English Language Skills and Becoming a Global Entrepreneur: Lessons for Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract. This paper discusses the results of a case study that focused on the importance of English language skills in helping students become global entrepreneurs. A critical element that is often missing in courses on Entrepreneurship Education is the inclusion of the language component that helps build oral English proficiency. In the entrepreneurship education courses, the importance of teaching English skills to prepare students to become global entrepreneurs is seldom instilled among students — an especially crucial aspect when teaching students for whom English is a second or foreign language — as it would not only motivate them to use English more, but also help them overcome their challenges in using English. By using an online survey and focus group discussions, this study obtained the views of 177 undergraduate students of an Entrepreneurship Education course conducted by the Faculty of Economics of a Malaysian public university. The attitudes of the students towards using English for entrepreneurship and the challenges they faced in doing so are highlighted, and implications are drawn for teaching English in entrepreneurship courses.

Keywords: English for business communication; English for Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Education; oral English skills; global entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is seen as a catalyst for economic development (Carree et al., 2002; Muhammad et al., 2011; Byrne, Fayolle & Toutain, 2014) as it helps in creating new business ventures which are the major contributors to the job creation of a nation (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004; Mansor & Othman, 2011). Its importance for a country's development prompted the Harvard Business School to start a programme on entrepreneurship education in 1945, which became so popular with other business schools in the USA that by 1980, more than 300 universities in the US offered entrepreneurship education (Vesper &

Gartner, 1997). As time went on, entrepreneurship education sparked a growing interest in scientific research around the world from the viewpoint of promoting creativity, developing entrepreneurial capacities, and changing the mindsets of the students from job seekers to job creators (European Commission, 2008; Fayolle & Gally, 2008; Nabi & Holden, 2008).

The central aims of entrepreneurship education are to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset and to develop the entrepreneurial skills and behaviour to enable students to be successful in their entrepreneurship endeavours (Lazear, 2004; Galloway et al., 2005); Byrne et al., 2014; Audretsch et al., 2016). It also aims to help students deal with and manage the uncertainties or challenges in the economy by laying strong social links that are multifaceted and diverse (Brian & Norma, 2010). Shepherd and Douglas (1997) suggest the following definition of entrepreneurship education:

> *"…the ability to envision and chart a course for a new business venture by combining information from the functional disciplines and from the external environment in the context of the extraordinary uncertainty and ambiguity which faces a new business venture. It manifests itself in creative strategies, innovative tactics, uncanny perception of trends and market mood changes, courageous leadership when the way forward is not obvious, and so on. What we teach in our entrepreneurship classes should serve to instil and enhance these abilities" (cited in Fatoki & Oni, 2014 pp. 587).*

In addition, Alberti et al. (2004) describe entrepreneurship as a transformation of entrepreneurial abilities in relation to theories, skills and understanding from the initial stage of business to the expansion of the venture.

Interestingly, Kirby (2002) views entrepreneurship from a different angle, asserting that the traditional management studies play an important role in forming a strong basis for entrepreneurial skills to flourish. Other researchers (as cited in Rahim et al., 2015) further elaborate that the effectiveness of an entrepreneurship education course is somehow associated with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), training of entrepreneurial skills (Gibb, 1999), action-learning (Smith, 2001) and work-related learning (Dwerryhouse, 2001)—meaning to say, the process of learning and launching a new venture involves an integration of skills, experiences, and knowledge. In short, entrepreneurship education is seen as a valuable platform to generate new entrepreneurs.

Alberti et al. (2004), as cited in Niyonkuru, (2005, p.15), identified three sources of demands for entrepreneurship education in academic institutions, namely, "governmental, students and education, and the business world". The demand from the government focuses mainly on the shift towards job creation among small businesses to tackle the problem of unemployment, while the demand from the students comes from their desire to become owners of their own businesses, to gain additional knowledge that would offer brighter opportunities to work in larger companies, and as a safeguard against the economic downturn (Jack & Anderson, 1999). The third demand is felt in the business world, brought about

by situations where the actors perceive themselves as lacking skills in managing small and medium companies and the requirements for ongoing production and services (Alberti et al., 2004). All these demands have prompted many graduates to develop their entrepreneurial careers.

