The English Teaching Program for Poor Women in Keputih

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One of the ways for poor Indonesian women to get rid of poverty is by becoming migrant domestic helpers. The higher salary of migrant domestic helpers that ranges from 840,000 rupiahs to 3,500,000 rupiahs than the salary of domestic helpers in Surabaya that ranges from 200,000 rupiahs to 600,000 rupiahs has attracted those women to leave their families. To compete and survive, they have to be able to communicate in English and know the strategy for success. Considering this fact, Petra Christian University (herein after termed PCU), with its motto “A Caring and Global University”, represented by English Department (ED) initiates to start a three-month English training for poor women in Keputih, a slum area in Surabaya, starting November 2007. This training aims to equip trainees with basic English and wide perspective so that they are motivated and ready to work overseas. Besides, trainees need to be informed about the laws of the republic of Indonesia no 39 in the year 2004 about the placement and the protection of Indonesian labours in foreign countries to avoid them being arbitrarily treated. One ED lecturer is in charge for this free training and she is assisted by five women student assistants. The trainees consist of women of productive ages, 21 to 35 years old. As a start, this program is open for ten trainees. This small number of trainees is to give them effectively intensive sessions. Even though this project is just a small one, it is hoped that it will contribute to the poverty reduction, starting from the specific group of migrant women domestic workers. Unfortunately, due to low motivation, lack of family’s support and lack of information, this training cannot be carried out according to schedule.

I. Introduction

Eventhough news about bad treatment to female domestic helpers who worked overseas was often issued in newspapers, the Indonesian women’s interest to work overseas never decreases because for uneducated women working as domestic helpers in foreign countries is the easiest way to get much money to get rid of poverty. The wages they get are multiplied times as much as their wages in Indonesia. The more wages they get, the more demand they have to fulfill. Meanwhile the competition is tighter because there are many competitors taking part. Consequently, if they don’t have enough skills, they will find difficulties to compete and survive.
To compete and survive, they have to be able to communicate in English and know the strategy for success. Considering this fact, Petra Christian University, with its motto “A Caring and Global University”, represented by English Department (ED) initiates to start a three-month English training for poor women in Keputih, a slum area in Surabaya, starting November 2007. This training aims to equip trainees with basic English and wide perspective so that they are motivated and ready to work overseas. Besides, trainees need to be informed about the laws of the republic of Indonesia no 39 in the year 2004 about the placement and protection of Indonesian labours in foreign countries to avoid them being arbitrarily treated.

As a famous proverb says ”Once rowing, two or three islands can be passed by”. Besides giving advantages to poor women, this free English training is also beneficial for PCU, ED and its students. Through this kind of community service, PCU has a chance to prove itself really as ”A Caring University”. This kind of activity gives ED some advantages. First, the lecturers can execute the Community Service, which is one of the requirements other than teaching and making researches. Second, this activity can be considered as an experiment for the activity of service learning which requires students’ participation of a certain subject—another activity required for all departments—can also be executed. Third, this activity gives a chance to lecturers and the students to implement the so-called faith and science, which is also another activity required by PCU. Fourth, this training can be considered as a pilot project since this is for the first time community service given to neither students nor teachers. Fifth, in reality this project can motivate teachers to do researches. This kind of activity may be beneficial in a sense of increasing both students’ social awareness and valuable life experience which is not got in family life, improving their teaching skill and giving credit point which enable them to get a chance to attend seminars or study abroad. As it is known, most of Petra students, who are from rich families, may not have opportunities to get along with lower class people.

Keputih slum area is chosen because YPK, Petra’s partner in helping poor people, has given social service to poor people there for several years. Most keputih inhabitants are Moslems and due to the issue of Christianizing, any aid from Christians, including Christian schools or universities is not easily accepted. YPK’s existence which has got belief from Keputih people enables Petra to give social service there. YPK only lends the classroom whereas PCU provides trainer, assistants and the material.

II. Training Material

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for life.

