcher to conduct interview for F&B trainees and trainer from the F&B. Besides that, observation and documentation will help in adding context to the researchers' study. Converging three qualitative methods (interviews, observation and documentation) will allow for data triangulation.
Triangulation is the use of more than one data collection method. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question". Instead of relying on one method of the data, the researcher will sought compatibilities across three qualitative methods. This allowed for a higher validity of the data.

Jick (1979) explains, "Triangulation may be used not only to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives but also to enrich our understanding by allowing for new or deeper dimensions to emerge". Research methods each reveal the world in a new way. Therefore, using three different methods assured the validity and depth of this study (Ormrod, 2013). To close this section the researcher provides the following figure to summarise the present research design.
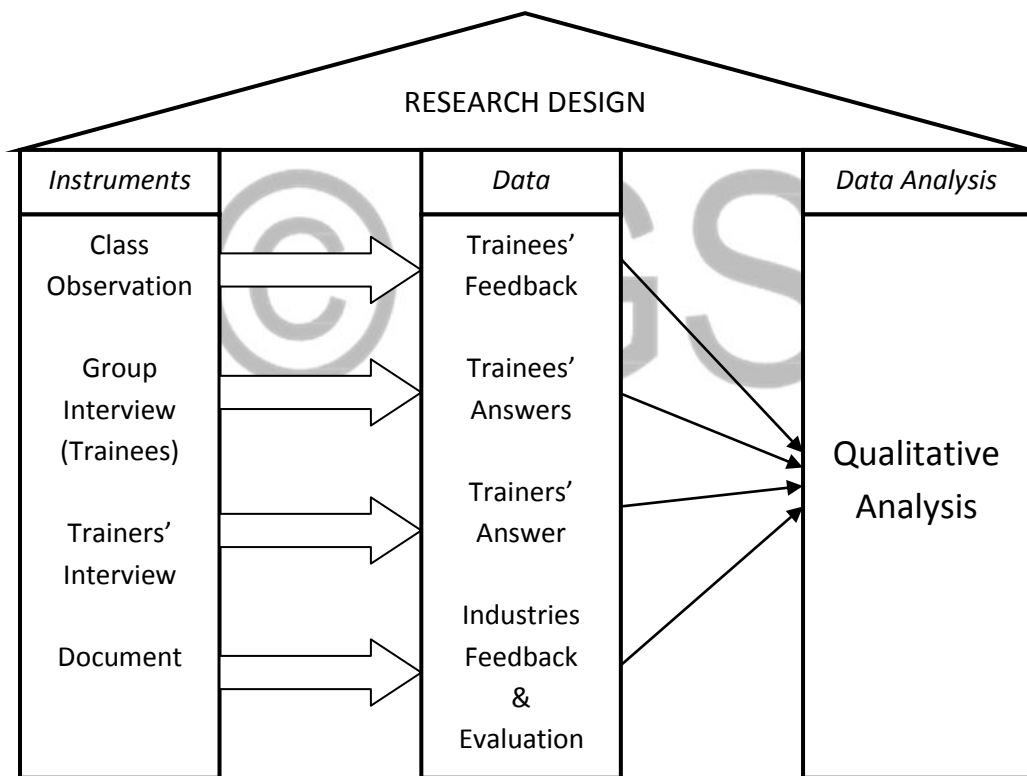
FINDINGS

This chapter presents on the main findings and cites evidence from the data to support the results. Participants of the study were assigned for observation as 'Tc' (Teacher) and 'Tr' (Trainee). Hence, for interview session participants mentioned as 'P1', 'P2', 'P3', 'P4', 'Ps' (Participants), 'Tc' (Teacher), 'R' (Researcher) and 'T' (Trainer). These results answered the following research questions:

1) How ESP approach can help TVET trainees to enhance their competency in oral communication skills in English?
2) How competence is TVET trainees in learning English oral communication through ESP approach?

The results of the analysis are elaborated in the same sequence as the presentation of the research questions along with other relevant information pertaining to the participants and the research. The researcher had used the following instruments to collect the data: semi-structured interviews, observations and documents. The researcher has conducted an ESP course for F&B trainees for a month before their industrial training. Throughout the course, the researcher has video recorded and transcribed the data analysis consists of Observation Notes and Form (Appendix G & H). Moreover the researcher has also carried out semi-structured interviews after teaching ESP course. The researcher has conducted two interview sessions separately; i) group interview consists of four participants, ii) interview for the F&B trainer.

Research Question(s)	Theme(s)	Occurrences in Data Corpus
Research Question 1: How ESP approach can help TVET trainees to enhance their competency in oral communication skills in English?	1. Getting to be familiar with F&B career prospect and learn variety of vocabularies	4
	2. English communication with video and demonstrating in order to correct the mistakes	4
	3. Learning how to communicate effectively in a topic of "Meet, Greet, Seat, Take Orders and Job Interview"	3
	4. Enjoying learning ESP course at Restaurant and presentation based on authentic situation	10
Research Question 2: How competence is TVET trainees in learning English oral communication through ESP approach?	1. Lack of confidence and shyness	2
	2. Active participation, well prepared and motivated to learn	6
	3. Usage of audio visual, commenting, praising, and rewarding enhances oral communication skills	13
	4. Able to learn, pronounce, and understand range of vocabularies	2

Overall findings of data analysis based on an observation

Research Question(s)	Theme(s)	Occurrences in Data Corpus
Research Question 1: How ESP approach can help TVET trainees to enhance their competency in oral communication skills in English?	1. Pronunciation, Comprehension, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Fluency aspects in speaking skills improves	19
	2. ESP is preferable and should be implemented	15
Research Question 2: How competence is TVET trainees in learning English oral communication through ESP approach?	1. No more feeling nervous and shy to present	5
	2. Able to understand better and speak well	5
	3. Confident to speak and love English course	6

Overall findings of data analysis based on *Group Interview – Trainees*

Research Question(s)	Theme(s)	Occurrences in Data Corpus
Research Question 1: How ESP approach can help TVET trainees to enhance their competency in oral communication skills in English?	1. Improvement in oral communication skills and the usage of English	2
	2. Able to lessen the nervousness and have the confidence to speak	1
	3. Able to make quick decision	1
	4. ESP meets Industries needs	1
Research Question 2: How competence is TVET trainees in learning English oral communication through ESP approach?	1. Improvement in pronunciation	1
	2. ESP course related to industry and meet the industry needs	1

Overall findings of data analysis based on *Interview – Trainer*

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

How ESP approach can help TVET trainees to enhance their competency in oral communication skills in English?

ESP approach is beneficial for F&B trainees at IKBN in order to enhance their competency in English oral communication skills. Based on the overall summary presented in Table 5.2 using thematic analysis for observation and interviews; the researcher found out that, there were many positive results that trainees can obtain by learning ESP.

From the observation analysis, there were five important aspects that the trainees have gained after learning the ESP. Firstly; they were familiar with their career prospect which needed English as a main language in the Hospitality industries. Secondly, learning communication through videos has also helped them to enhance their speaking skills. Thirdly, they have learnt a wide range of vocabulary based on their field which needs to be used at their workplace. Fourthly, learning ESP through demonstrating has also helped the trainees to correct their mistakes immediately as they have learnt it in the topic known as "Meet, Greet, Seat, Take Orders and preparation for job interview." Fifthly, throughout the observation, ESP course has also helped the trainees in their oral communication skills. Moreover, they enjoyed more learning the course at restaurant as it portrays the real working world. The presentations were all in authentic situation which makes them excited to learn.

Based on the group interview analysis, most of the trainees have improved and able to build up their pronunciation, comprehension, grammar, vocabulary and fluency. These aspects were very important in speaking skills as it helps the trainees to enhance their oral communication skills. Majority of the trainees prefers ESP to be taught in ordinary classroom session. They commented that the current syllabus is too general and not specific as how ESP was. All the participants suggested that ESP course should be implemented at IKBN as it really helps them to enhance their oral communication skills.

Trainers' also gave positive feedback on her trainee's performance after learning the ESP course especially in their communication skills compared to before learning ESP. As before this, her trainees couldn't present in front and unable to utter any words in English. After the ESP course, her trainees' nervousness was lessen and more confident to speak in front of the class during presentation. She agrees that ESP is the best course to be taught at IKBN as it meets the industry's' need and will enable the trainees to communicate well at their workplace. Moreover, trainees were also able to make a quick decision after learning problem solving technique during their ESP course, perhaps they are now well trained with regular role plays conducted during the course.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

How competence is TVET trainees in learning English oral communication through ESP approach?

TVET trainees were more competent in learning English oral communication skills after learning the ESP approach. This can be proven by looking into the seven evidences based on observation, six evidences from group interview and two evidences from trainers' interview.

Based on the observation analysis, the researcher found that trainees are lacking of confidence and shy to present or speak in English. However, after introducing the career prospect and ESP objectives on the first day of the class, majority of them tend to be actively participated in all the activities. Trainees were motivated to learn and involve actively in the presentation which was conducted at the restaurant. All of them were well prepared before the presentation. They also have improved their communication skills after been commented, praised, and rewarded by the researcher after each presentation. Besides that, they also have learnt a range of vocabularies on F&B terminology and understand them well such as where and what to use. Thus, they can also pronounce the vocabularies accurately. Usage of audio visual also enhances trainees' oral communication skills effectively. Duarte (2008) mentioned that trainees can pay more attention and love to learn with audio visuals in improving their skills.

In addition, based on the group interview analysis, the researcher has found that, after learning the ESP course, trainees were not shy to present in front of the class, they were able

to speak fluently, less nervousness and confident to speak during the presentation or even in the group discussion. Besides, the trainees were able to understand better on their group mates' feedback and able to respond spontaneously. Whereby, before this there are some of them just mildly likes the subject, however after learning the ESP course, all of them fall in love with English language because it really helps them to enhance their oral communication skills.

Based on the trainer's interview, trainees have improvised in their pronunciation after learning a wide range of vocabularies and all of them feel very happy because, they have learnt something and able to pronounce the words correctly as well as reach the ESP's learning objectives. Majority of them mentioned that ESP course is better than GE which only learns general English. They really hoping that ESP course will be taught again on the next semester as it meet the industry's and learner's needs.

CONCLUSION

The importance of oral communication skills can never be underestimated. Communication is a key part of trainees' learning and teaching in TVET world. Communication skills that trainees learn now can benefit them in the future especially when they communicate with their customers, managers and peers. Learning through ESP course can help learners to become better communicators as it meets the industries need (Gamble & Gamble 2010).

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