1.1 The Malaysian scenario
In Malaysia, entrepreneurship education was adopted by the country's higher learning institutions to foster the development of the economy (Herbert & Link, 2011; Yusuf et al., 2015; Cheng et al., 2009), to develop a sustainable society (Abu Sufian, 2012) and to prepare graduates for employment (Ahmad, 2013). To further understand the importance of implementing this form of education, Shamsudin et al. (2016), in their review of the policies and practices for entrepreneurial education in Malaysia, discussed the relevance of the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1971-1990), which was an initiative to reduce the disparity among races in the economy (Gomez, 2003). In addition, the National Development Policy (NDP, 1991-2000) was introduced, with a strong emphasis on ensuring political stability and national unity, which allows all Malaysians to be involved in economic activities (Economic Planning Unit). Subsequently, in 2010, the New Economic Model (NEM, 2010) was announced, aimed at propelling Malaysia towards becoming a fully developed country based on the country's Vision 2020 aspiration. Under the same policy, entrepreneurship is viewed as being important in generating a competitive domestic economy (Abdullah et al., 2014).

Given the importance that the government saw in incorporating entrepreneurial values and culture in the education system—especially among the higher learning institutions—the Higher Educational Entrepreneurship Development Policy (HEEDP) was launched in 2010, which was intended to intensify the entrepreneurship programmes to make them more holistic to produce graduates with entrepreneurial mindsets and characteristics. The policy would also see an increase in graduates establishing themselves as business owners (Yusuf et al., 2015; Cheng et al., 2009; Abdullah et al., 2014).

To further realise the objectives of the policy, the Ministry of Education introduced the "six thrusts" as the guiding tools to empower the entrepreneurial programmes. As described by Shamsudin et al. (2016), the first is to encourage the establishment of an entrepreneurship centre in every Higher Learning Institution, while the second is to advocate the provision of a holistic and systematic entrepreneurial education and programme. Empowering the entrepreneurial development programmes at the higher learning institutions and upskilling their entrepreneurship instructors and facilitators to be more competent in their abilities are the third and fourth thrusts, respectively. The next thrust is to provide a conducive environment for entrepreneurship development, while the sixth is to improve the effectiveness of the implementation and development of entrepreneurial education (Ministry of Education, 2012).

1.2 The Need to Improve Entrepreneurship Education in Malaysia
Despite the numerous studies conducted both locally and abroad that have shown that entrepreneurship education has helped to change the attitudes of graduates towards wanting to be self-employed (Ronstadt, 1987; Katz, 2003;

Othman & Othman, 2019), several studies have also highlighted the need to improve further entrepreneurship education in Malaysia (Cheng, Chan & Mahmood, 2009; Mansor & Othman, 2017). For instance, a large-scale study carried out by Yusuf and Kamil (2015), which reviewed the entrepreneurship education practices of 20 public universities in Malaysia, found that these programmes suffered a lack of funding, a weak support system, ambiguity in their policies and objectives, and an ineffective delivery mode. The study also found that the students at these institutions lacked soft skills, mainly English communicative skills. The results correlate with the findings of the National Graduate Employability Blueprint 2012–2017 and 2013–2025, which stated that the problem of unemployment among graduates had to do with a lack of English language skills (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010; Yusof et al., 2015; Ministry of Education, 2012).

It is essential, at this point, to emphasise that having good English communicative skills is crucial in business dealings. Mydans (2007) contends that success in business mainly hinges on effective communication in English, which is the *lingua franca* or the major language of international business, diplomacy, education, science and technology and the professions; thus, English plays an important role in global entrepreneurship. In her book titled *Teaching English as an International Language: Rethinking Goals and Perspective*, McKay (2002) states that good English language skills underpin the growth of an individual, as well as the growth of national wealth by attracting foreign investments and interest. Enterprises worldwide have noted the need to run a company with employees that are competent in English if they wish to benefit from the great opportunities in the global market. In their study on the role of communication in entrepreneurship, Abbasi et al. (2011) concluded that, "The basic need for interaction cannot be accomplished without effective communication between individuals…The most important trait of the entrepreneurially minded business students is the way they communicate, the way they convey their message" (p. 249).