The training material covers English and strategy for success as well as the laws of the republic of Indonesia no 39 in the year 2004 about the placement and the protection of Indonesian labours in foreign countries.

a. English Material
Due to the limited time and the goal of the training, that is to enable trainees to communicate in English, the material is focused on vocabulary dealing with housework and daily conversation. Besides given a vocabulary list, trainees are also taught how to find meanings of certain words in a dictionary and how to pronounce the words appropriately. For the sake of enriching their vocabularies and improving their speaking skills, all trainees are given Indonesian-English dictionaries, English-Indonesian dictionaries, picture dictionaries, posters and cassettes containing the pronunciation of the given words, songs and mini dialogues. Besides, they are also given conversation books which help them to memorize some expressions and the dialogues. Dictionaries will help trainees to independently improve their vocabularies. Picture dictionaries will help them to memorize English words easier. Posters stuck on the wall make trainees easy to study new words. Cassettes which are listened every day will help to improve their pronunciation and encourage them to speak. Moreover, a mini compo tape recorder is available for the best trainee. Hopefully, this mini compo tape recorder will encourage trainees to compete to be the best.

During conversation session, trainees work in pairs to make dialogues. The material covers asking direction, giving instruction, at the supermarket, at the airport, asking and telling about time etc. The technique of role play will be interesting to use. As an example, one trainee acts as an employer and the other acts as a domestic helper. Trainees will not only practice speaking English but also practice responding politely. Another example, one trainee acts as a crying child and the other trainee acts as a domestic helper. The first trainee practices speaking English and the second trainee practices both speaking English and handling children.

English material also includes songs. At least, there are five advantages of studying English through songs. First, it is easier for the trainees to memorize words. Second, they can sing the songs when they babysit. Third, they can sing whenever they are sad or feel lonely. Fourth, song causes to relax so the trainees are able to absorb the knowledge. Fifth, songs mau bring close everybody. Trainees will learn to sing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Ten Little Indians*, *If You’re Happy*, *Good Morning*, *Where Is Thumb kin?*, *One and One*, *Happy Birthday*, *A Little Teapot* and *Row, Row Your Boat*. All songs are easy to learn for they are children songs.

The material of the pretest and posttest cover common verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, songs and dialogues, Since the focus is on speaking, both tests are oral. Besides, this type is considered easier for the trainees.

B. The Material of the Strategy for Success

Before giving the material of the strategy for success, we have to make the trainees realize that as women they have potential, rights and obligation as agents of change for their families to live in better lives [Bhasin and Khan, 1995: 5-6]. In this case, considering that the majority population are Moslems, it is better to use what they believe. There are two beliefs that can be used. First there is an Arabian proverb which is firmly kept by Moslems, that is “Paradise is under mother’s feet palms. Second, some verses in Al-qur’an, both implicitly and explicitly state that women should be respected. Even there is a letter in Al-qur’an entitled An-nisak which means woman. When Prophet
Muhammad was asked by his fellow, “Whom should I ask for permission?” Prophet Muhammad answered, “Your mother.” Three times the same question was asked, three times the same answer was given. It proves that mother is respected three times as much as father. For the small thing a woman is more respected, moreover, for the larger things. Using two examples above I think it is enough to convince the trainees that women who are greatly respected, have to try to give their families good lives.

According to Jim Dornan and John C. Maxwell, in order to be successful, someone must think positively, be fond of challenge or difficult situation and be willing to work hard. Thinking positively here means having self-confidence, initiative, perseverance and creativity [Dornan and Maxwell, 1996: 7, 21-4]. That is why, trainees are prepared to be able to think positively, be fond of challenge or difficult situation and be willing to work hard. They have to believe that they are useful for their families, be able to absorb the training material and be successful in foreign countries as long as they work hard. They are also trained to try to do new things, not easily give up and find solution of their problems.

One way to maintain positive thinking is by often uttering positive words or sentences [Dornan and Maxwell, 1996:25]. I motivate trainees to utter positive words, phrases or sentences, such as “Smart!”,” Good woman!”,” I can do it, yes!”,” Strong woman, yes!”,” Good woman, yes!” and “Work hard, yes!” either when they start and end the lesson or whenever they have problem. It is hoped that by uttering them together repeatedly those positive words, phrases or sentences are kept in their mind so whenever they have to face difficult situation, these words or sentences can encourage them to survive and be the winners.

The other ways are informing the strategy for success, giving problems to be solved, giving rewards to those who can solve the problem, encouraging them when they fail and asking them to sing or speak in front of the class. Besides, trainees are assigned to memorize 20 difficult words and read several pages of children story book per week. We cannot give more homeworks because they have already had a lot of things to do at home. If they are forced to do too many thing, we worry that they will quit. To encourage them, we will show them the ways to finish their homework if they think it is too difficult.

