DEVELOPING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS THROUGH INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES IN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT: In the international integration, the importance and influence of English in working and living are great, especially for undergraduate students who need to use English in daily life. Up to now, students rarely communicate in English in daily activities in Vietnamese universities. There are many reasons for this situation such as undergraduate students always feel unconfident, feel shy and uncomfortable when exchanging and talking with others in English. This is notably due to the influence of lecturers’ seldom use of English communication. In addition, English clubs in universities are not really outstanding as well as attract a lot of students to participate. Lecturers should also encourage undergraduate students to contribute ideas, discuss lessons in English. When participating in extracurricular activities, traveling, doing community projects, the organizers need to create an environment and topics for students talking together in English. The bulletin board, internal information, email, Facebook fanpage of groups, exhibitions, events ... can be written and sent to students in the form of bilingual Vietnamese-English. Some internal communication activities like that will contribute to constituting a habit of using English regularly, confidently and reflexively for undergraduates. Applying internal communication activities in the university will help students gain more confidence, live in an English environment and see it like a close friend. And then, students will feel comfortable and naturally learning, talking and communicating in English anywhere.

Keywords: using English, internal communication, lecturer, undergraduate students.

I. THE CURRENT USING ENGLISH IN COMMUNICATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

English has long been an international language. The importance and influence of English in our work and our society are great, especially for undergraduate students in the international integration. Entering the current phase of globalization, if students can’t use English fluently, students will not be able to catch up with the development of the world. The developed and high-income countries in the world are those using English as a native language or use English fluently at the workplace. Understanding the urgency of English in teaching and training, some private universities in Ho Chi Minh City took the initiative in applying specialized English for some subjects such as Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology, Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, Hoa Sen University, Hong Bang International University, Van Lang University, University of Finance and Economics, etc. The correct and prerequisite orientation is helping students & lecturers to improve their English proficiency for working.

Up to now, English communications in daily activities of university students, in general, is very little. Students only speak and use English in the classroom and within the scope of the subject, when they were required by lecturers in discussing a topic or a situation of a major subject. Students have not still spoken English regularly, they prefer to speak Vietnamese. That leads to problems for them going to work while handling a lot of difficulties to communicate with foreigners in the workplace, responding to partners at the office. Besides that, reflection and ways of feedback in English via commercial mail, text, phone … are very much limited.

II. SOME REASONS MAKE STUDENTS RARELY USE ENGLISH IN COMMUNICATION

In general, students also feel embarrassed when they speak English with their friends or they feel as standing out from all others. Most of them are afraid of saying wrong, afraid of friends’ laugh. Others do not like to speak English and have the psychology to speak Vietnamese more quickly. This leads to the situation that no one will speak English outside classroom. Due to the forming habit from high school is to focus mainly on grammar, reading and writing, there is very little time for listening and speaking skills, so most students are weak in these skills. While attention in developed countries, they have been focused inwardly on mastering listening and speaking skills. This situation leads to the fact that divided into many kinds of students in class, creating two distinct trends: students are very confident and willing to talk, to discuss in English anytime - the other groups are timid, self-deprecating and don’t want to speak English outside class time. In addition, some students don’t speak English due to the influence of lecturers who are less willing to communicate, to talk with each other as well as with their students in English. In class or in schoolyard, lecturers speak Vietnamese while students speak English, what will happen? Of course, that makes students timid and fearful of their attitude. Therefore, gradually we cannot improve foreign language ability of students.
English clubs in university have not had outstanding activities and attractive programs as well to stimulate students participating fully and continuously. Furthermore, the English Club’s management board should have the funds to create a more effective playground for members. Lecturers need to join clubs, to find and to build interesting activities for students. Learning a foreign language in general and especially English, it is a long and continuous journey. A foreign proverb says: “Rome wasn’t built in one day - Once at a time - Never give up”. Thus, in order to help students improve English communication skills, there needs to have the determination and self-discipline of both lecturers and students. We must be persistent, patient and must love the work we do. There is such new progress. A day is not good, a week is not good but a month will be better and a year later will be more proficient. All activities are aimed at the ultimate goal is to support undergraduates to improve their English communication ability fluently and more confidently as the proverb “All roads lead to Rome”.

III. SUGGESTIONS ABOUT APPLYING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES TO BUILD UP STUDENT’S ENGLISH COMMUNICATION HABITS.