Hence, English language skills are needed and should be taught to produce graduates who can promote their business worldwide. The researchers observed that no importance is placed on the inclusion of English oral communication skills in the entrepreneurship education curriculum, even though its importance is universally acknowledged as the main medium of communication in the global business arena. In addition, the notion of the importance of English for global entrepreneurship is seldom instilled in students—an especially crucial aspect when teaching students for whom English is a second or foreign language—as it would not only motivate them to use English more, but also help them overcome their challenges in using English. Although the aim of producing "quality, viable, resilient, and competitive entrepreneurs with a global mindset" (NEP, p.iii) is explicitly mentioned as one of the objectives under the Malaysian National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030, these important elements have not been given much emphasis in the implementation of the entrepreneurship education syllabus (NEP, 2030). Given the tremendous importance of English skills among

entrepreneurs, there is a need for English oral communicative skills to be embedded in the course content of the entrepreneurship education programme if we are to produce effective and successful global entrepreneurs.

This paper discusses the results of a case study that focused on the importance of English language skills in helping students become global entrepreneurs. It also highlights the students' attitudes towards including English oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship course. The paper discusses the challenges students faced while using English in the entrepreneurship course. Finally, implications are drawn for the teaching of English in entrepreneurship education courses.

2. Methodology

The data for this paper were obtained from a few sources to allow for cross-referencing and validation of the results. Firstly, the quantitative data were obtained from the students' responses to an online survey, which was designed to gauge their perceptions of the importance of including English oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship course. The first part of the online survey included nine statements related to the students' perceptions of the topic where students were requested to choose their preference based on a five-point Likert-type scale of between "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The second part of the questionnaire included two open-ended questions, which allowed students to elaborate on what they felt about the entrepreneurship course and the challenges they faced in using English in the course.

Further, the study also obtained data from a focus group discussion which was carried out with a selected group of students from the Business Management Department. The students who participated in this discussion had successfully undergone the entrepreneurship education course and were randomly selected by the Head of the Entrepreneurship Division Centre. This form of interview is chosen as it presents the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on the issue discussed which will help to retrieve a substantial volume of concentrated data related to the interest (Morgan, 1997). The aim of this focus group discussion is to help validate the responses to the online survey and assist in understanding the students' feelings about the importance of including English oral communication skills in the entrepreneurship course and what challenges they faced using English during their course.

2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were undergraduate students at a public university. The main criterion for selecting the participants for this study was that they had completed the entrepreneurship course to ensure that they had had the practical experience of using the English oral communication skills. A total of 177 students were randomly selected from the Business Management Department because it offers the entrepreneurship courses to its management students as an elective subject. Of the 177 students, 71 were male (40.1%) and 106 were female (59.9%). For the focus group discussion (FGD), six students

were purposively selected as participants to share their related experiences. In the entrepreneurship courses, English is used as the language of instruction.

2.2 Procedure

Prior to the focus group session, the researcher sent a consent letter to the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences, to seek permission to carry out the study. Subsequently, appointments were set with six students selected from three sections of the elective courses by the coordinator of the entrepreneurship course in the Department of Business Management. The time and venue were set by the Head of the Department. The FGD took place at the meeting room of the Entrepreneurship Division Centre (EDC). Interview protocols were prepared by the researcher prior to the interview sessions. The students were briefed on the objectives of the research to be carried out before the session. Students took turns to respond to the interview questions and the oral session was recorded with their consent.

The online survey was administered by the course facilitators and the link to the online survey was shared to all the students during their class hours. Students were requested to respond to all the sections within the given time and submit the completed forms online. The online responses were later retrieved by the researcher for data analysis. Of a total of 200 students registered for the course, 177 responded to the online survey, representing a response rate of 89.5%.

