FIELD TRIPS AND THE STUDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE IMPACT AND THE USE OF ORAL COMMUNICATION AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract - The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of field trips and the use of oral communication skills at workplace for the engineering students. Education is not fulfilled until the theoretical ideas learned in the classroom are applied at the real workplace environment. To accelerate learning processes would be accomplished by implementing field trip in the curriculum. This paper presents experiences on applying a field trip in an undergraduate polytechnic students. Data for the study were gathered from 38 respondents from electrical and mechanical students who had completed their three oral communication modules. A set of questionnaire and face to face was carried out. The finding of this study indicates that the engineering students had impactful experience. The field trip gave awareness on the importance of oral communication skills and the gaps on the language needs at workplace. Besides that, the findings also showed that they had the ability to use the oral communication skills learned during the question and answer section without much struggle. This research concludes that due to the competitiveness and advancement of the workplace communication, there is a vital need to adequately prepare graduates with good English Oral communication skills. The contribution to new knowledge in this study included the development of advice on the impact and benefit of field trips education to undergraduates. The researchers recommended that educational trips should be included in the curriculum wherever possible.

Keywords - Field trip, English Oral communication skills, impact

I. INTRODUCTION

This research points out to explore the relationship between the field trips and the potential benefits of these visits to students' giving opinions on the use of English oral communication skills at workplace. The increasing mobility of engineering professionals around the world has placed a great impact on the employers demands of potential graduates. Due to the profound changes in the workplace, employers are increasingly expecting workers to have effective oral communication skills.In a research carried out by Gurvinder Kaur (2008), it is said that employers today are looking for graduates who are equipped with not only with specific skills and knowledge but also with the ability to communicate well. This is being supported by Zubairi (2008), who indicated that employers have continued to voice their dissatisfactions concerning the English competency of university graduates.

Field trip programs constitutes an essential part of the learning direct form the real working environment. It is the opening to the industries and delivers students with their first opportunity to real-life work situation. Through field trips, students could develop their awareness on workplace communication and build up their interpersonal skills.

Field trips are also the training ground for students to learn the traits of their upcoming occupations. When the students are exposed with communication with the problem solving tasks, and work based communication students will experience in trying to use the communication skills at targeted situation. This is what learning is all about. The process of using the language will enrich their understanding of the skills to a better level. This kind of exposure cannot be taught in the classroom. Students can utilize the filed trips to gain valuable real-world experiences that will strengthen their confidence and allowing them to gain an edge during the job search (Neuman, 2001).

As for this research, the respondents are the students who had completed all the three t English communicative modules. Thus, they are the most important source of information. The students will be able to provide important feedback on the relevance of the communicative skills taught in polytechnics and the gap with the industries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Informal learning experiences

Research indicates that informal learning environments would contribute to students' knowledge, skills, and exposure differently compared to studying in classroom. (Alawad, A. 2012). The need of exploring into many different types of teaching and learning methods is essential to prepare

students to work at industries. Informal learning experience would increase students' understanding in the use of the language learned in the classroom. Several studies discovers that institutions would increase achievements if the students are exposed to work environment. One of the methods would be field trip which can give impact on achievement gaps which involved in the use of oral communication skills (Dyke, J. F. 2006).

To understand the nature of workplace communication, it is necessary to investigate the industries needs and their practices. The communication skills exposed in institutions should matched the industries. Teaching would be meaningful if the institution have field visits and get exposed to the oral communication practices at the industries. A study by the University of Arkansas discovered that informal learning such as field trips would contribute to the development of student's communicative skills and increase their knowledge. Therefore, these trips should be implemented and maintained in institutions across the globe (Greene et al.,2013).

B. Field trip

In relation to this research, the term field trip refers to visiting industries and it can include work exposure and the use of oral communication skills. Field trip is an effort to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes through learning experiences to achieve effective performance (Adhikari U, Yadav RK and Shrestha RN (2012). To find out the mismatch of skills taught in classroom, field trip would be a good exposure. These trip, likewise, identify the need to establish close contacts with employers as a way of monitoring the world of work for which they are preparing their graduates (Isarji H.S., Ainol, Mohamad & Tunku Badaruah, 2011). Frequently, these exchanges outcome would benefit in collecting data to evaluate and modify the teaching of oral communication skills in classroom. As the classroom teaching was proved in preparing the undergraduate students into the working life, most of the higher education institutions in this country nowadays ought to incorporate industries to carryout field trips. The field trip gives exposure to enhance the existing curriculum studied in classroom and provides real world experience. This is because both classroom teaching and field trips are important. This is supported by Patrick (2010) where students do seem to benefit from the learning experiences that occur outside the classroom. Patrick, 2010, suggested that field trips should be merged into the teaching schedule as this will offer an opportunity for students to apply what had been taught in classroom. This closeness and approachability would be a key feature of field trips. Therefore, to prepare the students with competent in oral communication skills, they need to be exposed to real working environment.