After that, trainees are encouraged to set their goals. This step is important because according to Jim Dornan and John C Maxwell, another important step to get success is to determine the purpose [Dornan and Maxwell, 1996:69]. Rick Warren also states that someone’s success is close related to whether there is a target or not being reached [Warren, ---2005: 343]. By having the goal or target, trainees may be able to face challenges. In the step of determining the goal, the possible obstacles are also discussed in order to find the way to overcome them and know how to anticipate them as early as possible. Discussion is also directed to the sacrifice they may give. It is important to emphasize that the temporary sacrifice is not comparable to the benefit they will gain.

Trainees will also learn to communicate well because one’s success also depends on his/her communication skill [Dornan and Maxwell, 1996:153]. First of all, trainees will learn how to be good listeners so that they can really understand what the speaker wants, especially their employers. Then, they also learn how to make questions. They will learn these two skills through role play. To make this activity more interesting, trainees are asked to give comment or evaluation.
Trainees also need to know how to handle stress since working overseas cannot be separated from stress. They have to know that to handle stress, they have to look at their problems proportionally, take the risk, avoid demanding their rights, seek friends for telling the problem, think of themselves sufficiently and do their hobbies [Dornan and Maxwell, 1996:117-126]

Good attitude is the key of one’s success. Related to their works, trainees must be humble, obedient, honest, punctual, diligent and friendly. There is no employer who is not happy having a maid servant with this personality. Not only the employers but also their children will be happy to get along with maid servants who have such personality.

Besides good attitude, performance is also important. Trainees have to know that they always need to be clean and wear polite outfits. Wearing sexy clothes, either in the workplace or public places does not make any good. Considering that they are far from their husbands and families, their sexy performance will plunge them into big problems, such as inviting other men to ask for love affair. Polite performance can protect them from rape or sexual harassment. From magazines or new papers, we know that there are many Indonesian women laborers become the victims of rape or pregnant without marriage.

Trainees are also encouraged to have reading habit. At the beginning of training trainees are given books on children stories and then after a week, they are asked to retell what they have already read in front of the class. Every participant is given a different story book, this book is bilingual so besides knowing the story, they also learn English. At the end of the training they are given one more book on how to develop one self. We also give YPK some books related to English and self development after the training is over so trainees who live near YPK can still learn either English or self development. This small library will be directly managed by YPK.

In order that the money the trainees get later does not run out uselessly. We also teach them how to manage their money. They need to know that saving and spending money should be proportional / balanced in accordance with their goals. How to make investments and tips to live economically are also taught.

Besides, the way to manage the money and to avoid persuasion either related to sex or drug usage is also given. Trainees are encouraged to find their own tricks to avoid persuasion and share them. Because they are loyal to pray, it is easy to remind them about the existence of God who is omnipresent so that they always remember that even though their husbands or families are not with them, God always knows what they do. They also discuss the risk and the way to protect themselves from activities that can harm them and their families.

C. The Laws of the Republic of Indonesia no. 39 in the year 2004 about the Laws of the Republic of Indonesia no 39 in the year 2004 about the Placement and the Protection of Indonesian Labours in Foreign Countries.

There are three purposes of giving material on The Laws of the Republic of Indonesia no. 39 in the year 2004 about the placement and the protection of Indonesian labours in foreign Countries. First, to avoid Indonesian labours from arbitrary treatment or deceitfulness which is done by either labour agents or employers in foreign countries. The laws say that the labours’ rights and obligations prevail from pre-placement, during the placement to after placement. Second, to motivate trainees in order to be confident to
work. By knowing the protections which are given to Indonesian labours, it is hoped that they do not doubt to earn a living in foreign countries. Third, the trainees can give information to other women so more women are eager to work overseas.

III. Teaching-Learning Process

One ED lecturer named Yuli Christiana Yoedo is in charge for this free training and she is assisted by five women student assistants named Tjong Imelda Rifai, Marsella Y. Hatane, Sari Damayanti, Vania Danella and Patrisia M. Jelita. All of them are semester one students. Besides teaching, they are also involved in designing teaching material. The trainees consist of women of productive ages, 21 to 35 years old who are interested in becoming domestic helpers. In every meeting, trainees get three kinds of materials: English, strategy for success and the Laws of the Republic of Indonesia no. 39 in the year 2004 about the placement and the protection of Indonesian labours in foreign countries.

During the training, ED lecturer gives the material whereas the student assistants who sit among the trainees monitor and assist the trainees whenever necessary. For examples, they help to improve the trainees’ pronunciation and to give motivation. Student assistants also have chances to give English material to enable them to have teaching experience.