2.3 Data analysis

Data from the online survey were analysed using descriptive analysis while data collected from the interviews were transcribed. Selected key ideas or excerpts from the interview data and students' responses to the open-ended questions were then used to add more depth to the quantitative results.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

As shown in Table 1, more than half the respondents were between the ages of 22–26 (64.4), followed by 18–21 age range (39.9%) and the lowest number was from the 27–31 age range (1.7%). The number of female students (59.9%) slightly exceeded male students (40.1%). In terms of year of study, nearly half of the respondents were in their third year (41.2%) as students had to take the course to fulfil their study requirements. A total of 33.3% of the respondents were second-year students, followed by fourth-year students (19.8%), and the lowest number were first-year students (5.6%), mainly from the Faculty of Languages and Management where the course is offered in the second semester of the first year of study. As far as representation of respondents from the faculty is concerned, the most highly represented field was that of Economics and Management with 140 respondents (79.1%), followed by Engineering with 16 respondents (9.0%), Human Sciences faculty with 13 respondents (7.3%) and finally the faculty of Languages and Management with eight respondents (4.5%).

Table 1: Respondents response on demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Items	Frequency	Percentage %
Age	18 - 21	60	33.9
	22 - 26	114	64.4
	27 - 31	3	1.7
Gender	Male	71	40.1
	Female	106	59.9
Year of Study	1	10	5.6
	2	59	33.3
	3	73	41.2
	4	35	19.8
Faculty	Economics	140	79.1
	Engineering	16	9.0
	Human Science	13	7.3
	Language & Management	8	4.5

3.2 Students' perceptions of the importance of English oral communication skills in an Entrepreneurship Education course

On the question of the importance of English Oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship education course given in the questionnaire, the respondents were required to rate from a list of 12 items those which they perceived as important in building their skills and which should be included in the course content. The results showed that almost all of the respondents perceived English oral communication skills as important in an entrepreneurship course and should be included and taught in the course.

3.2.1 Skills in expressing ideas and participating in discussions more effectively

Items 1 and 2 in Table 2 show the results of students' perceptions of the importance of including English oral communication skills to express ideas and participate in discussion more effectively. Almost all of the respondents (98.5%) expressed strong agreement that these two skills are significant in helping them use English oral communication more efficiently and successfully in or outside the classroom. The respondents are aware of the importance of having the ability to say clearly what is on their minds and participate in business dealings as English opens wider opportunities for them to become successful entrepreneurs.

Table 2: Skills in expressing ideas and participating in discussions more effectively

Including English oral communications skills in an Entrepreneurship course will allow students to:	SA	A	NS	D	SD

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1. Express ideas in English more effectively.	(49.7%)	(49.2%)	(1.1%)	(2.8%)	
2. Participate more effectively in formal discussions in English	(53.7%)	(41.8%)	(0.6%)	(4%)	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

In response to the interview question on the students' perceptions of the necessity for English oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship education course, Jamal, (a pseudonym is used for each of the six participants) said;

> *"Learning the skills in expressing what I want to say to my business partners or clients in English is essential for me. If we do not know how to express what we have in our minds, then people may not understand what we really want to say."*

Another participant, Hisham, supported this by stating:

> *"Opinions expressed by entrepreneurs can make or break the business links. That is why I believe having the proper skills in making yourself clear when speaking is very important and should be taught in the course."*

Norman expanded the idea that having the proper skills to make others understand what you really wanted to say can build trust between business partners and colleagues. He added that:

> *"When you know how to use the right words at the right time; know how to express your ideas clearly, people will come to you. That is why learning the skills and mastering the English oral language is most important for us."*

In essence, being able to express ideas clearly and precisely can be very beneficial for the students. Students felt that the lack of skills to express their business ideas clearly in good English would hinder their success in closing any business deals. This is in line with what Cardona (2015) mentioned when he stated that the use of spoken words to convey a message clearly and concisely spells the success of business transactions. In other words, to get a message across, the businessman, as the speaker, needs to ensure the receiver correctly interprets his or her words. If not, confusion and conflict will typically result.