In this study, the field trip was typically intended to strengthen students' understanding of the use of oral communication skills in electrical industries and mechanical industries. The classroom teaching would expose the students with content and the broader educational settings would take place when the students are exposed at industries (Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014). Much of the research on field trips focuses on characteristics of high-quality experiences, identifying appropriate pedagogical approaches for informal education settings. In summary it can be conclude that lecturers should integrate trips into their class curriculum, and follow up trips during class time, and provide opportunities for students to involve in inquiry-based survey and use the language learnt in classroom.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study was to identify the impact of the field trips on students use of oral communication skills. The lack of studies in the students exposure on field trips and the use of oral communication skills in industries had encouraged the researchers to conduct this study.The results of this study would be a contribution to Ministry of Higher Education in preparing of curriculum and teaching methods to suit the industries. This would also provide an effective strategy to develop the classroom teaching.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The respondents were from two engineering department, each consisting of 19 students from electrical department and 19 students from mechanical department. who had taken all the three communicative modules which was part of the polytechnics requirement. Thirty eight questionnaires were disseminated to the students who had attended the field trip. From the total number of thirty eight respondents, 52% were male students while 48% were female students. The field trip was carried out in a multinational company. A multinational company refers to "a corporation that has its facilities and other assets in at least one country other than its home country with offices and/or factories in different countries and a centralized head office where coordination of global management is done" (Investopedia, 2008).

V. THE FINDINGS

The impact on the use of English oral communication during field trip. The discussion hereafter provides an insight of the perceptions of the engineering students' oral communication practices of the companies they visited. Table 1 indicates the "Frequency of Internal

Communication: (In Percentage)" showing the highest practiced to the least practiced within the company.

Table 1: Frequency Oral communication skills practice during field trip (practice from highest to lowest %)

TASK	Very often	often	sometimes	rarely	not at all
Social Communication in natural topics	70.0	22.7	1.3	6.0	0.0
Giving instructions	40.3	28.2	19.3	5.5	6.6
Provide response to questions asked	40.1	25.2	16.1	24.5	12.0
Giving constructive criticism	25.7	28.2	20.8	18.5	7.9
Participate in asking questions	22.2	23.0	18.2	18.2	0.5
Provide thoughtful feedback	11.5	27.6	26.5	22.6	10.8
Ask for clarification from presentation	5.0	21.0	14.3	23.8	35.9
Listening to short oral presentation	4.5	18.3	14.9	29.8	31.6
Communicate ideas persuasively	1.5	6.6	34.3	28.2	30.4

In order to investigate the experience in using English oral communication by the students during field trip, the respondents were asked to respond to nine questions. As depicted in Table 1 findings suggest that social communication in natural topics were most highly practiced during the field trip (92.7%), followed by giving instructions (68.5%), provide response to questions asked was at (65.3%), giving constructive criticism (53.9%). This feedback lends support to findings by Patrick (2010) that field trip experiences significantly improved the students' understanding of using the language and gives motivation/attitude towards the subject learned in institutions. This subsequently influenced and increased their perceptions over the use of communication at workplace. Therefore, results indicate the impact from field trips can enhance learning and motivate students.

The finding on participating in asking questions (45.2%), followed with providing thoughtful feedback with (39.1%). This two oral communication skills were ranked as average usage during the field trip. Both this oral communication may not be frequently practiced due to its ad hoc nature of meeting with the presenters. Interestingly, this finding constitutes ideas for the students for future oral communication with their co-workers at workplace. Other possible explanation why participating in asking questions and giving feedback was not ranked as high was students were lack of familiarity with such practice. As indicated by Hovde (2005), asking and giving feedback should be inculcated in the engineering classroom practice to familiarize students with the said event which will eventually allow better participation in the community (Thomas, 2007).

The impact on listening to short oral presentation (22.8%) and communicate ideas persuasively (8.1%) was ranked low. One possible explanation why it was with low rank was as students were not exposed to communicating to give ideas persuasively in classrooms. According to (Miller et al, 1996) experience required of novice engineers "to be familiar with engineering concepts and workplace environment". Listening to presentation is often done by the students in classrooms but were ranked low. This could be that during the field trip presentation the students were unable to follow the talk as it was technical and more of workplace instructions. The findings on oral communication workplace practice indicate certain similarities and differences with earlier studies conducted in institution and oral communicative practice in workplace.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the respondents who went for the field trip were able to use English oral communication moderately. They were able to use the language and got the opportunity to practice the language at the workplace. It was concluded that field trips to natural and industrial locations were a beneficial learning aid. This is a way of fostering students' language knowledge and apply it in practice at workplace. This assertion is based on the fact that after experiencing the field trip the scores were significantly high with the different types of experiences in communicating at workplace. A field trip can motivate and enrich students' learning opportunities as they experience the natural environment, which can then give encouragement and meaningfully enhance student's motivation and attitude towards the English communicative subject. The contribution to new knowledge in this study included the development of advice for all participants working within and related to the field of education and in particular teaching English oral communication subjects. The researchers recommended that educational field trips should be included in the English communicative curriculum wherever possible.

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