

To cite this article: Raja Parsait FMT Butar Butar and Rudy Haposan Siahaan (2023). The Importance Of Skills Of English Language In Improving The Human Capital Of Non-English Teachers And Lecturers In Indonesia. International Journal of Education, Business and Economics Research (IJEBER) 3 (1): 153-161

THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN IMPROVING THE HUMAN CAPITAL OF NON-ENGLISH TEACHERS AND LECTURERS IN INDONESIA

Raja Parsait FMT Butar Butar and Rudy Haposan Siahaan

¹Universitas Pelita Harapan, Medan – Indonesia

²Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan – Indonesia

ABSTRACT

English, as a language, has reached a global scope and become the only language with the most countries as its users. In the world of education and knowledge learning, English has been the only language used to share much beneficial information from many important places in the world. It is important to finally realize that English is a powerful tool for non-English teachers in Indonesia to improve their human capital. This study aims to elaborate, share and emphasize that English language is a type of human capital that is essential for teachers and lecturers in Indonesia, who do not even teach English. This study leans on the methodology of literature review where the process of summarizing, synthesizing and/or critiquing the literature are combined, identifying the developments in the field of education, with respect to the use of English by teachers and lecturers. It is true that skills of English language are of high importance for non-English teachers and lecturers in Indonesia because such skills can help improve their human capital for their vital role in the world of education. Andragogy, high confidence, good motivation, and reduction of interference can help teachers and lecturers achieve the goal.

KEYWORDS: Skills of English, human capital, non-English teachers and lecturers.

© The Authors 2023
Published Online: Feb 2023

Published by International Journal of Education, Business and Economics Research (IJEBER) (<https://ijeber.com/>) This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

INTRODUCTION

English, as a language, has reached a global scope and become the only language with the most countries as its users. Dunbar (1996) stated that English has spread around the globe to become the lingua franca of trade, government and science, as well as national language of countries on every continent. It is the largest language in the world if both native and non-native speakers are put together. English has been used as a medium of communication in many fields of job and types of knowledge. People, in this modern world, are unlikely to avoid English as a language that they have to master when they long for further endeavors. Any professions are likely to need English for their way of learning, exploring, and thriving further. In the world of education and knowledge learning,

English has been the only language used to share much beneficial information from many important places in the world; therefore, it is used to understand such beneficial information for the sake of users' needs. According to a study by Huttner-Koros and Perera (2016), there are pervasive ideas confirming that science is best communicated in English. For reasons of career success and their belief that the best scientific research is published in English, scientists from non-English speaking backgrounds feel compelled to communicate academically in English. As the profession that uses and explores very much information, teachers and lecturers need English as the medium for them to use and explore such needed information.

There comes the assumption that teachers and lecturers who teach and lecture English do know how to use English properly and have ample skills of it because they have sufficient previous education of English. This assumption confirms the idea that English teachers and lecturers have enough amount of human capital in relation to the language itself. A study on the competence of teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) confirmed that the teachers felt that they were competent enough in teaching English, would apply the constructivist approach to language teaching, and developed their professionalism by keeping up with the changes and innovations while teaching (Yüksel, 2014). Given such matter, teachers and lecturers who are not English teachers and lecturers could possess the possibility of not being able to use English properly in their professional activities, except for the native users. Indonesia has non-English teachers who are mostly lacking in English skills. It is important to finally realize that English is a powerful tool for non-English teachers in Indonesia to improve their human capital as this can increase the possibility for gathering, learning and mastering much more information and knowledge. This study aims to elaborate, share and emphasize that English language is a type of human capital that is essential for teachers and lecturers in Indonesia, who do not even teach English.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study leans on the methodology of literature review where the process of summarizing, synthesizing and/or critiquing the literature is combined. Literature study was conducted in order to identify the developments in the field of education, with respect to the use of English by teachers and lecturers. The literature reviewed include scholarly journals about how important English is to teachers and lecturers who do and do not teach English, including all teachers and lecturers in general field of education, especially in Indonesia. At the same time this study is trying to point out the gap in literature concerning skills of English used by non-English teachers and lecturers, in relation to their human capital. Some related studies have actually been done, yet this study is trying to highlight the importance of the variables discussed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