In response to the importance of including English oral communication skills to allow students to learn the skills to participate more effectively in formal discussion, almost all the six participants gave strong justification in their agreement to this during the interview session. Words like "engaging", "motivation" and "connection" were mentioned several times. Interestingly,

many of them expressed that this was one of the most important skills which should be included in the course. Sofea shared her justification:

> "*As a future business owner, for me this is one of the most important skills to master. Business is mainly about participating in discussions, about processing ideas and concepts, about building connections or networking.*"

Johan also agreed and was quick to add that:

> "*For students, having the skills in engaging in formal discussions in class is truly essential. It allows students to work harder and build confidence in our speaking skills. When we participate in a discussion, we are actually learning by practising the language. This will motivate everyone to better themselves.*"

Muhammad eagerly concurred that when students are given the opportunity to speak in class, they prefer not to say much. However, in a group setting, they are more receptive to sharing ideas and thoughts:

> "*Teaching students the skills in group discussion while using English will empower them to be great business leaders. It will also improve their listening, thinking and speaking skills, which are important skills for an entrepreneur to have.*"

These findings are consistent with the previous research carried out by Altan (2019) and Özdemir (2015) who confirm the importance of teaching English language skills in business activities and of embedding language skills with entrepreneurship skills, such as expressing ideas and participating in group discussions which can be a way to encourage students to venture into becoming successful entrepreneurs. All these responses show that English skills need to be embedded in the entrepreneurship courses if students are to build their skills in using English to communicate with their peers and in business settings. In brief, all six respondents strongly agreed that English oral communication skills need to be embedded in the course to achieve business success.

3.2.2 Skills in expressing disagreement and giving feedback.
Items 3 and 4 in Table 3 show the results of students' perceptions of the importance of including English oral communication skills to build their confidence in expressing disagreement and giving feedback. Almost all the students expressed agreement with Item 3, representing a response rate of 97.8%.

Table 3: Skills in expressing disagreement and giving feedback

Including English oral communications skills in an Entrepreneurship course will allow students to:	SA	A	NS	D	

3. Express disagreement respectfully in English	(48.6%)	(49.2%)	(1.1%)	(1.1%)	
4. Provide feedback to comments competently in English.	(49.7%)	(48.6%)	(0.6%)	(1.1%)	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

When asked why they thought expressing disagreement respectfully in English was important in an entrepreneurship course, Ali said:

> "I don't know how to disagree with my lecturer or my group members because I don't have the skills. I am afraid they will not like it. So learning this skill is crucial as it will improve my communication with other people."

When asked further why he was afraid, he explained that he might use the wrong words or a wrong phrase which could offend his lecturer or friends. As a result, most of the time in class he kept to himself and preferred to let others ask the questions. Another participant shared the same concern when she wrote:

> "Having the skills in disagreeing with someone is very important for me because sometimes there are things which I think are not right, but I am not sure how to say my view."

Similarly, Johan shared his perception of why learning the skills to disagree with what others are saying is an important element to be taught in an entrepreneurship course when he said:

> "We need some time to think or to automatically prepare for the answer and how to elaborate the alternative way when there is a debate on that matter. If we have the skills on how to respond to the debate, it will make us look very professional."

These feelings of not being able to deliberate politely in a disagreement could pose a confusion and misunderstanding among people and especially among business partners or organisations. However, when one has the confidence and ability to express disagreements, it is much easier to clarify the matter and solve the conflict by responding in respectful verbal communication (Cardona, 2015).

On the skills of providing feedback competently in English (Item 4), the results also show that this is an important skill to include in the course. One of the claims made by Shidah for Item 4 during the FGD was:

> "To have a strong business relationship, we have to establish a strong and successful communication channel and there will be many things we will disagree on, and we must know the skills in providing feedback in the proper way. This will lead to more profit and longer lasting business co-operation."

The importance of learning how to provide proper feedback in a group discussion can be regarded as a guide to improving a situation or changing a decision. This was expressed by both Mohammad and Hisham:

> *"We don't know when we make a mistake. So if our group mates or lecturer give us feedback, it can guide us to make things better. We can learn not to make that mistake again."*

3.2.3 Skills in asking questions clearly.
Item 5 in Table 4 shows the highest percentage in agreement among the nine statements presented. Almost all of the respondents were in agreement that including English oral communication skills in the entrepreneurship course was important to help students build their skills in asking questions in English more clearly.