A. Overview of Internal Communication

Internal communication is the transmission of information between organizational members or parts of the organization. It takes place across all levels and organizational units of an organization in order to build, maintain and strengthen good relationships, the trust and the understanding each other (Cowan, 2017). The effective internal communication helps to engage employees in the organization and helps enterprises to be sustainable from within. Internal communication is not only a catalyst connecting people, but also upgrade to business brand in the eyes of stakeholders, especially in target customers. (Ngo, 2010)

The means for internal communication include:
- Printing papers (newsletters, organizational books, letters, speeches,…)  
- The bulletin board  
- Internal email  
- Documentary film about the organization  
- Internal meetings, extracurricular activities,…

The content of internal communication revolves around the following:
- Organizing the managerial and human resources in the organization  
- Products and services in business  
- Tradition and achievements  
- Tasks and plans in each period  
- Innovations and improvement solutions  
- Reward and Commend the good persons  
- Conferences and scientific discussions  
- Cultural activities, Sports, Anniversaries,…  
- Sponsorship, charity programs, etc. (Ngo, 2010).

B. Applying some forms of internal communication to improve English students’ ability to use English

1. Fostering the English ability between lecturers and executives of each faculty in the universities

First of all, calling and encouraging students to speak English continuously, their lecturers and executives in faculty must seriously implement speaking and exchanging together in English daily communications. That has created and built a friendly image of using English effectively. From there, students can learn and practice their habits when talking with lecturers, friends, and others in English.

For specialized subjects are taught in English, creating an English speaking habit for students, lecturers should not set too high requirements or make situations which are too difficult in discussions. That makes students feel shy and not be confident to express their answers. At that time, students still didn’t have the correct answer in Vietnamese. So, how do they know the way to answer in English? From there, they didn’t want to interact with lecturers, not to speak, not to be interested in the subject. Thus, helping students confidently as well as developing foreign language skills, lecturers need to select appropriate exercises in class. The teacher must be the one to evoke the story and how to convey ideas
together. Regarding the content of lectures, if there are new or difficult words, lecturers should teach in Vietnamese and translate them in English with closer and easier content to help students grasp the lesson quickly.

Instructors should also encourage students to confidently express their answers in English. If students see many difficulties in case study solving, lecturers ought to explain carefully. Form “Learn Together”, lecturers and students study, share and communicate regularly in English. Surely, students will enjoy and be more comfortable to use English in daily life. In addition, the Faculty Committee should create activities for everyone to speak English like traveling, going out, picnicking between lecturers and lecturers, lecturers and students.

2. Applying Bilingual (Vietnamese - English) documents and internal notices of the Faculty to students

For internal announcements or internal newsletters (within the department's scope), not applicable to official notices issued by the University Administrators and external entities), the board of faculty may use bilingual Vietnamese - English. This creates a habit of using the 4 skills of English (listening - speaking - reading - writing) in any situations. Information, emails, bulletin boards, Facebook, etc. within the Faculty, we should also write in English when exchanging with each other (if the news is not political or not serious news).

Each faculty had the youth union board. Faculty should design and redecorate beautifully and eye-catching. Making a good impression on students is also a way for students caring, regularly the activities of the Union. Information - Photos on the Union Bulletin Board should be bilingual Vietnamese - English to create a habit of using English. Exhibitions of the faculty about Culture - Economy - Society - Education - International Relations or community activities, faculty need to use bilingualism to form an international studying environment for students. Organizing some student tours to visit and to interact with foreign and global companies in Vietnam. This will inspire students to interact, ask questions and chat with company staff in English.

Besides that, the University's Foreign Affairs bulletin board should also show bilingual Vietnamese - English. The information on the Foreign Affairs bulletin board needs to be edited content and images to be more impressive so that students can know and learn about the school's Foreign Affairs news and activities.

Last and not least, it is the student's self-discipline in speaking English. Even though the above suggestions and recommendations are very good, students who are not self-conscious, still not speaking English fluently. Lecturers need to talk and discuss with students, offer the benefits, analyze strengths and opportunities for those who use English well, they will get the bright future in their career pathway.

IV. CONCLUSION

In general, undergraduate students only speak and use English within the specialized subject when required by their lecturer in class. In order to improve the above situation, each lecturer in the university must be the pioneers in communicating with each other, communicating with their students in English, creating a premise for students to learn and practice English. Learning English cannot be mastered in one day or two days but a whole long process which takes much time, perseverance and continuity. Lecturers need to talk and discuss with students, offer the benefits, analyze strengths and opportunities for those who use English well, they will get the bright future in their career pathway. The quotations is “To be successful, the first thing to do is to fall in love with your work”. That is true, to be successful in any field, the first thing to do is to love your own work.” Learning English is not the result, it is a journey. Please like it and see it as a close friend, we will feel excited and comfortable when studying, talking, and communicating in English anytime and anywhere.

V. REFERENCES