The medium of instruction is Indonesian. The method used is direct translation method, where English is translated into Indonesian or the other way around. During the conversation session, trainees usually work in group of two. It makes them easier to share idea or opinion, speak more relax and make better eye contact [Harmer, 2001: 115]. Each pair is guided by one student assistant. The activities of the teaching learning process utilizes various teaching aids to encourage the trainees participate actively in the teaching learning process. Hence, the communication between the trainer, students-assistants and the trainees takes place naturally as expected.

Evaluation includes weekly participation, attendance and the results of pretest and posttest. Pretest is given at the beginning of the training and posttest is given at the end. Both tests are oral. Every trainee who is able to finish the training will receive a certificate.

IV. Student Reflection

Five students who got involved in this project were challenged to join again in the following training. They really enjoyed designing the materials and teaching poor people. They believe that what they have done is useful for their future because the training can develop their teaching experiences, increase their teaching skills and make them better people who care more about poor people. Besides, their participation may inspire other students to care more about poor people. One student is interested in joining this training since she wants to use her talent to serve God. All students determine to help trainees to accomplish the training since they know the benefit of the training.
V. Problems and Their Solutions

I find out that giving the aid is not as easy as I think because we do not always get good response from the people whom we want to help. Formally, training was planned to be hold once a week on Thursday at 14.30 – 16.00 or for 90 minutes during the months of November, December and January 2007 but it cannot be done even though the schedule is arranged following YPK’s advice. The first meeting is on November 1, 2007 was only attended by one participant named Eka. Four other participants who have priorily registered didn’t follow the training because suddenly they didn’t want to be workers in a foreign country. According to YPK there were some causes why this free training attracts few participants. Those causes are low motivation, lack of family’s support and lack of information. Previously, the information is only given by YPK. The only trainee joined this training because she liked English and she did not know that the training is for those who wanted to be migrant domestic helpers. She seem to be interested in joining this problem and still want to join the training in the future.

Some women did not want to join for their husband whom cannot give sufficient financial support did not allow them to work overseas. They have to take care of their children because according to the husbands taking care of the children is the wife’ duty while earning money is the husband’s duty. The husbands do not realize that this kind of training is very useful for sharpening or broadening their wives’ perspectives [Djayanegara, 2000: 5]. It can be understood because Javanese people follow patriarchal system, the husband earns a living and decide important things while the wive must do house works such as going to market, cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes and taking care of the children [Bhasin and khan, 1995: 25-8]. Even though the husbands fail, they refuse to change roles. According to Leclerc, this attitude can be considered as foolishness [Leclerc, 2000: ix]. Actually, the wives can join the training and work later if the real reason is the children’ age. If the husbands were willing to take care of their children and did the housework, the wives could work in foreign countries for several years. The result is that their economy level can be increased so in the future their children can get good education.

To overcome the problems, I decide to shorten the duration of the meeting into 60 minutes, approach the society, directly give information to the society, to revise the moduls of training and postpone the implementation of the training. According to Eka, the trainee, one hour is more effective because trainees cannot leave their families too long. Approaching the society is important in order to identify the problems why this training is not attractive for the women there, to find out the appropriate schedule so that I am able to plan the new strategy. First of all, the information is given to the parents whose children are taking English courses in YPK since they have put their trust in YPK.

This postponement is also related to fund. I need sponsor to start making an approach to Keputih society. If the fund is ready, this community service which gives great benefits to the poor women and generally to families at Keputih area at present and in the future can be carried out.

Other benefits of postponing the program is that there will be more students participate because the time for recruitment is longer and they are no longer join tutorial
class. Moreover, there is also a possibility that more lecturers will be interested in joining this program.

In the future this teaching program can also be included in Community Outreach Program (COP) which is held in the village. Teachers and students who join COP can work hand in hand to train poor village women. So Far ED teachers and students only taught children, they never taught adults. It will be a good experience for either ED teachers or students then.

VI. Conclusion

I can draw a conclusion that something which is good, e.g. this English training, is not always directly accepted by people who are uneducated or have low education due to narrow perspectives. That is why, related to this course, before giving training, I need to give the trainees understanding about the benefits of the training to broaden their perspectives. For the sake of this purpose, understanding local culture is very much needed. Moreover, besides teaching skill, any trainer including me, need to have communication skill.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA


