“TOP” it with Amazing Communication Skills: A Practical Strategy for Engineering Undergraduates

Abdullah Adnan Mohamed, Adelina Asmawi

The Current State

Every year, graduates who have completed their tertiary educations at higher learning institutions will seek for employment opportunities. While many were able to get their first jobs, many more were not so fortunate and remained unemployed. The statistics of unemployment rate among Malaysian graduates is alarming. In February 2016, The News Straits Times reported that, based on data from PEMANDU (a department under the Prime Minister’s Office) there were about 400,000 graduates who were still looking for jobs (Hussaini, 2016). There are many reasons for the high number of unemployment rate among Malaysian graduates. One of the main reasons is the issue of lack of English communication skills among these graduates where many were not successful even at the preliminary interview stage as the medium of communication in most interviews is in English. Therefore, graduates must equip themselves with appropriate English communication skills. Lacking these communication skills would almost certain mean that these students face great risks of not being able to secure jobs. This chapter highlights the issues related to English communication skills and unemployment among graduates, as well as proposes strategies for engineering undergraduates to improve their skills via technical oral presentations.

English Language for Workplace Communication

During their undergraduate studies, most Malaysian undergraduates studying in public and private universities are required to register for English classes. These classes are meant to provide necessary English language skills for academic purposes as well as to some extent provide exposure towards English communication needs in workplaces. However, there are issues of students’ lack of competencies in using English language for workplace communication. Studies reported that, upon completion of their education, professionals in accounting, business, medical and technical areas have often not achieved the