Table 4: Skills in asking questions clearly

Including English oral communications skills in an Entrepreneurship course will allow students to:					
5. Ask questions in English more clearly	(55.9%)	(40.1%)	(0.6%)	(2.8%)	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

> This concern was emphasised in the FGD where all the six participants said they did their best to avoid asking questions in English as they feared making mistakes and being embarrassed in front of their peers; or they would use Malay to ask questions in their business group discussions or during class discussions. One of them said:
>> *"Sometimes we ask questions, but the other person didn't understand it and give us another answer. This, I think, is because the question was not clear or wrong. So yes, we need to learn the skills to ask proper questions."*

When asked how they would overcome this situation, they replied that, with practice, they might be able to improve the skills which would build their confidence. They added that in business, asking questions can help to improve their learning.

> *"When we ask questions, we get new information. We learn new ideas, we improve our English which makes us more ready to face the business world."*

Finally, all agreed that the technique of asking questions clearly in English should be taught during the course as it is an important skill for all entrepreneurs to master.

3.2.4 Skills in meditating conflicts effectively
Mediation is a process which assists groups in conflict to reach a mutual resolution. Undeniably, this is a very common but essential skill for an entrepreneur to have. Item 6 was constructed to determine students' perceptions of the importance of having the skills to mediate in English. As

shown in Table 5, almost all the respondents agreed that developing confidence in mediating conflicts effectively in English was very important and should be included in the entrepreneurship course.

Table 5: Skills in meditating conflicts effectively

Including English oral communications skills in an Entrepreneurship course will allow students to:	SA	A	NS	D	SA
6. Meditate conflicts more effectively in English	(51.4%)	(44.1%)	(1.7%)	(2.8%)	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Analysis of the FGD of the item revealed that students lack skills in mediating; they find it difficult to do, and it is not as aspect that is commonly addressed in their course. In one of the answers, Syarifah said:

"*Many conflicts happen, especially between group members when discussing an idea and we end up not having a proper closure to it. So yes, the skills in mediating should be included in the course.*"

Her concern was echoed by Ali:

"*Managing conflicts is one skill we must have as an entrepreneur. Sometimes to express our feeling and things we want to say to solve it in English can be a problem. This is because we don't know how to put the right words in English and that is very frustrating*".

Another comment which was shared was:

"*In business we have to be able to speak our minds and make other people understand our situation. If we don't know how to solve an issue or respond to it in proper English, then we lose the business. This is important, I think.*"

These statements clearly show that students are aware of the importance of having the skills in mediating conflicts, either in the classroom or in business dealings. They were apparently frustrated that they were unable to manage conflict because they lacked the proficiency or the skills to do so.

Mediating is one of the most important skills needed in any business transactions. As mentioned by cited in Ilie et al. (2015, pp. 662):

"*In the business environment, mediation encourages strengthening of relationships and even creates new ways of collaboration between partners. Mediation in [the] business field helps in maintaining relationships between business partners and paves the way for initiating new partnerships and business, based on the principle of 'win-win'.*"

Thus, without the opportunity to master the skills in mediating, the students may lose opportunities in building business connections or handling business conflicts, prejudices, or intolerance (Ahmad, 2016).

3.2.5 Skills in carrying out business communication.

Items 7, 8 and 9 (Table 6) were included to determine the students' perceptions of the importance of including English oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship in terms of enhancing their confidence in carrying out business communication skills. Presenting a business proposition, or pitching, is one of the most crucial skills any entrepreneur must master in order to effectively convince the potential investor or buyer that they are investing in a profitable venture. The response to this statement is a high 97.8%.