➤ Skills of English Language as a Global Importance

As the most widely-used language in the world based on the number of countries, English has become a global importance in this modern world. Based on the number of people using a language, Mandarin is on top. However, it is limited to a particular part of the world. Many sources of information, such as the internet, books and movies, apply English as their main language. People of any nations travel as they wish to any nations or countries they want to travel to, and they usually use English to connect to and understand each other. People from many fields of skills and with

many types of intentions and businesses use English for their further endeavors. For scholars and other teaching-related professions, English is necessary for finding references, scouring for information, and broadening horizons. Students for and from higher studies must know English because, again, sources of knowledge are likely written only in English. As English is a lingua franca, most of the native and non-native speakers of English are using English as their mode of communication in their business matters or business organizations. English has become the fastest increasing language in this modern world and it occupies the status of a commercial language by connecting the East and the West and the North and the South (Rao, 2019). Most important of all, English is way ahead of all other languages as a learned language by non-native speakers, and it is the only one to be well represented in all five continents (Melitz, 2016).

Skills of English language include listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are the processes of receiving information, while speaking and writing are of producing information. All four are equal in importance. Generally, these four skills cannot be separated. Pande (2013) puts forward that language could only be understood by practicing all the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They can be learned one by one, but none of the skill is less important than the others. The more someone masters all of the four skills, the more proper English he or she will have. Some adult learners consider that speaking skill of English is the only skill that they need, compared to the other skills because they think that the ability to engage in a conversation will prove that they have good English (Madkur, 2018). Such notion is not entirely wrong, but there is more to that. As a profession of educators, teachers and lecturers need to use English at its maximum standard as they need to explore vast amount of information (by reading written materials and listen to audio sources) and deliver such information (by teaching, lecturing, or explaining something to students and writing texts and journals). Global and professional necessities push teachers and lecturers to use English properly. Generally, the more proper English someone has, the better chance he or she will have to actively participate in the globalization. Globalization is a separation of space and time, in which with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture could be shared around the world simultaneously (Giddens, 2000). Skills of English should let its users be involved and be integrated in the global interaction and communication between nations and particularly between people.

➤ **Teachers and Lecturers as Users and Disseminators of Knowledge**

Teachers and lecturers, as essential professions in society, possess high responsibility to their own designation, their teachings, their students, and the other stakeholders. Teachers and lecturers are deemed to be valid sources of knowledge. Naturally, teachers and lecturers must first ensure the validity of their own knowledge and must be able to convey such thing. Ensuring the validity takes the same activity as what the students do: learning and studying. To learn and study for its maximum effect, teachers and lecturers must be able to find and gain ample and trusted information. In this case, skills of English should help them as such. Listening and reading activities will get teachers and lecturer to gather knowledge and information from many trusted sources, while speaking and writing activities will ensure that teachers and lecturers can meet the responsibility of conveying the knowledge and information. The activities of learning a foreign language, such as English, can help lecturers in broadening their knowledge and presenting their

ideas in front of wider and bigger audiences (Madkur, 2018). Hence, it is clear that teachers' and lecturers' English-related human capital must be improved.

➤ **Human Capitals of Teachers and Lecturers in Indonesia**

According to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (The Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language), which also includes www.kbbi.web.id, teacher (or guru in Bahasa Indonesia) is someone whose job or profession is to teach, and lecturer (or dosen in Bahasa Indonesia) is a teacher for higher education. Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers defines teacher as a professional educator whose main task is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students in early ages in the scope of formal, primary, and secondary education. The same law defines lecturer as a professional educator and expert whose main task is to transform, develop, and disseminate knowledge, technology, and arts through education, research, and community service. Furthermore, Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, in Article 10 with Sub-Article 1, states that teachers' competences do not include only professional and pedagogic competences, but also personality and social competences. The same law also mentions the need of competence for lecturers. What is more emphatic is another part of the law, which is the Explanation Part. The Explanation Part of Law of Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers states the following:

“Kualitas manusia yang dibutuhkan oleh bangsa Indonesia pada masa yang akan datang adalah yang mampu menghadapi persaingan yang semakin ketat dengan bangsa lain di dunia. Kualitas manusia Indonesia tersebut dihasilkan melalui penyelenggaraan pendidikan yang bermutu. Oleh karena itu, guru dan dosen mempunyai fungsi, peran, dan kedudukan yang sangat strategis.”

In English, that means: “The quality of humans needed by the nation of Indonesia in the future is the one with humans who are capable of being in increasingly tight competitions with other nations in the world. Such quality of Indonesian humans is created by the practice of quality education. Therefore, teachers and lecturers have strategic functions, roles, and position”. The aforementioned explanation of law emphasizes the effect globalization on the necessary quality of humans of Indonesia that can be guaranteed by improvement of education and educators. Educators – meaning teachers and lecturers – must possess high awareness towards global competitions and international trends. As teachers and lecturers are more aware of the necessary competences and competitive, this proves that their human capital is increasing.

Human capital is the skills the labor force possesses and is regarded as a resource or asset (Oxford English Dictionary). Direct expenditures on education, health, and internal migration to take advantage of better job opportunities are clear examples of investment in human capital (Schultz, 1961). Teachers and lecturers, as a human capital in the world of education, can help all stakeholders gain advantages and specifically improve students' chance to be better learners and humans (Ginsburg, 2017), so it will be excellent when teacher-related organizations put effort into teachers' and lecturers' development. As an example perspective, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) education strategy documents focus substantial attention on the role played by formal education in developing the human capital of students as future workers, which is the main focus on education within human capital theory (Levinson, 2002; Woodhall,

1997). English, as a human capital for teachers and lecturers, will be very useful for them to find needed information for the sake of their own self-development and to deliver their information better, so it will be excellent when any teachers or lecturers put effort into their English language skills. As particularly for non-English teachers and lecturers, English should definitely help them improve the quality of their teaching. By possessing proper – not necessarily perfect – English skills, non-English teachers and lecturer can be equipped with proper knowledge, communication skill, and confidence. English language, as an essential competency, will have teachers and lecturers become better professionals in their field. To be a successful lecturer in English as a lingua franca setting, communicative competence is required (Bjorkman, 2010). Aziz and Akhtar (2014) emphasized that training programs should be conducted to improve lecturers' competence. Pre-service and in-service teacher training can be seen as an extension of the view of teachers as human capital (Ginsburg, 2017).

➤ **Skills of English Language for English Teachers and Lecturers in Indonesia**

Skills of English are naturally taught to English teachers and lecturers during their learning period as students and their self-study time. It is claimed that most English teachers and lecturers have exact capability to understand the skills of English, and therefore are able to use them in the context of teaching or lecturing. A study by Rinantanti (2017) found that teachers of English as a Foreign Language perceived their competence as good. English teachers and lecturers are more open and exposed to English-related materials, and this creates a good human capital for the use and dissemination of the language itself. Despite the fact that English teachers and lecturers are assumed to be academically and practically ready, there are sometimes problems. To illustrate the point, teaching English as a foreign language is a demanding task when it comes to the places where English serves limited exposure (Khan, 2011). This problem occurs in many schools in Indonesia as students lack exposure to English via their means of communication and social interactions, troubling them with learning proper English. This is, of course, a problem for the teachers, yet a challenge for them to provide enough exposure for the students.

Another problem is related to teacher quality. For example, study on English teaching in primary schools in Indonesia has shown that most of the teachers in primary schools in Indonesia are not qualified and that most of them have insufficient command of English to be able to teach effectively (Kasihani & Chodijah, 2002; Suherdi & Kurniawan, 2005). Most teachers who teach English are not prepared for the teaching they need to do. Their pedagogical knowledge may not be adequate for teaching English as they do not have an English educational background relevant for teaching school students. As a result, many schools may offer English without having the necessary teachers or facilities (Rachmajanti, 2008). This phenomenon happens to some Indonesian teachers who teach English and who have English educational background, where there is questionable competence regarding their skills of English. Yet, some other teachers and lecturers are still deemed to be competent enough.

➤ **The Need of Skills of English Language for Non-English Teachers and Lecturers in Indonesia**

Indonesia experiences the lack of English-learning and English-understanding capability towards non-English teachers and lecturers. Specifically, in term of speaking English, some lecturers

encounter many obstacles such as lack of vocabularies, the interference of Indonesian language, no opportunity to practice English, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes (Madkur, 2018).

In a study in Denmark, it was found that the students' perceptions of the lecturers' English were found to be influenced by their perceptions of the lecturers' general lecturing competence. More importantly, it is found that the reverse was true as well, that the students' ratings of the lecturers' general lecturing competence were influenced by their perceptions of the lecturers' English skills. This has potential consequences both for the individual lecturers and for the academic institutions. Lecturers whose English skills are perceived as problematic by their students risk being downgraded on their general lecturing competence, i.e. they are perceived as less competent teachers, which may have serious consequences, for example for lecturers seeking tenure. Because of the mutual effect the two factors can have on each other, it may be difficult for both the lecturers and for the institution to determine whether any problems noted by students with either language skills or general lecturing competence can really be attributed entirely to one of these competences only. Crucially, the results indicate that universities should be aware that the English skills of their teaching staff will be reflected not just in the students' perceptions of language skills but also in their perceptions of the lecturers' overall lecturing competence, which may have a negative impact on the impression the students have of the academic level of the institution as a whole (Jensen, 2013).

Another problem arising is about how difficult it can be for lecturers to be 'subjected to student criticisms' and how some defend themselves by questioning the students' ability to judge their fluency, while others describe how it has caused them to drop several points in student assessments as compared with evaluations on the basis of classes conducted in their first language (Tange, 2010). Students who are modern-minded and have been aware of the need and effects of globalization tend to criticize the inability or low ability of their teachers or lecturers of using English, and some believe that when a lecturer's English is not good according to their standards, the whole quality of the lecturer's teaching and the overall educational dimensions of the course are insufficient and bad. Furthermore, despite students' perception of English capability of their teachers or lecturers, research in English as a lingua franca has shown that native speaker standards are not always relevant in all contexts (Jensen, 2013). Therefore, there is acceptance where teachers' or lecturers' English skills do not have to be perfect as long as they are proper or sufficient.

A phenomenon put forward in a study at an institution called Institute Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Manado, Indonesia, confirms the situation where some non-English lecturers happened to be able to teach English fluently, interactively and communicatively, and finally gained positive response from the students (Nagauleng, 2021). Regardless of the lecturers' educational background, this phenomenon proves that it is possible for non-English teachers and lecturers to possess enough skills of English. Multilingual lecturers (lecturers who have proper ability to use some languages even though they do not teach English) have high competence in personal and social matter, while the lack of pedagogical and professional competence has been reinforced by their good intercultural and emotional competence (Bin Tahir, 2016). The main factors that influence the multilingual lecturers' competence do not just include educational background, but also social interactions and

cross-cultural communication. Non-English teachers and lecturers always have the opportunity to be competent in using English as long as they get enough exposure through social connections and cross-cultural matters. In addition, most of students show positive perception towards multilingual lecturers' competence.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It is true that skills of English language are of high importance for non-English teachers and lecturers in Indonesia because such skills can help improve their human capital for their vital role in the world of education. Global and professional demands demand teachers and lecturers to have good skills of English, and this is not limited only to teachers and lecturers who teach English. As users and disseminators of knowledge and information, teachers and lecturers must ensure that their human capital includes skills of English. Furthermore, students themselves show positive response towards non-English teachers or lecturers who show good skills of English. This can create positive image of educators and schools and encourage the students to also have good skills of English.

As for teachers and lecturers who need to study English more, andragogy can take place. The term andragogy came when the adult education started to organize systematically during 1920s (Grasso, 2017). At that time, the teachers of adults began finding the pedagogical model difficult to implement in teaching the adults. Andragogy can help find suitable curriculum that is focused on the adult learner needs to be relevant, applicable, and have a real-life focus (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p.147). It should also be problem-based so that the adult learners can be pushed to be a more self-directed learner. In this sense, teachers and learners who are willing to improve their English can focus on vocabulary, interests, and teaching materials in their own field, so their English is based on specific purposes. In the case that someone wants to focus on only the speaking skill, he/she still necessitates devotion to precise details of language. The person needs to invent the correct words and the accurate grammar to convey meaning precisely and also need to establish the discourse so that a listener will understand.

Self-confidence is one principle that teachers and lecturers must possess to encourage them to better their skills of English (Brown, 2001). That is one of the keys to become successful in language learning. The motivation of adults is internal which involves increased self-esteem and self-actualization. It is also believed that when the adults are recognized and appreciated for their individual contributions then they are best motivated to succeed in their learning goals (Knowles et al., 2005). In the context of this study, the motivation, slowly but regularly, drives the lecturers to keep increasing their skills in using English. In addition, Indonesian teachers and lecturers are recommended to minimize interference from the first language while learning English. Theorists of interference are certain of that acquisition of the first language usually disturbs performance in a subsequent language learned (Patrick, et al, 2013). To minimize this problem, learners can increase the frequency of using English.