Table 6: Skills in carrying out business communication

Including English oral communications skills in an Entrepreneurship course will allow students to:	SA	A	NS	D	SD
7. Present effective business propositions in English	(50.3%)	(47.5%)	(1.7%)	(0.6%)	
8. Build better rapport with business partners	(50.3%)	(43.5%)	(1.7%)	(4.5%)	
9. Build self-esteem as a global entrepreneur	(54.8%)	(40.1%)	(2.8%)	(2.3%)	

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NS= Not Sure, D= Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

One participant mentioned:

> *"The English oral communication skills are important in the course because it [sic] prepares students for real job situation where most professional organisations communicate in English; related formal events are also in English, especially presenting business ideas and concepts."*

Students are aware that they need to be prepared for real job situations because that will play an important role in establishing a business network. Abdullah shared his views on improving his skills in presenting effective business models:

> *"By having the skills in presenting in English, one tends to look more convincing when discussing ideas and business proposals, and reliable [sic] in carrying out the task. If we do not know the skills, what we want to say may not be understood clearly."*

Building better rapport with business partners is also perceived as a significant skill to be included in the entrepreneurship course. A further review of the FGD revealed that the participants were in agreement with this statement. One of the requirements of the course is for the students to go out and interview real business owners. The objective of this exercise is to expose the students to contact with people outside the classroom and to gain first-hand information about building a business. However, students are not taught the skills for

establishing an effective conversation outside their course group. Syed shared his thoughts on this statement:

> *"It is not easy to have an effective conversation with a person who is established in his business when our English is not good. It makes us look unprofessional. That is why the course should give students practice in building rapport with people outside the class so that we can gain the confidence."*

Sharifah added:

> *"The thought of meeting a stranger itself is very daunting, and not having the proper skills in maintaining a conversation in English can be very damaging to our self-esteem. I totally agree that this skill should be included in the course to better prepare us."*

The other four participants agreed with Syed and Sharifah. Phrases that were captured such as "*lack of practice*", "*no confidence to face people*", "*cannot find the right words*", "*embarrassed to open my mouth*", "*I feel nervous to face people outside the course*" and "*I normally use Malay to start a business conversation as it is faster and easier to share my thoughts*", describe how significant it is for this skill to be embedded in the course.

Item 9 received an overwhelming response of 94.9% in agreement with the statement that including English oral communication skills in an entrepreneurship course would allow students to build self-esteem as a global entrepreneur. During the FGD, most of the respondents reasoned that since English is the main language of the business world, an entrepreneur must master English to be able to break into the global market. This was mentioned by Muhammad when he shared:

> *"English oral communication skills are important because English is the world language right now. So, when we use English during our business dealings, we can go far as we can to make everyone understand us, and this will build our self-esteem."*

Further analysis of the list of comments showed more respondents agreeing on how the ability to communicate effectively in English oral skills can help entrepreneurs:

> *"For me, English oral communication skills are important in terms of gaining confidence to talk publicly in front of others, especially regarding their business ideas. Without having a good communication between both parties, or lack of confidence, it would be harder for others to invest, or attract them with our products. Therefore, English oral communication skills should be done in [the] entrepreneurship education course to help the students in improving the ways of generating ideas and talk confidently in front of many people."*

The above results and justifications emphasise the importance of English oral communication skills and their inclusion as part of the course. The respondents clearly perceived that skills in expressing ideas, participating in discussions, expressing disagreement and providing feedback, asking questions, mediating, mastering the skills in presentation and building rapport with business people

are essential skills to be learned and should be embedded in the Entrepreneurship Education course.

4. Conclusions

The key to successfully becoming a global entrepreneur is the ability to communicate effectively with people. As the English language is the major link in connecting businesses across the globe, mastering the skills, especially English oral communication skills, is seen as crucial for students taking the Entrepreneurship Education course, as it builds their confidence in expressing their vision, their ideas, and expressing innovative strategies more vividly. English language skills would also help to build their self-esteem when asking questions, discussing discrepancies more efficiently, and improving their lack of proficiency in language skills. Entrepreneurship is not only about capitalising on profits and building empires, it strives for sustainability of relationships and charismatic leadership in which effective business presentations, meetings, negotiations, mediating conflicts, building rapport with existing or new business partners play an important role. To produce successful entrepreneurs of a global standard who would become the saviours of the global economy of a country, it is vital to expose them to the English language skills along with the entrepreneurial skills by embedding the language skills in an entrepreneurship course.

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