REFERENCE

Aziz, F., & Akhtar, M. M. S. (2014). Impact of training on teachers competencies at higher education level in Pakistan. *Researchers World*, 5(1).

Bin Tahir, Saidna & Rinantanti, Yulini. (2016). Multilingual Lecturers' Competence in English Teaching at the University of Iqra Buru, Indonesia. *Asian EFL Journal*. 5. 79-92.

Björkman, Beyza. 2010. So you think you can ELF: English as a Lingua Franca as the Medium of Instruction. *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication Studies* 45. 77-96.

Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by principle. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). NY: Longman.

Dunbar, R. (1996). *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.: Harvard University Press.

Giddens, A. (2000). *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*. New York: Routledge.

Ginsburg, Mark. (2017). Teachers as Human Capital or Human Beings? USAID's Perspective on Teachers. *Current Issues in Comparative Education (CICE)* Volume 20, Issue 1, p. 6-30. Fall 2017

Grasso, G. M. (2017). Language Anxiety: A study on communication apprehension and willingness to communicate in the older adult EFL learners' context. (B.S.thesis). Università Ca'Foscari Venezia.

Huttner-Koros, A. and Perera, S. (2016). 'Communicating science in English: a preliminary exploration into the professional self-perceptions of Australian scientists from language backgrounds other than English'. *JCOM* 15 (06), A03.

Jensen, Christian et al. 2013. Students' attitudes to lecturers' English in English-medium higher education in Denmark. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13(1): 87-112.

Kasihani, E. S. S., & Chodijah, I. (2002). The teaching of English in primary schools: The policy, implementation and future directions. Paper presented at the TEFLIN Conference, Surabaya.

Khan, I. A. (2011). Challenges of teaching/learning English and management. *Global Journal of Human Social Science* Vol. 11, 68-79.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2005). *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development* (6th ed). Amsterdam; Boston: Elsevier.

Levinson, D. (2002). Human Capital Theory. In D. Levinson, P. Cookson, & A. Sadovnik (Eds.), *Education and sociology: An encyclopedia* (pp. 377-379). New York: Routledge Falmer.

Madkur, A. (2018). The non-English major lecturers speak English: The barriers encountered by adult learners. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 8(1), 39-56 (doi: 10.23971/jefl.v8i1.584)

Melitz, J. (2016). English as a Global Language. In: Ginsburgh, V., Weber, S. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-32505-1_21.

Nagauleng, A. M., Asrifan, A., Waris, A. M. (2021). Perceptions with Non-English Educational Background Competence in English Teaching. *Al- Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, August 2021, Volume 13 (2), Pages 1259-1268 DOI:10.35445/alishlah.v13i2.839

Pande, V. B. (2013). Problems and remedies in teaching English as a second language. *Confluence*, 416-421.

Patrick, J. M., Education, M. E. E., & Sui, M. (2013). Mother-tongue interference on English language pronunciation of senior primary school pupils in Nigeria: Implications for Pedagogy. *Language in India* 13 (8), 281–298.

Rachmajanti, S. (2008). The impact of English instruction at the elementary schools on the students' achievement of English at the lower secondary school. *TEFLIN Journal*, 19(2), 160–185.

Rao, Parupalli Srinivas. (2019). The Role of English as a Global Language. *Research Journal of English*. Vol-4, Issue-1. ISSN: 2456-2696.

Rinantanti, Y., Rahman, M. A., Atmowardoyo, H., & Bin-Tahir, S. Z. (2017). Perception of Senior High School EFL Teachers in Papua, Indonesia towards Their Own Competence. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(6), 1181–1189.

Schultz, T. (1961). Investment in Human Capital. *American Economic Review* 51 (1), 1-17.

Suherdi, D., & Kurniawan, E. (2005). Teaching-learning processes in multilingual context: A detailed of two different English classrooms in urban elementary school. Paper presented at the 53rd TEFLIN International Conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Tange, Hanne. 2010. Caught in the Tower of Babel: University Lecturers' Experiences with Internationalization. *Language and Intercultural Communication* 10/2. 137-49.

Woodhall, M. (1997). Human capital concepts. In A. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown, & A.S. Wells (Eds.), *Education, culture, economy and society* (pp. 219-223). New York: Oxford University Press.

Yüksel, H. G. (2014). Teachers of the future: Perceived teaching competences and visions of pre-service English language teachers. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 11(2), 27–39.